



Claiming  WILD HEARTS  
HER HEART



USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

DELTA JAMES


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# CLAIMING HER HEART

WILD HEARTS



DELTA JAMES

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*Dedicated to My Two Best Friends:  
Renee and Chris, without whom none of  
what I do would be possible and to the Girls,  
who bring joy to my life every single day*

*Acknowledgements:*

*Editor: Lori White, Creative Editing Services*

*Cover Design: Dar Albert, Wicked Smart Designs*

*Proofreader: Melinda Kaye Brandt*

*Special thanks to Maggie for all her help and support*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*When you begin your journey as an author, you don't realize how much it is you don't know. Such is the case with the Wild Hearts series. I've learned a lot since then. I've worked hard to hone my craft and have hooked up with my wonderful editor, Lori.*

*What follows is the result.*

# CHAPTER 1



Standing on the covered porch outside the local watering hole, Devon Cooper rested her hand on the railing. This late in the season it was hard to remember which city they were in and which event they'd just completed.

The cacophony from the noise inside was giving her a headache. Normally, she would have quietly exited the party and headed home or to her hotel by now. Parties with throngs of people were not something she particularly enjoyed, but her attendance at this one was expected and bordered on mandatory.

The completion and naming of the champions of the latest Fédération Equestre Internationale, or FEI, event and the announcement of the short-list for the U.S. Olympic Equestrian Team had been cause for celebration. Devon wasn't an actual rider for the team but was deemed a critical representative. As such her presence was a given.

Many of the participants had been partying since the afternoon and as the evening dragged on were becoming rowdier as their consumption of alcohol increased. Devon was already late as she'd made sure her appaloosa gelding, Dreamer, was bedded down for the night and ready for their long flight tomorrow from Helsinki to Toronto to compete in the last event of the season.

Devon was just headed inside when a reporter from one of the dressage magazines stepped between her and the door.



“You don’t really think that reining ought to be included as an Olympic equestrian event, do you?” the reporter asked, giving no preliminary greeting or acknowledgement.

It was an old argument and many who rode and loved dressage had no appreciation for the more rough and tumble ‘cowboy’ event. Devon was not among them.

“I don’t actually see them as all that different,” she explained with the patience of one who had gone over this information time and again. “Reiners perform maneuvers that require an advanced level of skill.” The reporter snorted as Devon reached for the handle on the door of the pub. “We just do it with one hand, one bit, and a helluva lot more speed.”

That last bit wasn’t part of the official party line from the U.S. Olympic Committee, but Devon was getting tired of other equestrians looking down their snooty, self-involved noses at her and the sport she loved.

Devon and Dreamer weren’t part of the actual competition team but would be representing the United States at the upcoming Summer Games as a demonstration sport. Devon and riders like her had been trying to get reining included for years but had been successfully blocked time and time again.

Today, the Canadian team had been the big winner in the eventing division, dressage had gone to the Swiss, and the Canadians had just managed to edge out the Americans in stadium jumping. There were plenty of groupies of both sexes trying to make a connection with the winners and others who were more than happy to commiserate with those who had not done as well.

She stepped into the bar, thankful to have at least gotten away from the reporter. The blast of noise and smells of booze and fried food were almost enough to make her turn around and exit just as quickly. She reminded herself she wasn’t here to have a good time. She was here to try and get reining accepted as an Olympic sport.

“Devon! Come join us,” called Ronin Gutherie.

She was shocked he even knew her name. Gutherie was a celebrated member of the Canadian eventing team and had been the overall winner for this weekend's event.

He was as notorious a womanizer as he was a rider. He laughed, drank, and fondled more than his share of female backsides as he danced and partied the night away.

Gutherie was interesting. He didn't look like most of the other riders. His rugged good looks were just this shy of pretty enough for him to make a living as a male model. At least in the eyes of those who decided such things. Devon thought he was gorgeous and often found herself watching from the sidelines. He was considered to be one of the best riders on the circuit and was heavily favored to win at the Summer Games.

He was built more like a rugby player than a rider, with strong shoulders tapering into pecs that stood out against those thin-weave shirts the riders wore and a flat stomach that begged for the brush of a woman's fingers. Devon didn't even need to leave the contours of his physique to the imagination—he was constantly removing his shirt, revealing defined, corded arms and his broad shoulders tapered into chiseled pecs and a trim waist. He had muscled arms and every time he took off his shirt, someone managed to snap a picture of him. His skin-tight breeches revealed well-muscled legs and provided evidence that the rumor that he was hung was to be believed.

His physicality was actually not highly desired by those who designed the uniforms and advertised the events, as he stood out like the proverbial sore thumb and no-doubt necessitated countless fittings to get things exactly right. But while the designers and major advertisers might not appreciate the way he was put together, the female members and fans of the sport certainly disagreed. He had a few endorsement deals that always showed him shirtless or at least unbuttoned to show his amazing core muscles.

He had dark, laughing eyes, close-cropped dark hair, and a deep, smooth as silk voice. It was the latter and the way the man could ride that attracted Devon the most—or, at least, that's what she told herself.

She had no intention of acting on that attraction.

She acknowledged his invitation with a wave of her hand. “Thanks, but I was just leaving,” she lied.

Gutherie extricated himself from the throng of women vying for his attention and crossed the expanse of space between them. “But you only just arrived. You have to stay. Do you dance?”

She laughed, nervously. The man had the power to rattle the most sophisticated person in the room—and that certainly wasn’t her. “Like a new-born foal on roller skates,” she answered.

He shook his head. “No way. I’ve seen you ride. Any woman with a great ass, hips, and legs like yours has to be able to dance.”

He was devastatingly sexy and could be incredibly charming when he chose to be, but he could also be arrogant as all get out. Even so, normally she might have found him too arousing to resist, but tonight, he was just this side of drunk and way too full of himself and his most recent accomplishments.

“No, really,” she said, trying to figure out how she was going to avoid this scenario without a confrontation. “I’m sure one of these ladies will be more than happy to accommodate you. Won’t you, ladies?” she called to the gaggle of girls he’d left behind.

“But I want to dance with you,” he said decisively, stepping between her and the exit.

Devon smiled sweetly. “People in hell want ice water, but that don’t mean they get it,” she said with a little more bite than she’d intended.

She heard a familiar laugh from behind. “Careful, Ronin. Devon can be a nasty piece of baggage when she’s in the wrong mood, can’t you, Dev?”

This was *not* what she needed. Two years ago, Devon had made the mistake of getting involved with Jake Rutherford, one of the coaches of the U.S. team. She had imagined

building an equestrian dynasty with him. It had been all passion and fireworks until she walked in on him plowing a groupie bent over a hay bale. The resulting split had not been pretty.

“Fuck off, Jake.”

“I’d like to Dev, but you haven’t opened your legs for me, or for anyone else I suspect, in a while.”

“That’s enough, Rutherford,” Gutherie said, pushing his way between Devon and Jake.

“Thanks, Ronin, but I can handle Jake a lot better than he can handle his liquor,” Devon said.

Before things could escalate further, the head coach of the U.S. team stepped in and got Jake out of harm’s way.

“Are you sure you’re all right?” asked Gutherie.

“I’m fine. Thanks,” she said, turning to leave.

“No, you have to stay. You can’t leave me alone with these girls. My virtue could be compromised.”

Devon gave a very unladylike snort and rolled her eyes. “Is there any part of you left to be compromised? I find that hard to believe. Somehow, I’m sure you’ll survive.”

The aforementioned girls joined Gutherie and tried to pull him back to the dance floor. Devon shook her head a little at the sight. It was unreal.

Ronin extricated himself from them with speed, though, and approached her once again. “Come on, Devon. Just one dance? How hard could it be? I lead, you follow, and it all works out.”

“Usually for the one leading. Not so much for the one who has to do all the following. Thanks, but as I said, I’m on my way out.”

“But you have to come dance with me.” His eyes swept over her, leaving her feeling the touch as though it had been his hands grazing her skin. “I’ve been wanting to get my hands on your ass all day.”

“Well, then it won’t kill you to wait a little longer.”



Ronin laughed. He liked her. He liked her probably more than he should. Her long blonde hair and patrician features belied a wicked sense of humor and a caustic wit.

Devon had a smoking-hot body. Taller than most of the women who competed at an international level, she had a great rack and legs that seemed to go on forever. He’d long held fantasies of how those breasts would look free of any encumbrance and what her legs would feel like wrapped around him as he drove his cock into her wet heat again and again.

If he was being completely honest, he also wanted to know what she sounded like in the midst of passion. Her voice held a lilting drawl that spoke of her home in Texas, somewhere on the gulf coast if he remembered correctly.

And she could ride. Good lord, could she ride.

He took hold of her arm and drew her forward, closer to him. “Come on, baby. We’re both visitors here in Helsinki. I hear there’s a great boat tour at midnight. They take you out far enough that you can see the night sky without so much air pollution. They say on a good night you can see the Northern Lights. You don’t want to miss that, do you?”

He had the advantage of height and could see down the scoop neck of her sweater just enough to see the tops of her creamy breasts. He wondered how much darker her areola and nipples were. He wanted to see that contrast and so many other things if he could just get her naked.

Ronin’s cock began to swell. It had been a while since he’d gotten laid, but lately the one-night stands had lost their allure. He’d begun to suspect that for a great many of them, it was more about being able to say they’d slept with the winner or someone well known than with the man himself.

“Again, no,” she said firmly.

He knew he should back off; was well aware he'd had too much to drink. But he was as intoxicated by Devon as he was by the booze. He stepped into her space, hauling her up against his body. "Don't let that jerk, Rutherford, get to you. Canadian men know how to treat a woman right."

"You're drunk."

"And you're sexy as hell. Oh, I may have had a few too many, but you know what they say— 'in *vino veritas*.' And alcohol never affects my performance."

"In *vino* there is also a hell of a hangover. You already proved your prowess on the course today." Devon tried to pull away again.

He held her tight and allowed one of his hands to slip down to her ass. He leaned in close to whisper, "If it's been a while, I can be gentle—at least the first couple of times. Although, I have to admit that wouldn't be my first choice."



As obnoxious as he was, it was difficult to ignore or be unaffected by him. Certainly, she could understand the allure he held for others, but not for her—at least, that's what she told herself. Devon knew that arguing with him in his inebriated state would be pointless so she turned to leave again.

Gutherie pulled her back against the front of his body, wrapping his arms around her.

*Where the hell is everyone? Why isn't someone trying to intervene?* One hand fondled the underside of her breast, and he nestled his hard cock against her ass.

*Drunk, horny, and strong. That's never a good combination.* She wasn't sure if the drink was fueling his arousal, or his arousal was enhancing his state of inebriation.

"I really want to fuck you," he whispered in her ear. "I've wanted to fuck you for the longest time. I have dreams of

getting my hands on you, spending the night between your thighs, and rocking your world.”

*Damn... what happened to a dance?*

He was beginning to get more than a bit obnoxious and yet help seemed nowhere in sight. No one seemed to either care or notice that she was being prevented from leaving or that Guthrie was being completely inappropriate.

*Time to take care of this myself.*

Devon turned in his arms and pasted the sweetest smile on her face. Guthrie’s reaction was swift, sure, and completely expected. He dropped his hand to the globes of her ass and squeezed as he pulled her into direct contact with his hard cock. She allowed the contact which seemed to mollify him somewhat.

“So, you’ve wanted me for a long time?”

“Abso-fucking-lutely,” he said with a grin. “You have the best rack of any of the girls on the circuit and the way those chaps frame your ass, well it’s enough to give a man all kinds of fantasies.”

“Is it?” she whispered with a seductive tone. “You know I’m from Texas, right?” Guthrie nodded and she continued. “I don’t know if you know, but Texas has a rich history of cowboys and cowgirls. Texas cowgirls know how to handle a stud who’s got lovin’ on his mind.”

He pulled her closer, nuzzled her neck beneath her long, blonde hair and said in a tone dripping with lust, “And how’s that, baby?”

Guthrie was apparently drunk enough that he didn’t realize the vulnerable position he’d put himself in, but she did. The words had barely left his mouth when Devon brought her knee up sharply to make painful contact with his balls. Instinctively he let go of her and dropped to his knee.

She leaned in and whispered, “We geld them.”



It was all Guthrie could do to keep breathing. Her aim was deadly and she had put quite a bit of force into the blow. He wondered for a moment if she had robbed him of his ability to sire children. Certainly, it had sobered him up.

He was still nursing his groin and struggling to get back up on both feet when Jake Rutherford clapped him on the shoulder, saying “See what I mean? A real tight ass bitch. But if you can get her to spread those legs and loosen up, she’s a hell of a ride.”

His gaze flickered to Devon’s eyes. He saw pain flash through them—there and gone before almost anyone could see it. All thought of his own pain vanished as he saw her features tighten and then smooth out as she worked to hide it away. It was too much.

Guthrie came upright and drove his fist into Rutherford’s perfectly chiseled face, smashing his nose with a satisfying crunch, loosening some teeth, and knocking the assistant coach on his ass.

He growled down into Rutherford’s bloody visage. “Don’t you ever speak her name in my presence again. Got that?”

Rutherford managed to nod, and Ronin looked up in time to see the door close behind the amazing ass he’d been so preoccupied with.

He rushed outside, looking up and down the street, but Devon was gone. Pulling his cell phone out of his pocket he sent his kid brother, Gage, a message:

*Spent a little time with the gorgeous blonde.*

*I’m convinced she is the one.*

*Her name is Devon.*

*You’re going to love her.*



## CHAPTER 2



Devon stared out the window of the taxi. She could have taken the team's transport van, but she needed a little time to settle herself. She'd spent a restless night between fantasizing about Ronin and fretting about the flight.

She was sure that at some point excitement about traveling from Helsinki to Toronto before going home would overtake her concern about the long flight ahead. Traveling as a passenger by herself was nerve wracking enough but being in the specially made cargo plane with Dreamer was another thing entirely.

They were headed to an FEI event in Toronto, and everything was packed and ready to go to the airport to be stowed away. All she had to do tomorrow was supervise Dreamer's loading into the plane's tie stalls before getting as comfortable as possible in the airline seats provided behind where the horses rode. International competition sounded so glamorous and exciting, but the long flights were hard on both horses and people, and most of the people involved prayed for a dull transport.

Devon arrived at the cargo loading area and checked on Dreamer once more. There would be more than one cargo plane for the horses. They were loaded according to weight and destination. Most of the horses at the Helsinki event were headed to Toronto, and as such, there would be several flights leaving today.

Teams were not necessarily kept together on the same flights. Equine passengers and equipment were all weighed

and then divided for the best and most equal distribution of weight. Riders were assigned to the same plane as their horses in case there was trouble.

Dreamer was calmly standing in a small pen on the airport's apron adjacent to the taxiway, munching alfalfa from his hay net. Lifting his head for a moment, he nickered when he saw her. As Devon approached him, he inclined his head towards her. She laughed. He was a greedy gelding. He wanted her affection but wasn't really willing to give up his hay. She stood on her tiptoes and placed her forehead against his. He stopped eating long enough to nuzzle her as she spoke to him softly.

"I don't suppose you'd care to offer me your sage advice on how to relax and enjoy this, would you?" she asked him.

Dreamer raised his head, bumped her with his muzzle and went back to eating.

"No; I didn't think so."



Ronin had also come to check on his mount, Pax, who would be on the same flight. From Pax's pen, he watched Devon with her horse, his eyelashes shielding his curious gaze. There was a bond between them much like the one he had with Pax.

They were the only two riders waiting with their horses to supervise their loading. Most of the others had already gotten on the plane and were just waiting for take-off. Pax didn't take to most people and could be difficult to deal with, but Ronin thought he'd probably like Devon. She had a way with horses. He grinned as his groin reminded him she also had a way with men who were misbehaving. Ronin slipped Pax a peppermint and made his way towards Devon.

"Devon?" he said softly, not wanting to startle either her or the horse.



As she heard her name, Devon turned and spied Ronin. She sighed to herself. He really was easy on the eye. And that voice. It surrounded the recipient like a warm hug, and he could probably talk a girl to an orgasm. Oh lord, why was she thinking about Ronin Guthrie and orgasms?

“Guthrie,” she replied in a neutral tone.

“About last night. I’m afraid I need to apologize for my rather boorish behavior.”

“Was that boorish behavior for you? I thought you said in *vino veritas*.”

Ronin brought his hand up and rubbed the back of his neck. For once in his life, he seemed uneasy. Devon had never seen him as anything but incredibly self-confident, bordering on arrogant.

“Yes, I did. And there is a lot of truth in what I said. But the way I said it was crude and inappropriate. I hope you can overlook it and allow me to apologize and take you to dinner when we get to Toronto.”

Devon searched his face for signs of deception or guile and found neither. “Thanks, Guthrie. That isn’t necessary, but I appreciate the offer. Most of the people I know think if they had too much to drink, that’s all the excuse they need.”

“I’d like a chance to show you that I’m not most people.”

“Why?”

“As I said, it isn’t that what I said last night wasn’t true. It’s just that I was raised to treat a lady with more respect than that.” He shook his head slightly, laughing. “The fact is, if my mother had heard what I said, she might have beat you to the punch—or rather the knee. And my grandmother would have taken her beloved wooden spoon to me.”

She couldn’t help but smile. He was quite charming when he chose to be. And that chuckle was something else again—

deep and melodious. He really did have a great voice. The rumor was that Guthrie could calm a fractious horse on a flight just by talking to it, and she believed it.

By being able to calm a horse with just his voice, they could avoid either having to use a higher level of tranquilizer, which could cause serious side effects, or keep the horse from having to be put down. That was every international rider's greatest fear: that their horse would become so unruly that in order to maintain safety, the horse would have to be destroyed in flight.

Devon suppressed a laugh. She didn't believe in the corporal punishment of children, but the image of the very masculine, very alpha male standing before her as a young boy with a formidable mother and grandmother was amusing and a bit endearing.

"Your grandmother used a wooden spoon on you?"

"Unfortunately, on more than one occasion. For the most part, the lessons she taught me stuck, but sometimes when I've had too much to drink, it's been a long day, and there's a beautiful woman I've had my eye on for a long time... well, as I said, boorish behavior."

Devon laughed. "Do you see her often? Your grandmother, I mean."

"Not anymore. She died two years ago," he said thoughtfully.

"I'm so sorry," said Devon, reaching out to touch his forearm. "I lost my favorite grandmother three years ago."



Ronin placed his hand over hers and was surprised when she didn't withdraw it immediately. That was a good sign. He hadn't frightened her last night. Pissed her off, but hadn't frightened her. Things were looking up.

Her horse nudged her, seeking her attention once again. She removed her hand from Ronin's arm and turned to the

gelding.

“He’s quite a bit smaller than most of the horses,” Ronin remarked, unwilling to lose the connection he felt to her.

He wouldn’t have blamed her had she been angry or dismissive with him. He’d been prepared for that. Instead, she’d been kind.

“Actually, for a reiner, he’s on the larger side. We tend to like them smaller because they are more agile and quick.”

“He’s really quite striking. He’s not actually black, is he?”

“I’m surprised you noticed. Most people think he is. He’s always described as a black appaloosa with a huge white blanket and peacock spots. But he isn’t black at all. He’s a dark liver chestnut, but I’ve given up trying to explain that difference to people. At least they get the blanket with peacock spots right. Dreamer can be something of a prima donna and the grooms aren’t overly fond of him.”

Ronin chuckled. “God, I’d be thrilled if I could say our grooms weren’t ‘overly fond’ of Pax.” Ronin reached out to stroke Dreamer’s neck and then moved his hand to scratch his withers, eliciting a pleasurable response from him as the gelding made funny contortions of his nose. “Most of the grooms are terrified of Pax and refuse to deal with him. So, I mostly do it myself. I was watching you earlier with your boy and thought you’d probably get on with mine fairly well. Would you like to come meet him?”

“Sure.”

Ronin led the way back to his horse: a huge smutty buckskin with black hairs and patches mixed in with his golden coat. He had a black mane and tail. He had to be at least six inches taller than Dreamer. The only white was an almost perfectly formed circle located on his forehead between the upper portion of his eyes.

“Hello, pretty,” she said, without reaching for him.

*She knows horses.* The big gelding looked at Ronin and then at Devon and reached his muzzle out to her with his ears pricked forward, a relaxed nostril, and soft eyes. It was only

then that Devon reached under his head between his jawbones to rub him with her knuckles. Pax closed his eyes and moaned happily.

“He’ll give you about an hour and half to stop that. It’s his favorite place to be scratched.”

“Well, of course it is. It’s a difficult place to reach, isn’t it, sweetie? How is he bred?”

“He’s half Irish Sport horse and half Mustang” Ronin smiled at the look of confusion on her face. “The owners of his superbly pedigreed, blue-blooded dam were none too happy that she found herself a mustang boyfriend. By the time they knew, Pax was already on the way.”

“Sometimes a girl just wants a bit of rough and tumble.”

“Does she now? Is that just pedigreed broodmares or does that hold true for other females as well?”

She grinned. “Boorish.”

“Nah,” he said, laughing at himself, “just a bit of rough and tumble. Come on, they’re here to load them. Let’s get on the plane so if anything goes wonky, we can get them settled.”

They walked companionably to the plane and climbed the stairway. The change in Devon’s body language and demeanor was subtle, but he could see it when she saw the coaches for the U.S. team, including Jake with his bruised face, were already on board.

“Well, well, well,” Jake said. “What’s this? Did Devon kiss it and make it better for you?”

Ronin bristled. He’d never cared for Rutherford and his feelings towards the asshole were now becoming close to murderous. He would love to wipe the smirk from his face, although the residual bruises from their altercation the night before did make him feel better.

“Jake,” said the head coach. “That’s quite enough. Shut up or you can stay behind and catch a later flight. I don’t need anyone starting trouble. Sorry about that Devon, Ronin.”

Ronin wondered if she could feel the level of heat and anger rolling off his body. He had gone from being in a good mood to straight pissed in seconds.

“Look, Ronin, there are two seats on the end. We’ll be closer to the horses,” she said, trying to diffuse the situation.

Ronin put his hand in the small of her back and escorted her to the seats she had indicated.

The horses were loaded without incident, and the plane taxied out to the runway. Ronin was glad to see everyone, including the horses, were calm, but a sideways peek at Devon showed him she was the exception. Devon had gone pale, and he could see her clutching the arms of the seat, her knuckles white.

“Not a good flier?” he asked solicitously.

“Dreamer is,” she said, trying to hide how nervous she was with a little laugh. “Me? Not so much.”

Ronin gently pried one of her hands loose from the arm and took it in both of his. She tried to pull away, but he prevented her from withdrawing her hand by massaging her hand with the thumbs of both of his with a firm, soothing touch. As the plane began to gather speed and lift off, he increased the pressure on her hand, making her focus more on what he was doing.

As they leveled off, he released her one hand and then put his hands out for the other. She grinned at him, released the seat arm, and placed her hand in his. Again, he used his thumbs to firmly massage her hand in circles and strong lines. He then took each of her hands into one of his own, using his hands and thumbs to offer her some reassurance and comfort. As the tension began to leave her hands, he continued to massage them, helping her to relax.

Ronin stood. “Let me check the horses.”

“I can help.”

“No need. Everybody seems fine. I just like to check on them periodically. You sit here. I’ll bring you a bottle of water when I come back.”

“I think I’d rather have tequila.”

He chuckled. “Not really the best thing for hydration. But if you agree to let me take you to dinner, I’ll buy you all the tequila you want and you can behave as boorishly to me as you like.”

She laughed. She had a great laugh. It wasn’t some girlish giggle, but one of a grown woman who knew what she wanted. Ronin couldn’t recall ever having heard it before. Of course, he hadn’t had many chances to in the past, but that was something he planned to remedy.

Ronin checked the horses and went to the back of the plane to get some water and see if there was anything to eat on board. Finding a couple of apples and kiwis, he located a knife and prepared them to be eaten.

Jake sidled up to him. “The food won’t do the trick, but give her a couple of shots of tequila and she’s fairly easy to get into bed.”

Ronin said nothing, but calmly put down the two bottles of water and the plate with the prepared fruit. He grabbed Jake’s hand and applied an uncomfortable amount of pressure to a sensitivity point, driving Jake to his knees.

No one noticed or, if they did, bothered to come to Jake’s aid. Ronin leaned down and whispered, “I warned you Rutherford— don’t say her name and don’t ever speak of her again. Stay away from her and stay away from me. This is my last warning. Next time, I’ll put you in a hospital. Clear?”

Ronin could see the effect he was having on Jake, as the assistant head coach grimaced and then whimpered. Ronin was certain this time he had gotten through to the pompous asshole, and that Jake had no doubt Gutherie spoke the truth.

Ronin returned to Devon with the fruit and water. “Sorry, it was the best I could do. Apparently, they forgot the gourmet cheese and artisan bread.”

“This is gourmet food in my experience. Most of the time we’re lucky if we get vending-machine peanut butter and cheese crackers.”



“Peanut butter and cheese? That sounds disgusting.”

Devon laughed again. “It is, but Dreamer loves them. Thanks, by the way. I’ve never been this relaxed on a flight.”

“I’m not being boorish?”

“Not at all! Your grandmother would have no need to take her wooden spoon to you.”

He smiled.

*Yes, she would. If my grandmother knew the thoughts I was having right now, she’d wear out her wooden spoon. But she’d think you were fine, Devon Cooper. Very, very fine and just the girl for her favorite grandson.*

Ronin knew that his lustful thoughts and fantasies about Devon were quickly turning to something deeper. He accepted that and planned to follow through on those feelings. He was a great believer in fate, in destiny, and love.

He had confidence in his ability to get her into his bed. Keeping her there and claiming her heart might be a very different story all together. Finesse would be the key.

Ronin was accustomed to winning even when the stakes were at their highest, and Devon was a prize he had no intention of losing.

After they’d finished their food, Devon got up to stretch her legs. Ronin hid his smile when Jake avoided eye contact with her as she passed by.

She returned to her seat and Ronin took the hand closest to him and began to massage it again. She thought she could hear him begin to hum to her in a voice so low no one else could hear it. She wasn’t even sure she heard anything. It wasn’t a song, per se, but was something that had been passed down in his family through the generations—a sound that spoke to her inner being. She looked around and no one else seemed to hear it.

Devon glanced around and then sat back. Her eyelids fluttered closed, then opened, and then closed again. He could feel the exhaustion emanating from her being.

At some point, she leaned against him while he continued to massage her hand and hum to her. He wrapped his arm around her, pulling her close so that her head rested in the crook of his shoulder, and she drifted off fully.

Ronin smiled. He wasn't sure why he was so ridiculously pleased with the situation, but he was. This was a far cry from the way he'd fantasized about sleeping with her for the first time. He was content, though, that she was in his arms, in a manner of speaking, relaxed, and feeling safe enough to sleep next to him.

That was a good start and a solid foundation. As the flight dragged on, Ronin closed his own eyes and slept. He didn't kid himself that everything would just fall into place, but he knew with fate and luck on his side, he would claim her heart just as sure as he had claimed all of the top eventing titles.

## CHAPTER 3



Devon's sleep was disturbed, and she began to wake, but then the humming noise that seemed to emanate from Ronin pierced her senses, soothing her. He traced circles on her hand, lulling her spirit, and she relaxed back into the curl of his arm, allowing herself to wake more gently.

Realization and embarrassment that she'd been sleeping with her head on Ronin's shoulder crept over her and she turned her face, looking at the night through the airplane windows. "I'm so sorry, Gutherie. I don't know why I fell asleep. Kind of rude to use you as a pillow."

The bright spark in his eyes was echoed by the low rumbling chuckle. "Not a problem. I rather enjoyed having you sleep with me," he teased.

"Boorish."

"Nah, truth."

Devon started to laugh, something she seemed to do a lot around Ronin, but covered her mouth with her hand. "Everyone's asleep," she whispered.

"Most of them are. There were equal amounts of pills and booze used to accomplish that."

"Generally, I would have needed both. Not sure what it is you did with your thumb on my hand, but it's like the relaxation you were able to give my hand travelled all the way up through my body. I don't think I've ever been so at ease on a plane. Thank you."

“My pleasure. I’ve been told I have great hands,” he said, pausing to grin at her expression. “I know, boorish.”

She returned his grin. “No, truth.”

“They’re even better when I use them to arouse instead of relax.”

She laughed softly, “Okay, now we’re back to boorish.”

“I’m beginning to think you like boorish, Ms. Cooper.”

“Perhaps.”

“So, does that mean you’ve forgiven me for last night?”

“Are you apologizing?”

Ronin seemed to consider his answer. “For the truth of what I said? No. For the way I behaved and the way I said it? Yes. Give me a break, Devon. I was drunk and high off the win. Let me take you to dinner.”

Deciding that dinner with the hunky Canadian might not be so bad, she nodded slowly.

“Good. I’ll pick you up. Are you staying where the others are?”

She smiled. “The Olympians? No, I’m just a mere demonstration rider. We must be kept separate, lest we taint the true talent. They’ve got me at one of the cheaper hotels.”

“Hotel name?”

“The Parkside.”

“It’s not a bad little place. Not as fancy as some, but clean and quiet. It’ll make it easier for you to get to and from the event. It wouldn’t be a problem for me to give you a lift every day.”

“Let’s see how dinner goes.”

“I’ll be on my best behavior.”

“And here I was thinking last night was your best behavior.”

“You wound me. I think now you’re just being a tease.”

“Never,” she said, allowing her drawl to become more pronounced. “Texas cowgirls do not tease.”

“No?” he said, his eyes laughing. “What do you call it then?”

“Sass. We call it sass. We do not tease. However, we do occasionally sass the men in our lives.”

“Now, that is progress. Last night I was to be gelded and tonight I’ve become the man in your life. Is that official?”

“No,” she stammered and then reconsidered. Ronin Guthrie was confusing. “Would it matter?”

“Very much. You see, if I’m the man in your life, that makes you my woman. In which case I am obligated by alpha male tradition to put Jake Rutherford in the ICU for treating you badly and speaking ill of you,” he said with a little less levity than she thought he should have.

“I think knocking him on his ass last night probably sufficed,” she said archly, not wanting to think about all that could be extrapolated by what he’d said.

“Heard about that, did you?” It was easy to forget how quickly gossip spread among the international equine set. “Then, in the interest of full disclosure, you should know that earlier today, I applied pressure to his hand and dropped the sonofabitch to his knees. I also told him if he spoke your name or talked about you again, he’d deal with me.”

“You didn’t,” Devon said, not sure whether she should be appalled or quite pleased.

“I did.”

Not only had Ronin stood up for her; he had caused Jake some physical pain. Devon knew that she shouldn’t feel quite so satisfied about it, but she did. She leaned in closer and said, “I’m not sure how I should feel about that. Let’s just say I’m happier about it than I should be.”

“Good. When I do make you mine...”

She huffed playfully. “Not if, but when?”

He nodded. “When I do make you mine, I’ll give him one warning to steer clear of you and never trouble you again. Like I said, Gutherie men know how to treat their ladies. We’re the only ones who get to behave boorishly to them, and then only in private.”

Again, Devon couldn’t tell if he was joking or serious. She was a bit concerned that he might be serious, and even more concerned with how that made her feel—giddy, aroused, warm.

She grinned. “Well, if you’re planning to be boorish, perhaps I should invest in a wooden spoon.”

He laughed. Even though everyone was asleep, and they had been speaking softly, he leaned closer to her and said, “You keep sassing me, Ms. Cooper, and I’ll introduce you to another Gutherie male tradition.”

“And what might that be?” She was flirting with him and enjoying how easy it was.

*Foreplay, old style. Hmmm, delicious.*

“The judicious application of a firm hand to your glorious backside.”

Her eyebrows lifted. “You think I have a glorious backside?” It struck her after the comment that it was interesting that it was his feelings regarding her backside that gave her pause, and not the fact that he was talking about spanking her.

If she was honest with herself, she might even say she found the idea... intriguing.

“I do, indeed. And I’m quite the connoisseur of female backsides. I am of the learned opinion that yours is quite spectacular. And I have yet to even see it unclothed.”

Devon searched his face for a clue to his true intentions. His eyes held laughter and a certain degree of lust, but the rest of his face said he wasn’t joking.

“No wooden spoon?” she teased again.

“Only if my hand can’t accomplish the goal.”

“And what goal might that be?”

Devon couldn't believe they were having this conversation. Not only did it seem utterly inappropriate, but she couldn't believe she found the idea of getting spanked by Ronin more than a bit arousing.

They were sitting close to one another. Close enough that she could see he was becoming aroused. She hoped that the heavy sweater she had on disguised the fact that her nipples were responding in a positive way to what he was saying. She was also glad she had on jeans so it would be impossible for him to tell that she was becoming wet.

“The goal would be to teach you to mind me and be careful about sassing me. A certain amount of sass is fine, but anything more and I'd have to teach you a lesson. Just so you know, I'm not a big fan of the wooden spoon as an escalated method of discipline.”

“No?”

He shook his head, “No. I find leather to be far more effective and more readily available.”

“Do you now?”

Challenging him came naturally to her. Devon had fooled around with erotic spankings in the past and while they did enhance her sexual arousal, she had ultimately found them dissatisfying. They were never quite right. More of a quick swat or two than a true spanking.

No one had ever even alluded to anything like discipline. Yet, there was no ignoring the fire building between her legs.

Ronin tilted her face to his and pressed a kiss against her lips. His eyes never left hers as he stared intently into them. She closed hers when he deepened the kiss, his tongue parting her lips and sliding through her mouth—tempting and teasing.

It was a good kiss. Better than good, if she gave the caress and Ronin's expertise their due. His kiss made nerves clench low in her belly; made her chest tighten with anticipation.

She didn't want it to end. But it did, far too quickly.

“Yes, I do. I’d rather you never had to find out, but if you do, I promise you won’t easily forget it,” he said when he ended the kiss.

“And what exactly do you think I’ll be doing while all this is going on? If you think I’m just going to go along meekly with you and your plans, you’d better think again.”

He chuckled. “I rather imagine you’ll start out fussing, squirming, and cursing at me. But when you realize that isn’t going to do you any good, I suspect you’ll settle down and learn to behave. That way most of the time my hands will be used just to pleasure you.”

“Most of the time?”

He nodded his head. “Most of the time. I think we both know you’ll never truly be submissive. I think you’ll submit and follow my lead most of the time, but there will be times I need to remind you which one of us is alpha, and that it isn’t you.”

“You know, Gutherie, I don’t understand you at all. One minute I think you’re an intelligent, sensitive, good man, and the next that you’re some kind of Neanderthal who’s threatening to beat me.”

He pressed a second light kiss to her lips.

“I didn’t threaten to beat you; and I don’t make idle threats. I’m just giving you fair warning.” He shrugged. “I told you that once you’re my woman, you’ll mind me. When you don’t, there’ll be consequences. The first time I have to give you those consequences, I’m going to remind you of this conversation.”

Realizing she had lost any control she had in the conversation and that she was in danger of being steamrolled by the arrogant man, Devon started to get annoyed. “Maybe I should re-think dinner.”

He kissed her again, this time with a little more fire and passion. “Too late. You can rethink it all you like, but I’m holding you to your original decision. Changing your mind is



unacceptable and could lead to being put over my knee and getting that luscious bottom of yours spanked.”

“You must be joking.” She wasn’t sure if she was more outraged or aroused.

“Nope. So,” he continued, “I’m going to pick you up tomorrow at seven. That way you can get Dreamer settled, get checked in, rest. We can check on both horses either before or after we eat. Now, what kind of food do you like?”

Devon shook her head internally. Ronin could change moods almost as fast as the Texas weather. She knew she should be annoyed with him, that she should tell him to go fuck himself, but she didn’t.

He’d taken hold of one of her hands again and was using one of his thumbs to rub soothing circles onto it. The feeling of relaxation was rapidly being replaced with a growing arousal which she needed to get taken in hand.

She started to protest, but he silenced her with another kiss. This time she was certain she could not only hear but feel his humming. It traveled from his mouth into hers and right down to her nether region.

“Dev? What kind of food do you like?”

“I’m easy.”

He chuckled again. She was really starting to like that sound—very deep, very masculine but without rancor. It was filled with mirth. “That’s not what the gossip says.”

He waggled his eyebrows at her, obviously trying to lighten the mood.

“Boorish,” she laughed, prompting him to laugh out loud. “I’m not a picky eater. What kind of food do you like best?”

“Clean. Not fancy. Mostly fish or lamb.”

“Then it sounds like we’re having seafood.”

“Do you want to go someplace nice or laid-back? Tourist or local?”

“Someplace I can wear jeans and relax. All of the noise and crowds get to me.”

He nodded. “Me, too.”

“I don’t believe it. You seem to thrive in the spotlight. And all those endorsements and ads...”

“They pay the bills and mean I can focus on riding and keeping Pax in top shape and not selling myself to a sponsor.”

She heard the change in his tone, and he seemed to realize he had conveyed some of the residual anger he still carried regarding what had happened with his last horse, drawing in a deep breath.

“Sorry,” he said.

She took his hand in hers and tried to mimic the concentric circles he had traced upon hers with his thumbs. She knew what he was thinking. She would have found it difficult to deal with as well.

“I am, too. What happened was a tragedy. I can’t imagine how much that must have hurt.”

She watched his expression as he allowed his normal bravado to slip away for a moment in the face of her empathy. It stirred her, and Devon reached up and initiated a kiss.



Ronin allowed her to set the mood of the kiss, but quickly took control of it and drew her closer. He would have to remember to tell her someday that this was the moment he’d fallen hopelessly in love with her. She did understand how he felt and had sought to offer her kindness and compassion.

It was a priceless gift, and nothing like his usual encounters with the opposite sex. Even though to some it might have seemed incongruous, as his mouth settled on hers, he couldn’t help his mind traveling back. The event that had been a watershed moment in his life, was nowhere nearly as defining as claiming Devon as his.

*A decade earlier, Ronin had been set to win the Olympics. He had discovered an amazing horse that he'd needed impossible amounts of cash to purchase.*

*One of the top eventing saddle makers had offered to buy the horse and sponsor them in international competition. He could see what many other investors could not—Ronin had taken a good horse and made him truly great.*

*Everything seemed fine on the surface until the sponsor wanted Ronin to compete in an event named for them. Ronin felt there was something not quite right in doing so and the horse had needed some rest. Ronin refused to go.*

*As technically the sponsor owned the horse, and their vet gave him a clean bill of health, the sponsor had the horse transported to the event and hired another rider to take him over the course.*

*It was an ill-fated run from the beginning. The horse had been out-of-sorts and bogged several obstacles. The rider who had replaced Ronin was bound and determined to force the horse to finish in good time and so chose to take the remaining fences via the shortest, most difficult routes.*

*It was at the last water obstacle that it happened. The horse started to refuse; the rider used whip and spur to force the horse through the obstacle. The horse jumped wrong, his footing gave way as he attempted to land in the water and he slipped, fell, and broke his neck.*

*The rider had nothing more than a compound fracture of his leg from where the dead weight of the horse had fallen on him.*

Ronin had seen the whole thing on the event's televised coverage. He'd torn up the pub in which he'd been watching and disappeared for more than six months.

When he returned, he had a two-year-old gelding he'd purchased for next to nothing—Pax. He swore he'd never again allow anyone to own or control his horses or him. He rode for no one other than himself. Both the sponsor's

representative and the rider who had caused the fatal fall had avoided Ronin like the plague ever since.

As he released her mouth, Ronin could see tears rolling quietly down Devon's face. "It was a long time ago," he whispered, leaning his forehead against hers.

"I don't think you ever get over something like that. You learn to live with it, but the scar remains."

"Devon Cooper... I should warn you to run while you still can."

"From what? You?"

Still keeping their foreheads together, he nodded. "Although, to be honest, it wouldn't do you any good. I'd just come after you. My family has always said that our men are born knowing their soul mates. They spend their lives searching for her. Oftentimes she is not aware of their connection and then it is up to the man to find ways to help her accept her fate."

He grinned as he kissed the tip of her nose.

"So what you're telling me is that being boorish runs in your family?"

He nodded. "I'm afraid so. It's in our DNA. My paternal grandmother with the wooden spoon? She used to tell me when I was tomcatting around that someday my soul would recognize my mate and that I'd play hell getting her."

Devon seemed at a loss for words.

Taking advantage of her silence, Ronin captured her mouth once again.



Devon had a fleeting thought that she was becoming far too accustomed to Ronin's mouth being on hers. Not only did the man have great hands, but he was also a superior kisser. He kissed her like it was the only thing on his mind. It seemed his only concern was eliciting her response to that kiss.

“Did your grandmother give you any advice for winning over this soul mate of yours?”

He shook his head. “She refused to help me. She said that women had to stick together. But my grandfather had more than a few good ideas. I believe he knew from the get-go that my grandmother was his. She had no interest in getting involved with him, but in the end, he won her over. They had a wonderful, happy life.”

Devon grinned; she knew this was an outrageous conversation, but she couldn’t help herself. “And what were his ideas for persuading an unwilling soul mate?”

He shook his head, grinning at her. “No way. I have no intention of telling you just so you can formulate a plan to ensure all my plans fail.”

“So, you think it’s me?”

He shook his head. Devon wasn’t quite prepared for how devastating the negative gesture felt, until he spoke and she realized she had misinterpreted its meaning.

“There’s no thinking involved. I’m quite certain it’s you.”

Devon laughed nervously. “I didn’t even think you knew my name until last night.”

“I told you; I’ve been watching you and having fantasies of getting you into my bed for quite some time. But I didn’t know you were my soul mate until last night.”

“At what point did you figure that out?”

“Right about the time your knee connected with my balls. By the way, you try that stunt again and you won’t sit for a week.”

The low rumble that she was beginning to recognize as some kind of hum that only she could hear happened again. It shouldn’t have caused a rush of lust, warm and deep, to surge through her, but it did.

Ronin helped Devon up so they could stretch their legs and check on the horses. He took her forward so that they could watch the sunrise together through one of the plane’s

windows. She stood, her back to his front, in the circle of his arms, quiet as the indigo night was replaced with pale purple that faded gradually to blue and then the pinks and reds of dawn.

Standing thus, realization settled deep and satisfying within her soul. Nothing had felt quite as right as this... Ronin's arms, Ronin's strength, Ronin's care... in a long, long time.

## CHAPTER 4



Enjoying the strength of his embrace as he pointed out several things he wanted her to see, Devon was disappointed when the call came over the speakers that the riders and support staff should return to their seats and prepare for landing. They made a last check on the horses, both sitting down as the plane began its long descent into the Toronto airport.

Devon wasn't at all surprised when Ronin took her hand in his and began soothing her fear. It was the easiest touchdown she'd ever experienced.

Devon and Ronin sat as the other riders disembarked. Both stayed on board until the horses began to be unloaded by the airport personnel.

"Thank you again, Ronin. I was really dreading this flight. Please don't feel like you need to take me to dinner tonight."

Ronin took hold of her upper arm and turned her to face him. "Don't, Devon. Remember what I told you about running from me: I'll just come after you. Then, when I catch you—and never doubt that I will—there will be consequences for your behavior."

He really was getting a bit over-the-top with his alpha-male behavior. The idea of being with a man who could be a true partner and who could, at times, take the lead was more than a little bit seductive. But she didn't know that Ronin could be that man. She needed to get a handle on this and on her burgeoning feelings for him.

“Just for your information, your behavior is moving past boorish and bordering on Neanderthal. Again, thank you for your help on the flight, but...”

He cut off her argument with a kiss, ignoring her struggles and deepening it until she sagged into his body and into the kiss itself. *Maybe he could be that man.*

By all appearances far too pleased with himself and the success of that kiss, he said, “Let’s go get the horses settled and I’ll drop you at your hotel.”

“If you think that kissing me to shut me up is going to work...”

He kissed her again and left no doubt in her mind as to who was kissing whom. He lifted his face a few inches from hers. “I don’t know, seems to be working fairly well.”

“And what happens when it doesn’t?”

He chuckled and ran his hand down to cup her backside and then patted it. “Then I’ll have to use something other than my mouth to get you to mind.”

He wrapped his arm around her waist and they headed towards the horses, all of whom seemed to be completely unfazed by the trip. They watched as the government employees loaded them into the transport vehicles.

Once they were on their way, Ronin guided her toward the private hangar where customs had set up a special check for the riders. Devon made note that most of the officials seemed to know and like Ronin. They teased him about illegal contraband and bribes, which seemed a bit odd. He directed them to his duffle, which they opened, squealing as they saw the Frazer’s chocolates he’d brought them.

She laughed and looked at him questioningly.

“Customs officials do a hard job with little thanks. They have to find and confiscate contraband. If it’s foodstuffs they just get tossed. So I always find the country’s best chocolate and bring some in. Chocolate is the universal language.” He shrugged his shoulders. “Seems the least I can do.”



Having cleared customs, they proceeded to the long-term parking lot. Devon had automatically headed towards the taxi queue until once again Ronin placed his arm around her waist and reminded her that he was driving her to her hotel.

Toronto was a good-sized airport but really lovely. As they entered long-term parking, she saw several of the other riders from the team. There were some raised eyebrows, but no one said a word. Not only was Ronin the captain of the team, but he was also a natural leader, and one who the team members not only liked, but respected.

“I’ll drive. I had my kid brother leave my vehicle here.”

“Look, Ronin, last night was... Well, I’m not sure how to classify last night. But you shouldn’t feel like I will hold you to anything you said.”

“As I recall, I did most of the holding. I spoke nothing but truth last night. I’ve always known I had a soul mate and when I realized it was you, I started making plans to persuade you of the same. So, you can be the stubborn Texas cowgirl, or you can be my good girl and just give in. As I said, I’ll lead, you’ll follow, and it’ll be easy. But I have no problem *making* you follow if that’s what it takes.”

He came around the Range Rover and escorted her to the passenger side. He took her head in his hands and kissed her thoroughly. Devon thought if he hadn’t had her pinned against the car and hadn’t been holding her, her knees might well have buckled.

“Now, be a good girl and get in the Rover and I’ll take you to your hotel.”

He opened the door and waited for her to get in. As she turned her back, he swatted her rump with a bit more sting than affection. He went around the front of the vehicle and got in. Devon was still sitting there trying to figure out how she should respond to him. Hell, she was still trying to figure out how she was feeling.

He reached across, kissed her, and buckled her seat belt.

“Ronin, could we go to the event site first? I just want to make sure Dreamer is okay.”

“We can if you’re not too tired. I was going to go after I dropped you off, but if you’d rather go first, we can do that.”

“Thanks, I would.” As they drove to the show grounds, Ronin pointed out various sights and tried to help her get acclimated to the city and the surrounding area.

Devon enjoyed just watching him drive. He’d rolled up his sleeves to reveal well-developed forearms, and his strong hands held the wheel steady. She found it hard to focus on what he was trying to show her. It was far more pleasurable to watch the muscles in his hands and arms flex and listen to the sound of his voice.

He pulled up to the showgrounds and was immediately waved through the gate. From there, he made his way to the visiting stalls first. She sensed that he understood that she would relax once she saw Dreamer settled in his stall.

At the stalls, she got out and found Dreamer napping. When she opened the stall door, Dreamer rolled up on his side, but made no move to get to his feet. She walked over, knelt down beside him and rubbed his face. She stood up and could see he’d had some water and food. Now he needed to rest.

“You be a good boy. I’ll see you later.”

“He trusts you,” said Ronin approvingly.

“Of course, he does. He’s known me his whole life.”

“You raised him?”

“Yes. I was there the night he was born. I made the deal to buy him before he ever got on his feet.”

Ronin smiled. “He was lucky to have found you. Now let’s go check on Pax.”

They found Pax tied to one of the wash racks. Devon was surprised that Ronin laughed. He patted the big horse’s rump with far more affection than he’d swatted hers earlier. “What did you do this time?”

One of the grooms came out. “I swear to God, Gutherie, I’m going to kill that nasty beast of yours. The stalls were all set up and ready to go. He goes in, deliberately tips the water over, tears down the hay net and throws it at one of the newbies, and then proceeds to terrorize people.”

“Come on, Mic. You know he doesn’t mean anything by it. Obviously, something in his stall wasn’t right.” Ronin entered the stall and then returned with one of the rope hay nets in his hand. “You know he hates these things. That’s why I bought him the bags. And it has some grass hay. He doesn’t like grass hay. Go get me one of the hay bags filled with alfalfa.”

Mic took the hay net and headed for the feed area. Ronin grinned at Devon. “As I said, he’s not too popular with our grooms. But he likes things a certain way and when he doesn’t get them, he acts out.”

“Kind of like his owner?” Devon teased.

“That’s the sass you warned me about, right?” he laughed. Ronin went back into the stall and finished spreading the bedding, then filled the water bucket. Mic returned with the hay bag and handed it to Ronin to hang in the stall.

Ronin called to her, “Devon, would you mind grabbing Pax for me?”

“Ronin, he’s in a mood, maybe you should handle him,” said Mic worriedly.

“She’ll be fine. She’s a good hand with a horse, and Pax likes her.”

Devon untied Pax and whispered to him, “You’d better behave. He tells me if I don’t, he’ll spank me.”

The big horse looked over at Ronin and then dropped his head to her eye level and rubbed it against her. Devon led him to his stall, went in with him and removed his halter when Ronin closed the stall door.

“Thanks, Mic. We’ve got it from here. Why don’t you take off? Give your pretty girl a hug and a kiss from me and don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.”

“No way, Ronin. If she thinks she has a prayer at a hug, or a kiss, or more from you, I’ll lose her for sure.” They both laughed. He started to leave, but turned back, “Just so you know, the rumor mill has kicked into high gear about a cozy overnight flight between the two of you.” With that statement, Mic took off for his car and home.

Devon cringed.

Ronin pulled her into his embrace saying, “It’s all right, Devon. People were going to find out. And in my less than sober moments I haven’t exactly made it a secret that I would like to be sharing your bed.”

“Oh, that’s just great. The demonstration support rider and the leader of the mighty Canadian team. Just what I need. And on his home turf. Should I expect paparazzi at my hotel?”

Devon was joking. There was no reason to think anyone would be waiting. For the most part, the American press ignored equestrian sports unless there was a huge scandal. In other countries, horse-related activities drew the same kind of interest and scrutiny as other sports.

“I hadn’t thought about that. Maybe it’s best if you stay with me from the get-go.”

“I’ll be fine at the hotel. I can take a taxi from here. No reason to give them anything to write about.”

“There’s no need for a taxi. I’ll make sure you aren’t bothered.” He kissed her lightly and rubbed one of her hands with his thumb trying to re-instill some of the calm she’d had before.

Ronin headed out but didn’t head back the way he’d come. “Isn’t the hotel back in the city?”

“Yes, but my place is in the opposite direction. Now before you go getting all out of sorts with me, it really will be quieter and fewer people will bother you. If you insist, I’ll even let you get set up in the guest room to start.”

“To start? *Boorish.*”

## CHAPTER 5



*R*onin could tell she was moving from aggravated to annoyed. He placed a hand on her upper thigh. “Devon, I’ve made no secret about what I want. I’m accustomed to getting it.”

“Jesus, you’re an arrogant bastard. Take me to the hotel now, or I’ll get out of this vehicle and call a cab at the next stop sign.”

He knew she had to be exhausted and didn’t want to fight with her. He started the low-pitched hum to help calm her.

“Arrogant I may well be. But I’ll have you know my parents were married by the time I was born.” He laughed aloud. “Of course, one doesn’t want to count the number of months between when I was born and when my parents got married. It was a little bit short of nine.”

He watched as she began to grin in spite of herself and then lost control and laughed with him. “Really? Do tell.”

“My father, like all the men in my family, knew his mate almost from the moment he set eyes on her. And he knew the pretty girl who was visiting the area as an exchange teacher was her. He romanced her into his bed and convinced her he didn’t need a condom. I think he told her that virgins couldn’t get pregnant their first time. She got pregnant with me and my father convinced her to marry him.”

“How?”

“I think there was a shotgun involved, only it was pointed, figuratively you understand, at my mom.”

“And how did she feel about that?” Devon asked, fascinated.

“She was none too happy about it. Like certain other females of my acquaintance, she was from Texas. Her plan was to stay until the baby was born and then leave my father and raise me on her own. She had planned to spend her life being an exchange teacher all over the world and figured she’d just drag me along.”

“Obviously he convinced her to stay. And I suppose you’ll tell me they lived happily ever after.”

“Oh, they did. They’re absolutely wild about each other to this day. But nope, I was born and when I was old enough to travel, my mother packed us up and left while my father was out moving sheep from one pasture to another. Did I tell you I grew up on a sheep farm? My parents still own it.

Anyway, she made it to the airplane and was on the runway when the plane was called back. My mom said she was shocked when my dad stalked down the aisleway and took the both of us off the plane. The story goes that by the time they got back to the farm, my mom couldn’t sit down too well. And nine months after that, my brother was born.”

“I’m not sure that’s a heritage to be proud of.”

“Wait until you meet my folks. You’ll see. My dad knew they were soul mates, he just had to convince my mom. Ask her. She’ll tell you quite plainly that he’s the love of her life and she’s so glad he came after us.”

“But what about her plans to travel and see the world?”

“Don’t get me wrong, my father is head of the household, but every year after the shearing and lambing is done, they get a map out and my mom closes her eyes and points. They go off on a private vacation, just the two of them.” Ronin laughed again. “For the first few trips, my mom would deliver a baby about nine months later.”

“And that’s your idea of romantic? He drags her off a plane, beats her, and keeps her knocked up?” Devon said, trying to sound disapproving.

“That, Devon, is most alpha male’s idea of romance. If you can’t reason with her with what’s between her ears, you use a combination of what’s between her legs and yours and supplement it with warming her backside when warranted.”

“Boorish Neanderthal.”

He laughed out loud and squeezed her thigh. “You’re catching on. See, there’s no escape, this behavior is not only accepted in my family but actively encouraged.”

He turned on an unmarked dirt road that wove through beautiful open country with rolling green hills. “This is beautiful. Is your place close to here?” she asked.

“This is my place.”

As they made a curve in the road, suddenly there was beautiful white vinyl fencing six or seven feet high. The road itself was blocked by an elaborate wrought iron gate that was like a piece of art. Scroll work was intermixed with wild horses running across the gate itself. The arch over the gate had the name of his farm, Sauvage. He saw her look up at the arch as he pressed the button to open the gate automatically.

“Sauvage. It’s French for wild. It’s how my grandmother told me to live my life—wild and passionate.”

“You’re really close to your family, aren’t you?” She was surprised.

This was a side of Ronin she hadn’t expected.

“Yes. Are you close to yours?”

“Not really. My parents have been dead so long, I don’t remember them. My grandmother, who died three years ago, was the one who raised me. We were very close. I miss her.”

He stopped, leaned over and kissed her reassuringly and increased the hum. “I’m sure our grandmothers are up there becoming friends. My Nana is probably reassuring her that her grandson can behave crudely, but really isn’t a bad fellow. And the rest of my family is going to adore you.”

He put the vehicle in gear and continued down the road.

“And what about those Neanderthal tendencies?”

“I’m afraid you’re stuck with those.”

Devon laughed. “God, you are absolutely unrepentant.”

“I have nothing to repent. I’ve never lied to or led a girl on. As I said last night, with too much booze and on a high from a win, I can behave in a less than socially acceptable manner, but I’ve never done any damage to any of the girls I’ve been involved with.” They pulled up to a beautiful Victorian cottage.

“This isn’t at all what I expected.”

“Did you think I’d live in a tent?”

“No, but something more modern with lots of steel and glass.”

“It was here when I bought the property and I had it restored. It’s not big, but it’s comfortable and I think it suits the surroundings. You saw we have large pastures and over there is the barn and arena. If Dreamer is a social fellow, he can go out with some of the other horses. If not, he can have one of the private paddocks.”

“That won’t be an issue. I’m only here for the event.”

He laughed and helped her out of the car, pulling her close and kissing her. “You keep telling yourself that, sweetheart. My mom told herself that; she’s been here forty years and gave birth to six boys in the first decade.”

As if he had heard him speak of them, his younger brother, Gage, came barreling up to him.

“You’re home! Thank God. You can feed the livestock while I head into town to get laid.”

Ronin stepped a bit to the side so that Gage could see he wasn’t alone.

“Shit, Ronin. You must be Devon. I’m Gage. You didn’t tell me you were bringing her home with you today.”

Ronin looked down at her. “I told you; Neanderthal tendencies run strong in my family.” He grinned at his little



brother. “Devon, this is my baby brother, Gage. I suspect your way of curing me of my inappropriately boorish behavior will work on him as well.”

Devon laughed out loud and extended her hand to Ronin’s brother. “Nice to meet you, Gage. I was just explaining to your brother that I didn’t really need to worry much where Dreamer would spend his off time because I’ll only be here two weeks.”

Gage looked over her head at his brother, “Two weeks? Are you guys going somewhere? I thought this event was the last event this season.”

Ronin laughed. “It is, and we aren’t planning to go anywhere. Devon’s just having trouble getting on board with the whole soul mate concept.”

“Ah,” Gage said. “Our mom had some issues around that, but she’s been here ever since dad got her preggers with Ronin.”

“That was forty years ago. I doubt that would work as well these days.”

“You’d be surprised. The men in our family like to cling slavishly to our old-fashioned notions and ways. A good love story starring my big brother? My money is on him. But I’ll leave the two of you to work that out. You wouldn’t mind if I’m not back to feed in the morning, right?”

Gage sprinted to his car before Ronin could answer.

“If he lives here, why wouldn’t he be back tonight?” Ronin gave her a knowing look with an arched eyebrow. “Ahhh... let me guess: not allowed to bring girls here?”

Ronin nodded. “Standing house rule. You don’t bring casual home. If it gets serious, then it’s fine. For the record, you’ll be the first woman to stay here since we restored the place.”

He grabbed both sets of bags and ushered Devon into the house. It was large, bright, and open. The kitchen was gorgeous, and she had a quick flash of cooking in it. She shook her head to dispel the image. She wouldn’t be here that long.

Ronin leaned down and kissed her. “Take a look around and get comfy. I’m going to put the bags up. You probably ought to think about taking a nap and getting acclimated to this time zone.”

Devon watched him disappear into what she assumed was the primary suite. When he came back out, neither his bag nor hers was in his hands.

“That’s a pretty big assumption, Gutherie. Pushing just past boorish.”

He chuckled and crossed to where she stood. “The master bedroom has the most comfortable bed in the house. Besides Gage’s room, it’s the only one with a private bath. I’ll sleep in one of the other rooms or on the couch until you invite me to your bed.”

He pulled her against his body and was gratified to find that she didn’t shy away from the aroused state of his cock that she had to be able to feel. He patted her bottom affectionately. He couldn’t wait to get his hands on her naked body.

“Now, why don’t you go in, take a shower if you like, and take a rest. I’ll use the guest bath and do the same. I don’t know about you, but I’m beat. When we wake up, we can decide if we want to go back into town to eat or fix something here.”

She tried to disengage from his embrace, but he held her fast. “I think it’s probably best if I stay at the hotel. I think I may have given you the wrong impression.”

He laughed and kissed her. “No, you’ve been quite clear. You are having trouble with being my soul mate. I’ll give you all the time you need to get used to the idea, but you’ll do that with me in attendance and doing everything I can to help you to accept the inevitable. Remember, Devon, I can be a seductive sonofabitch when I want. And I’ve never wanted anything half as much as I want you.”

“What’s to stop me from waiting until you’re asleep and calling a cab?”

“Bad plan. First, you don’t have the gate code. That means you’d have to walk to the gate. By the time you could walk up there, I’d catch up with you. If I have to come after you and drag you home, you’ll find yourself over my knee for a spanking so fast it’ll make your head spin. I’m my father’s son. While I might not get you pregnant that first night, I’d sure as hell put enough sting in that pretty little tail of yours to make you think twice before doing it again.”

She started to protest, so he kissed her again. This time it was no easy-going, lightly romantic kiss. It was full of passion and lust. His tongue darted between her teeth to do battle with hers.



Devon wanted to deny to herself the effect his words had on her, but she couldn’t. The words, combined with the depth and melodic quality of his voice along with his sexy accent and the hum he seemed to create made everything in her body cry out to submit to him.

She melted into him as he cupped her backside, pulling her even closer. She had no doubt that the rumors regarding his size were true. It crossed her mind that she wasn’t sure she’d ever accommodated a man that big and that it had been more than a year since she’d accommodated anyone at all.

His mouth left hers and he rained kisses all over her face and then down the side of her neck and up to her ear lobe that he nipped as he rocked his hips into hers. He wasn’t trying to dry hump her, more that he was giving her a taste of what pleasures he could offer. And he called her a tease.

“Please, Devon. Just behave. I don’t want to have to punish you before I pleasure you. Be a good girl?” She looked up at him and nodded. He kissed her on her forehead, turned her towards the primary suite, giving her a little swat. “Sweet dreams.”

“Should I dream of you?” she quipped.

“Baby, what I plan to do with you is a lot of things, but sweet isn’t among them—at least not for a while.”

She laughed but continued into the bedroom.

## CHAPTER 6



Devon turned on the shower in Ronin's bath. It was huge and could easily accommodate several people. She had thought about just lying down on top of the bed with her clothes on, but he'd turned the covers down, making it far too inviting.

She would shower the day off, and then climb in.

When she went in the bath, the shower was too much to resist with its multiple shower heads including a rainfall setting. She got in and allowed the warm water to just pour down on her.

Her nipples were stiff and a bit sore. They'd been aroused since sometime yesterday and being encased in a lace bra hadn't helped.

She soaped her body all over, enjoying the tea tree oil soap. She lingered probably more than was necessary on her breasts and nether regions, but that, too, felt so good. The hand-held sprayer was incredibly powerful. The urge to use it to blast away at her clit and alleviate her arousal was too tempting to deny. She turned it on her clit and came almost immediately. Normally, a simple climax would take care of her needs, but this seemed only to make things worse.

She realized it wasn't a high-powered water spray she wanted, or even having her clit used to make her come. Rather, it was a certain eventer's cock fucking her pussy that she needed.

She was glad he couldn't see her now. Evidence of her desire for him would only encourage him. She found it flattering that he'd brought her to his home and spoke of a future together, but they didn't know enough about each other yet to consider any kind of long-term partnership. Perhaps if he was serious, staying here with him would provide her with some additional, needed insight.

She walked out of the bathroom and crawled into Ronin's bed naked, stretching herself out languorously in the soft, clean sheets. She allowed herself a brief moment to wish he was lying close beside her.

*Girl, at least be honest with yourself. You don't want him lying next to you, you want him fitting his cock into your pussy and fucking you—and not all that gently.*



Sleep did not come easily to Ronin. His tepid shower had done him little good. He was clean, but he had a raging hard-on and the object of all that lust was most likely asleep in his bed. He thought about joining her there and encouraging the response he'd felt in her several times. He could probably seduce her into letting him have his way with her. Using his hum to soothe her had been successful. Most likely it could be used to elicit arousal, as well.

He knew she had a willful streak a mile wide. It allowed her to be a tough competitor, but it would also give her the internal strength to fight what was happening between them.

Ronin knew he would eventually persuade her that they were soul mates, but not everyone had been raised to believe in soul mates. Even those who had been weren't always quick to subscribe to the idea that one should accept their destiny and happily move forward.

Devon was much like his mom that way.

Long-term and strategic thinking were needed here. This was much more complex than just how to get between her legs and take both of them to heights of pleasure neither had ever

known. He needed her to make a choice to commit to him. But he knew if he pushed her too hard, or too fast, there was a very good chance her pride and that damn willful streak might cause her to walk away. He didn't want to damage her spirit, but she needed to learn to yield to him.

She was right though; it wasn't forty years ago. He doubted he could get anyone to call back a plane so he could go claim his woman. He smiled as he always did at the thought of his dad bringing his mom back home. To this day, his mom would blush whenever anyone brought that subject up.

His father would simply smile and pat her backside lovingly. He and his brothers had been raised to think that a man who truly loved his wife loved her enough to take her over his knee for a little old-fashioned discipline when called for. They were also raised to believe that any man who did so needed to understand what his woman needed after that: reassurance that she was loved and forgiven.

He smiled remembering when he'd figured out the reason his mother often seemed to be a bit sore after an argument with her husband. He had also recognized his father fussing over and spoiling her.

The boys had never actually caught their parents going at it, but certainly they had seen the loving caresses between their parents and were all taught to knock on their parents' bedroom door before entering.

He'd grown up knowing his parents had a healthy sex life. The thought of his parents' relationship made him smile. Certainly, that was the model upon which he wanted to base his own.

Devon was fast asleep when he entered the bedroom, humming to her so he could invade her dreams and wake her gently.

"Hey, sleepyhead. You probably need to wake up for a few hours or you're going to get your internal clock all screwed up."

Ronin sat on the edge of the bed in a pair of jeans and nothing else and pushed her hair away from her face. It was taking every ounce of strength and honor he had not to pull the covers back and slip between the sheets with her. He was unprepared when she reached up in a lazy stretch and wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling him down to kiss him. Her lips were soft and sweet and yielded easily to his.

He took her in his arms and pulled her partially into his lap. The sheet slipped away, and he was confronted with Devon's exquisite breasts.

They were large and firm with well-defined areola and nipples that were currently in an advanced state of arousal. The contrast between the deep pink hue of the areola and nipple and the creamy ivory of the skin of the breast itself was intoxicating. He noticed that there was only a faint tan line separating most of her chest from her breasts.

*Naughty girl. Someone's been sunbathing without a top.*

He longed to draw the sheet down and see if there was a more pronounced tan line from where a bikini bottom would have hidden her most feminine parts.

Devon's nakedness was doing nothing for the state of his own arousal except making it more pronounced. He was harder than he could ever remember being and he desperately wanted to get between her legs, mount her, and stroke her until they were both spent. He could only imagine what she would feel like pressed against him, her legs wrapped around him as he thrust repeatedly into her wet pussy. God, how he wanted to run his hand between her legs to check for the signs that she was aroused and ready for him.

He knew he should stop the hum he was using on her. It really was an unfair advantage. He had used it to soothe her in the plane. Now, he laced the sound with arousal and was rewarded with her heightened response.

"Devon, sweetheart. You need to wake up."

"No. I don't want to," she said. Her voice had a sleepy, sexy quality to it.



He chuckled and nuzzled her. “I know, baby, but you really need to wake up. You are far too tempting this way.”

She opened her eyes and looked deeply into his. Even though the sun was going down, there was enough light left for him to see that her pupils were dilated with arousal. She pulled herself closer to him and kissed him again. He was certain that when she realized that the sheet now only covered her from right above her mound, she’d want to go after his private parts again and not in the way he had fantasized about.

“Dev, if you don’t stop, I’m going to consider this an invitation into your bed and have my way with you.”

She smiled seductively and rubbed her nipples against his bare chest. “What’s stopping you?”

“The thought that you are only half awake and don’t know what you’re saying.”

She took his face in her hands and kissed him deeply. “Are you humming or something like that to me?”

He smiled. “Yes.”

“It’s nice.”

“It’s meant to reassure one’s mate and make her more receptive to his amorous intentions.”

“Amorous intentions? You mean, it’s supposed to be seductive as hell, so she’ll spread her legs more easily?”

“Sassing me is not your best idea at the moment.”

“Why ever not? I’m lying here naked in your lap. My nipples are so hard they hurt. I’m probably dripping all over your sheets from how wet I am. And that thing that’s defying gravity and pointing straight at me says you’re more than ready. So, since you’re not doing anything about any of that, I think this is a perfectly good time to sass you.”

“Do you now?” he said, pulling her fully onto his lap so she could feel his cock poking up, trying to get free and into her pussy. He pushed the sheet away and brought his fingers to her pussy.

She wasn't just wet, she was soaked. He stroked her outer lips and heard her moan deeply in pleasure. He started to hum again—a soothing, hypnotic sound from deep within his chest. It was said to be the sound of one heart calling to the other. He dipped his fingers into her only enough to pull some of her moisture out and coat her clit, which was distended and begging for attention.

“You're sure? I can wait.”

“Maybe you can, but I can't,” she said with a half-exasperated, half-lustful tone.

He picked her up and positioned her on her back more in the center of the bed. He unzipped his jeans and pulled them off.

Devon's eyes widened when she saw the size of his fully erect cock. What had been hinted at in his breeches and when she'd been close to him had been just that—a hint. It had not done justice to the size or girth that confronted her. And she realized he was uncircumcised. The hood had drawn completely back, exposing the entire head.

He saw her staring and grinned. “Never been with an uncut guy before?”

“Not that. It's the size of that thing. I really don't know that it's going to fit.”

“Don't worry, baby,” he said in a deeply seductive tone as he continued to hum. “I'll make it fit.”

He could sense she was truly nervous about her pussy being able to take all of him. He increased the rhythm of his hum. “I told you I'd be gentle. I will be as gentle as I can. It may be uncomfortable at first, but I'll give your pussy time to relax and accept me. It'll be good, baby, I promise.”

He stretched out beside her, knowing the easiest way for her to be as relaxed and open to him as possible was to see that she climaxed a couple of times.

He leaned over and kissed her mouth while his hand slid between her legs and began to rub her clit. Once again, he used his thumb in a pattern of circles as he had with her hand

to relax her on the plane. Only this time, the circles evoked a heightened sense of arousal.

Quickly Devon's breath became ragged and shortened as her body started to rush towards an orgasm. She moved her hips in rhythm with his thumb. As she started to come, he slipped two of his fingers in her sheath, causing her to cry out in ecstasy.

"There's my good girl," he murmured in her ear.

She was magnificent. Her response was more than he'd hoped for, especially for her first orgasm at his hands. He let her body start to settle, but before she could recover completely, he stilled his hand and sucked one of her nipples into his mouth. He nipped it gently, causing a sharp intake of her breath. He immediately soothed the nipple with his tongue and began sucking again.

She brought one of her hands up to play with her other nipple. The hum changed to a growl as he slapped her hand away. "No. These tits, this clit, and this pussy are now mine. You don't get to play with them unless I tell you to."

He could feel her body begin to tense and immediately resumed the hum. His mouth took possession of her other nipple, and he brought up his hand to play with the one not in his mouth. He moved one of his thighs between hers and brought it into direct contact with her pussy and clit, allowing her to move against him.

His cock was throbbing and straining to get into her. He increased the attention to her nipples and felt another orgasm start to build. He continued to play with her, alternating between soft suckling, deeper suckling, and the occasional nip or pinch. Once again, he was rewarded as she came, calling his name.

"Jesus, Ronin. Fuck me."

He chuckled deeply at her distress as he increased the hum.

"Please, Ronin, I need to have you inside me."

"Not nearly as much as I need to be inside you." He rolled over her, nudging her legs further apart, and settled himself in

the cradle of her hips. His cock probed to find her slit and once found, penetrated her deeply with one thrust.

She gasped and flexed her fingers into his back. “You said you were going to be gentle. You’re too big.” She started to struggle half-heartedly.

“Take it easy, sweetheart; give it a minute.”

He hummed to her more deeply and just lay quietly within her, letting her body relax and accept him. He murmured and hummed to her, bringing his hand between them to play with her breasts and nipples.

Ronin could hear the change in her breathing as her body started to strive towards another climax. He allowed her to move her hips and respond to his fondling. As she came again, she sank her teeth into the skin covering his collar bone.

Ronin moved his hands down to cup her ass and hold her still as he started to move within her. He hadn’t stroked more than three times when she came yet again.

His voice became deeper, the hum more pronounced as he whispered, “You are the most responsive woman I’ve ever fucked. You feel better than anything in my wildest dreams and fantasies.”

Knowing that she wasn’t scheduled to ride for almost a week, Ronin decided that even if he made her somewhat sore from his use, she’d be fine by the time of her performance.

He now held her close and started to thrust with more power, slowly increasing his speed. She tried to move with him, but he held her fast. He fucked her through another orgasm before he finally started the rhythm he knew would allow him to climax with her.

He continued to hum to her and murmur words of love and sex, reveling in her response. When they finally came together, he felt like he poured more of himself into her than he ever had with any other woman. She clung to him and seemed reluctant to have him leave her.

Finally, he slipped from her body and rolled over onto his back, pulling her into the crook of his shoulder so that she was

nestled against him with her body half on top of his. He wedged his leg between hers. He looked down at her and brushed her hair away from her face.

She smiled at him. “What happened to gentle?”

“Sweetheart, that was gentle. You wait until I get your pussy used to my cock, then I’ll give you that bit of rough and tumble you were looking for. I can’t wait to mount you properly and have at you.”

“Properly? That seemed pretty damn proper to me.”

He ran his hand down her back and fondled her backside. “Properly like a stud horse mounts his mare.”

She giggled. “You do realize I’m going to be sore as hell in the morning.”

His response was to give her a self-satisfied grin and kiss her.

“Try not to look so damn pleased with yourself.”

“I hate to tell you this, Devon, but you’re not nearly as sore as you’re going to be.” Her quiet laughter reassured him that they were right where they needed to be. “If you’ll let me up, I’ll go make us something to eat and bring it back here to you.”

“I can get up and help.”

“Oh no, you don’t. I finally got you into my bed. I’m not letting you out of it anytime soon.”

He kissed her, rolling off the bed, and realizing how serendipitous life could be. If he hadn’t been drunk, insulted her, and then defended her, who knew how long it would have taken to have her right where he wanted her.

## CHAPTER 7



Ronin had returned with their food and then proceeded to make love to her—more than once. He made no secret of his desire to mount her from behind.

“God, I want you on your hands and knees.”

“I don’t recall telling you no. It’s not a position I’ve favored in the past, but then, I think at this point I’m rather a slave to your lovemaking.”

The hum morphed into a brief chuckle before transitioning back.

“Baby, if you think I pound into you hard now, it’s nothing compared to what I’ll do to you on your hands and knees.”

Devon glories in his uninhibited sensuality and responded to his touch with unabandoned rapture.

She slept wrapped in Ronin’s embrace. Her first inkling of waking was the humming that both soothed and aroused her. She moved a little and was reassured to feel him spooning his front to her back. He’d slept with his arm draped over her side either traveling up to cradle one of her breasts or traveling down to cup her mons. As she had found several times during the night, his cock was hard and ready to go.

She smiled and allowed him to roll her onto her back again. Each time he mounted her had been less uncomfortable than the last. It was generally just as he pushed into her that caused any discomfort. He was as gentle as he could be, and she reveled in their lovemaking.

Once he was seated inside her, her pussy seemed to adjust and was able to take him. Ronin assured her that within a short amount of time, even the discomfort from his mounting her would go away and leave only the ecstasy they experienced when he fucked her. The physicality of their coupling was deeply satisfying, and she always climaxed several times before he sought his own release deep within her.

He nuzzled her as he ran his hand between her legs and checked to ensure that she was wet enough for him. She was, so he moved his hand up and briefly played with her clit before he raised it to play with one turgid nipple while his mouth captured the other.

She arched her back, pushing her nipple deeper into his mouth, spreading her legs in a blatant invitation. Once more he settled himself between them. This time, as he held her steady and thrust into her, she came a second time. Ronin smiled and increased the hum until it had invaded every pore of her being.

He began to stroke her hard, deep, and slow. She knew he would have his way and enjoy several more of her orgasms before allowing himself to plunge into her and pump his semen deep into her core. Her body had already learned his rhythm and never failed to climax with him, milking his cock in order to get every last drop.

Still inside her, he rolled over on his back, bringing her with him so that she lay directly on top of him. “Happy?” he said as the hum continued in the background.

“Yes, but that doesn’t mean I’m not going to make you pay for making me sore.”

“Me? You seem to forget, Ms. Cooper, that you’re the wanton hussy who couldn’t get enough of me and came more times than I can count.”

“As I recall, Mr. Gutherie, you seemed to greatly enjoy making me come that many times.”

He chuckled. “You have me there. Seeing and feeling you respond to me and orgasm so easily and so many times has

gotten to be quite the addiction for me. I fear I will never get my fill of you.”

“I don’t suppose there is any way I’m going back to the hotel?”

He shook his head.

“I think if I stay here everyone is going to figure out I’m not staying in the guest room.”

“That is a given. It won’t be five minutes before everyone and their brother knows we’re together. And if you don’t want people to know for sure how much you enjoy having me fuck you all night, then we’d best stay away from hotels.”

“Why is that?”

“The walls are too thin.”

“Boorish Neanderthal,” she laughed.

“Yes, but only in private with my woman.”

“And when did I agree to become your woman?”

“It was either the night you kneed me in the nuts for behaving badly in public or the time you came for me as I spilled myself in you the first time.”

She tried to wriggle off of him. Her efforts were rewarded with his hand connecting with her bottom in a less than affectionate manner.

“Ouch! That hurt.”

“It was supposed to. You don’t try to disengage from me when I’ve got my cock shoved up your pussy. You want off, you ask.”

“That is bullshit.” This time she used her considerable upper body strength, developed over years of riding, to try and remove herself from his cock. It didn’t work and she was rewarded with two more stinging swats to her bottom. “Knock it off, Ronin. I want up.”

He chuckled and started to hum at her. “What was it you told me that first night? Oh yes, people in hell want ice water



but that doesn't mean they get it. Now settle down, Devon."

"I want up."

"And I want you right where I have you. Sweetheart, I may not be as hard as I was before I came, but I'm still engorged. The best place for me to be is snuggled up in that pussy of yours."

She could feel the hum beginning to get through to her. She really didn't have a defense for it. The worst part was, he damn well knew it. She lay still for a moment and realized he was telling her the truth. He didn't feel as hard, but he probably was more comfortable with his cock in her pussy than not.

"You know that damn hum of yours makes it very difficult not to do what you want me to do."

He grinned at her. "Yes, sweetheart, I'm aware. I figure between the humming, the spanking, and the fucking, I just might be able to make you behave yourself."

"You don't have some kind of family magic that you can use to help with how sore I'm going to be, do you?"

"I may have a trick or two up my sleeve. And if you like I can call my mom and ask her."

Ronin laughed out loud as she felt a blush bloom across her cheeks.

"Don't you dare call your mother. And what would you say to her—'Hey mom, I fucked this girl so hard and so many times last night she's a bit sore. Know anything that'll help?'"

He increased the humming, soothing her ire. It seemed to Devon that he could change the vibration ever so subtly to accomplish pretty much anything.

"No. What I thought I'd do is tell her that I'd been a bit overly enthusiastic with my soul mate and did she know of anything that would help. Trust me, she'd see you as the injured party and me as the villain."

"Why would you even think your mother would know something like that?"

He laughed again. “Because I suspect my father is overly enthusiastic with my mom on a regular basis. And she must have something that helps as it doesn’t seem to last long, and she is never angry with him about it. But then he knows how to hum to her, as well.”

Devon laid her head on his chest and listened to the steady rhythm of his heart. Between that, the way he ran his hands soothingly up and down her spine, the time change, and the humming, sleep claimed her again in no time.

When she woke several hours later, she was alone in their bed, but there was a glass of juice, a chilled bottle of water and a note from Ronin telling her he’d gone out to feed the stock, she should take it easy in the house and he would be back shortly.

Devon stretched and sat up. Her feminine parts were definitely complaining to her about the amount of use they’d received the night before and the size of the tool that had been used.

She swung her legs over the edge of the bed, had to catch her breath from the soreness of her nether region and drained the glass of juice. She took a long swig of the water and then went into the bath to use the shower again.

Clean and feeling somewhat refreshed, she pulled on a pair of jeans, grabbed one of Ronin’s cotton shirts and pulled on her boots. She exited the house through the French doors of the primary bedroom, onto a private deck that had an intimate hot tub set up as well as a comfy seating area. She gingerly made her way down the three steps that led from the deck to a brick pathway and headed towards the barn.

She made it through the yard and onto the drive when she heard a car roll up. Turning, she watched as Gage hopped out and called to her, jogging over to join her. “Good morning, Devon. I’d ask how you were, but you look a bit tender.”

“That’s a nice word for it,” she said, unable to keep from blushing.

“Well, at least it means the big bad will be in a good mood.”

Devon laughed. “The big bad? That would be Ronin?”

“Apparently, you’ve never been on the wrong side of his temper or else you wouldn’t have to ask.”

“No, he just hums to me to get his way.”

“That’s how it is, eh? If he’s broken out the family hum, you may as well just give in. It’s said that no woman who’s ever heard it can escape its pull.”

“Hum?”

“Yeah. It’s something the male members of my family have been doing for generations. We tend to go after feisty mates, and it helps to...” Gage seemed to realize he may have painted himself into a corner.

“I believe your brother said it was to reassure one’s mate and make her more receptive to his amorous intentions.”

“He actually said that to you?”

“Yes, but don’t think for one minute I don’t know that what it really does is seduce the hell out of a woman so the male members of your family can get her on her back with her legs spread.”

She pivoted on her heel and started back toward the house. She was getting a bit annoyed in spite of her general good mood. Gage grabbed her by the arm and spun her around so that he was now between her and the house.

“Devon, you’ve got it all wrong. The hum doesn’t work on anyone but your true soul mate. Other people can’t hear it, only the one you are meant to be with.”

He stopped as if he thought he’d said too much and then continued in a much lighter vein, “Besides you’ve seen the size of his cock. He doesn’t need to hum at girls to get them lined up to spread their legs and get that thing in their pussies.”

Devon suppressed her grin as she saw Ronin exiting the barn, headed toward them. She had a sneaky suspicion that

he'd overheard at least part of her conversation with Gage and would be none too happy with his little brother's behavior.

Ronin slapped his younger brother upside the head. "Jesus, Gage, did Nana not use her wooden spoon on you enough times?" growled Ronin as he walked up to join Devon, wrapping his arms around her and starting to hum.

"Me? The baby of the family? By the time I came along, she didn't have any left. She'd used them all up on the rest of you. You most especially, Ronin."

Devon laughed. She liked Gage. She suspected he often liked to poke at his older brother just for sport. "Be nice. I wanted to see the barn."

"You don't look like you're in any shape to be making a tour. Didn't you see my note?"

"Yes, I did."

"Did you miss the part where I told you to take it easy up at the house?"

"No, I did not."

"Then you'll understand why I'm trying to figure out why you didn't do as you were told."

"I've got a hot news flash for you, I'm not in the habit of doing as I'm told."

Gage started to quietly back away towards the barn. He was unprepared for Devon stomping on Ronin's instep forcing him to loosen his grip on her. Gage started laughing.

Ronin glared at him.

"Apparently you weren't using the hum that time big brother. You tell him, Dev. You remind him that he doesn't run the world."

"Oh, but I do, little brother. At least this little portion of it. I can kick your ass any day of the week, and you don't need to encourage my woman to misbehave. As for you," he said turning on Devon, "you might want to consider options for dealing with me that won't get your sexy ass spanked."

Devon could feel her face turn beet red. It was one thing to have him talk about spanking her when it was just the two of them; it was another thing entirely to have him say it in front of others.

She turned on her heel to leave and go back to the house, but never made it that far. She could hear the hum start and turned to face him. “Don’t you start that bullshit hum thing with me.”

She could feel the relaxing waves wash over her. It really was impossible to ignore and gave him a decidedly unfair advantage. “Stop it, Ronin.” The hum increased and the vibrato changed from one that was wholly pacifying to one that calmed her temper and ignited her libido. “No!”

Ronin gathered her to him, “Yes,” he said as he nuzzled her neck.

“It’s not fair,” she said plaintively.

“I know,” he murmured, as he kissed her mouth. “But it is effective. Do you think you can go back up to the house, take off your boots and relax while we finish up down here or do I need to take you up there and deal with your unwillingness to do as you’re told?”

She searched his face and was quite certain that he would have no compunction about spanking her whether or not Gage was around if she didn’t give in to him. “Can’t I just sit on a hay bale down here with you?”

“No, you’ll go back up to the house and behave.”

She could feel her anger start to rise again but it was immediately beat back by the hum he sent her in response. She groaned. “This is so not fair.”

Ronin laughed at her, “I know, and even gelding me wouldn’t help.”

She blushed again but couldn’t quite suppress her smile. He kissed the tip of her nose, turned her toward the house and gave her an affectionate swat to start her in the right direction.



Gage was in awe at the changes in Ronin. Ronin had noticed Devon several months ago and had shown Gage a video of her riding. The girl could ride and had an impressive horse.

When Gage had made a joke that he wouldn't mind having those legs wrapped around him, Ronin had not been pleased. He made it clear that Devon Cooper was off limits and that he had plans for her. Over the next few months, Ronin often brought up the blonde Texas cowgirl. Enough times that his family had begun to suspect that he'd finally located his soul mate.

Gage knew that Ronin had planned to make a play for her before the event in Toronto, hoping to be able to solidify the relationship here at home. He'd even talked about making a move in Helsinki where they would both be *strangers in a strange land*. He walked up and put his hand on Ronin's shoulder.

"She's going to be a handful."

Ronin grinned at him. "I know, but she's worth it."

"She wanted to geld you? Was that before or after last night?"

Ronin laughed at his youngest brother's teasing. "Before."

"Glad to hear it was before. Although from the way she's walking, you might want to be a little worried that she's reconsidering that option."

Ronin laughed, "No, little brother, after last night that's the last thing she wants to do."

Gage laughed with him. "Do you need me to take off and stay at the folks' for a while until she gets settled in?"

Ronin seemed to think about it. "I hate to kick you out, but seriously, do not encourage her to misbehave."

"I won't. You know at some point she's going to and you're going to have to take her in hand. It just might be easier

on her if I'm not here.”

“Could be. I think once she's found herself over my knee a few times, she'll settle pretty quick.”

“So, it shouldn't be too long.” Gage laughed. “I don't think she's going to yield as easily as you think. I can still feed and do the work, just maybe not be in the house for a few weeks. Or maybe months? I hope for your sake she does settle quickly. The nice thing is she seems really sensitive to the hum.”

Ronin chuckled. “You have no idea, baby brother. You have no idea.”

## CHAPTER 8



*T*he closer Devon got to the house, the more she started to fume.

*Who does he think he is, telling me what to do?* It was hard sustaining any kind of anger with that damn hum buzzing through her whole body. It did seem to have a proximity range, but it seemed to be a fairly wide area in which she was susceptible. Certainly, anywhere in the house would work for him.

She ran the past two days through her mind. She had to admit she found Ronin wildly attractive and the story he spun about soul mates spoke to the core of who she was. But she didn't believe in fairytales or happily ever afters anymore. She'd kissed too many frogs who either never changed into a prince or if they did, changed back right after they'd been 'kissed.' And lord knows he'd been 'kissed' last night. Again, and again, and again.

As sore as she admittedly was, she wanted to check on Dreamer. And she really needed to check into the hotel. She figured part of the reason Ronin wanted to drive was he thought she would be tired from the long trip but she wasn't. She was used to long trips, and she'd be fine.

Instead of staying at the cottage as directed, Devon grabbed her bag and Ronin's keys and headed out to his Range Rover. She took a minute to acclimate herself with the fancy controls and locate the electronic remote for the gate. She started the Rover, backed out and headed down the drive.





Gage looked up just in time to see the gate close behind her. “Uh, Ronin? About Devon settling quickly... You might want to ask yourself where she’s planning to settle.”

Ronin came out of the barn and swore under his breath. “Let’s finish here and go get cleaned up. She’s either headed to check on Dreamer, or to the hotel. Either of which will earn her a couple of well-placed swats on her cute little ass.”

“And what happens then?”

“You may want to stay with the folks. There will be a lot of wailing and crying before I’m done introducing my woman to the consequences of disobeying me.”

“Come on, Ronin. You might want to go easy on her. She’s like a wild filly. She needs gentling as much as taming.”

“If she’s run off, she’ll get plenty of gentling once I’ve tamed her. And if you want to compare Devon to a mustang, I’d be careful. Most women don’t like being compared to a horse. Devon is an intelligent, beautiful woman. I don’t think you want her to believe you don’t think she’s smarter than a horse. I warned her what I’d do. If her things are still in our room, she’s just gone to see Dreamer. But I don’t want her driving when she’s in an unfamiliar place and tired after a long flight. So, as I said, she’s going to get her first taste of discipline from me, regardless.”

After they got themselves cleaned up, Gage offered to drive Ronin to the showgrounds. They reached the gate, and the guard assured them that the pretty Texas rider with the appaloosa was still at the barns.

Ronin spotted his Range Rover and had Gage park next to it. He looked in the windows and spotted her bag. If she wanted to keep their relationship quiet, she had picked the wrong time and the wrong venue to challenge him. Ronin sent Gage back to the farm to pack a few things and told him he’d let him know when it was safe to return home.

Ronin chuckled as Gage shook his head at Devon's foolishness. She was about to find out in no uncertain terms that he was not a man to be trifled with and that he didn't make idle threats.



The event didn't start until the following week, but the horses needed time to get used to the change in climate as well as their new surroundings. Devon was just coming out of Dreamer's stall when she realized how still the barn had become. Normally it was alive and bustling as people exercised horses, groomed them, and talked amongst themselves.

She looked up to see one of the U.S. team's event riders staring at her. She couldn't imagine why until she realized he was actually staring past her.

A small, niggling feeling of dread started that was only increased when she could suddenly hear a discordant version of the hum being sent in her direction.

She squared her shoulders and turned to face him. "Hello, Ronin."

He said nothing as he approached her. She stood her ground. The hum increased and was rather unsettling. No one who was witness said a word or made a move. Dreamer, sensing something was amiss, stuck his head out of his stall and then pinned his ears at Ronin.

Ronin reached out and placed his hand on the horse's head between his eyes and said quietly, "She's all right, son. We just need to sort a few things out. But she'll be fine. You can trust her with me."

Dreamer's ears came forward, he reached out and nudged Devon but then retreated to his hay bag to munch.

"That hum must work on horses as well."

Ronin lowered his voice. "No, love, only soul mates. You want to take my arm and walk out of here? Or would you

prefer that I toss you over my shoulder and carry you out?”

“You wouldn’t dare.”

The sentence had barely left her lips when Ronin bent at the knees, put his shoulder into her middle and stood upright, with the result being that she was draped over his shoulder like a sack of grain. “Never, ever dare me, sweetheart.”

“Ronin! Damn it; put me down.”

“I will when we get home, only you’re not going to like where I put you or what happens after that.”

“Now, see here, Gutherie,” started one of the French riders coming up behind him.

Ronin spun on his heel and stared the Frenchman down. “This isn’t your concern, Jean Paul. This is between my woman and me.”

“I’m so sorry. I didn’t know. I mean there was a rumor but then she showed up without you,” Jean Paul stammered as he backed away.

Ronin turned with her slung over his shoulder as if she weighed nothing. Devon just wanted to bury her face in his back with her hair hanging down.

“Anybody else? No? Good.” Ronin spun back to the parking lot and continued to his vehicle.

“Put me down, you sonofabitch.” Devon was angry and humiliated but was also cognizant of the fact that Ronin wasn’t humming to her.

“I’m only going to say this once, Dev. If you don’t want me to give your backside a good hard swat while I have you slung over my shoulder, in front of the crowd that I’m sure is starting to gather, then you’d best hush and behave yourself when I put you in the Rover.”

He arrived at the vehicle, opened the passenger side door and set her on her feet. Kissing her briefly he whispered, “Get in now.”

She thought about defying him but realized that no good could come from doing so. With as much dignity as she could muster, she got in. Ronin reached across her and buckled her seatbelt before closing and locking the door. He walked around and got in, started the Range Rover up and headed back to his place.

“I’ll thank you to drop me at my hotel,” she said with as much ice in her voice as she could manage.

Ronin laughed. “Will you now? That’s not going to happen, and we both know it.”

“It damn sure will. Now stop this vehicle, let me get my bag, and I’ll be out of your hair.”



Ronin was surprised at the level of distress he could hear in her voice. Almost automatically, he began to send a soothing hum her way. Her body responded almost immediately.

Controlling his temper, he asked, “Why?”

“Because I want to go to my hotel,” she said, still obviously upset despite the hum. He increased the vibration to calm her and temper his own anger.

“No, you don’t. I think I embarrassed you in front of Gage and I did so when you weren’t feeling as sure of us as you needed to be. That’s on me. Had you stayed up at the house like you were told to do, I could have reassured you and given you the time you need to settle with me.”

“I don’t want to settle with you, and I needed to check on Dreamer.”

“We could have come together to check on Dreamer and you know that. And it isn’t a case of whether or not you want to settle with me. You’re going to need to do so in order to be able to ride.”

“What does our relationship, if you can call it that, have to do with my riding? If you think I’m going to give up

competing and follow you around to fawn all over you, you're crazy. Go get yourself a groupie to fuck and keep your bed warm. And stop humming at me."

Ronin increased the strength of the hum and said calmly, "Our relationship has everything to do with your riding. Not because I want to prevent you from competing, but because I meant what I said yesterday. When I get you home, we're going directly to our bedroom, I'm going to strip you naked, put you over my knee and give you a spanking you won't forget anytime soon."

"You will not!"

Ronin was happy to hear that while she still sounded upset, she was beginning to respond to the hum and calm down a bit.

"Oh, but I will. I warned you Devon. You're about to get your first taste of discipline."



Devon said nothing but stared out her window on the drive back to the farm. She refused to think of it as home, even though it already felt that way. He hummed at her the entire way. Even though she pushed at the feeling with as much resolve as she could, the relentlessness of it eked through the tiny cracks in the shell of anger with which she had tried to shroud herself.

As they turned off the highway onto the long drive, the hum seemed to change so that while it still soothed, it also started to arouse. He reached across and stroked her thigh. She pushed his hand away. "Stop it. I'm just going to call a cab when we get back ho... to your house."

"Knock it off, Devon. You don't swat at my hand when all I'm trying to do is comfort you."

He returned his hand to her thigh and began to trace his index finger up and down the inside of it.

"Sweetheart, since this is your first time, let me give you a little piece of advice. Now is the time you should be trying to

reduce the level of my anger, not increase it. As it is now, you're going to get disciplined. Keep ramping up your misbehavior and I'll do the same with your spanking. It's better to just accept your punishment so I don't feel a need to be more severe to ensure you've learned your lesson."

She hated the fact that between the hum, his voice, and his insistence that she was going to get spanked that her libido had kicked into overdrive. Her anger was gone and all she wanted now was to be back in his bed with him loving her. He'd told her on the plane that his hands were better at arousal than relaxation and he had proven himself to be right.

"Ronin?"

"What, sweetheart?"

"I'm sorry. I don't know what got into me. Maybe you're right and I felt embarrassed or maybe I was nervous about the demonstration, but I shouldn't have just taken off."

"No, you shouldn't have," he agreed.

"How about if I promise not to do it again?"

"I think that would be a good place to start. But, I told you that if I had to come after you and drag you home, you'd find yourself face down over my knee." He opened the gate and drove through. "I know you, Devon. My soul has known yours across the millennia. You need to trust that I mean what I say. I appreciate that you seem to have calmed down, though."

"I didn't have much chance of that not happening with you humming at me the whole time."

He smiled. "You're right. It's a very effective tool with you. And as I said, I think the right combination of that, some bare bottom spanking, and a lot of fucking will keep you in line most of the time."

He parked the Range Rover and got out, coming around to open her door. He noticed she still moved with care. "Still sore, sweetheart?"

"Yes. Seeing as how you were so dominant with me last night, I don't think you need to spank me to feel that way

tonight.”

He chuckled, and the hum increased to arouse her more than calm her. “I wasn’t all that dominant last night. Yes, I led, and you followed, but that’s just the way it’s going to be.”

He walked her into the house and straight into their bedroom, closing the doors behind them. He leaned against them and propelled her further into the room with a well-placed swat to her rear end.

She scooted forward, saying “ouch” and rubbing where his hand had connected.

“Devon, I’m only going to tell you this one time. If I’m the one who put the sting in your backside, I’ll be the one to help soothe it. Now strip.”

“Ronin. I am not just going to strip whenever you want to fuck.”

He laughed. “I’m sure you wish that’s all I was going to do to you. Don’t get me wrong, once I’ve spanked that sweet ass of yours to a nice shade of red, I intend to reinforce the lesson with a good hard fucking from behind. Come tomorrow morning, you’ll be sore and well punished and will think twice before misbehaving any time soon. Now, strip Devon. I want you naked.”

“No.”



Ronin could feel her anxiety start to rise. That was good. He wanted her wary of being disciplined. But underlying that he could also feel her arousal. He grinned. He had a sneaking suspicion that once he’d disciplined Devon, she would be more than ready to have him fuck her into submission. And he planned to do so.

He’d wanted to wait to fuck her from behind when her body was more accustomed to his. But his need to dominate her and make her submit would more easily be accomplished by a good hard fucking in the most male dominant position.

Devon had yet to move any further or begin to take her clothes off. “Devon, I told you to strip. I don’t want to tell you again.”

“Ronin, please. I won’t do it again.”

“After I’m done with you, I’ll bet you won’t—at least not for the foreseeable future. Right now, I’m only planning to use my hand to teach you a lesson. But if you don’t get naked or you keep pushing back, I’ll use my hand to warm you up and then take my belt to your backside.”

He said nothing more but watched her carefully. Devon reached up and pulled his shirt over her head.

“By the way, sweetheart, if you don’t want people to know you’re sleeping with a man, don’t wear one of his monogrammed shirts. Kind of a dead giveaway that you’re sharing a bed if you’re wearing his shirt.”

“Good to know,” she said, trying to lighten the mood. “See, I can learn when you just tell me things.”

“Perhaps, but I told you I’d spank your bottom if I had to come after you and bring you home so obviously just talking isn’t working. For the record, I have no problem with you ever wearing anything of mine. I’d just as soon men had as many clues as possible about who you belong to.”

“Belong? I don’t belong to you,” she said bristling.

The arousal hum increased, and he saw her nipples stiffen under her bra.

“Yes, you do, and I’m about to leave handprints all over your ass to get that through to you. As for my shirts, help yourself, but before too long there’ll be a diamond ring on that certain finger to clearly spell out that you’re mine.”

“Not the most romantic proposal.”

“It’s not a proposal. A proposal would indicate you had a choice in the matter. You don’t. Keep in mind you’re marrying into a family of Neanderthal men. One of them has one of those internet licenses to marry people. Last chance, Devon.



Am I going to spank you with just my hand, or do you need me to take my belt to you?"

Devon stomped her foot. If she wasn't being so willful, it would have been downright adorable. "Ronin, please. I said I wouldn't do it again."

"I'm glad to hear that. But it doesn't mean you aren't going to get your bottom blistered for having done it this time. Hand or belt?"

"Ronin."

"Devon, take your bra off."

She reached up and unhooked her bra and let it fall to the floor. Suddenly shy, she used one arm to cover herself. He shook his head.

"Nope. I want to see your tits and see how nice and stiff those nipples are. Now, Devon."

She removed her arm from in front of her breasts.

"Do you need my help with your boots?"

"No, but Ronin..."

"The only butt I'm interested in is the one I'm going to paddle until you can't sit comfortably for a few days. Take the boots off." She sat down on the bed and pulled her boots and socks off.

"Stand up, sweetheart."

He increased the hum so that it could surround and envelop her. As he continued to stare at her, she stared back. He was well aware that she could see the evidence of his own arousal.

"Now the jeans."

He watched her slowly unzip her jeans and shimmy out of them. He was greeted with nothing more than the blonde patch that covered her sex. "Now, that's a good girl. No panties."

She blushed profusely and shivered as he closed the distance between them. Humming to reassure her, he gently

led her over to a corner and faced her into it.

“This is your corner. From now on when I tell you to get ready for a spanking, you will come in here, get naked and come stand in this corner facing it.”

“I cannot...”

His hard swat to her derriere convinced her that she could stand in the corner. “Can you remember what to do when I tell you to get ready for a spanking?”

“Yes,” she said quietly.



Her body was trembling as he came to stand behind her. She shivered, not in fear, but in need. She didn't understand yet that part of that need was for his dominance. Part of the expression of that dominance was answering to his authority and submitting to it.

He reached around her from behind and brought his hands up to play with her breasts and nipples. The hum had increased the arousal vibrato and he could sense she was near to an orgasm.

“Ronin. Please, I want you.”

“I can see that, sweetheart,” he chuckled.

One of his hands left her nipple and trailed down directly to her wet pussy. He then penetrated her with two fingers while his thumb caressed her clit. She came, and he had to catch her as her knees started to buckle.

“There's my good girl. Now let's get your spanking over with so I can get you mounted and fucked properly.”

There would be a time in the future when he knew he'd make her come to him for her spanking, but for now, he was willing to gently pull her across his knee before he began her real punishment.

Ronin sat on the edge of the bed with his legs spread. The arousal she had felt pushing against her backside when they were standing in the corner was now painfully obvious.

He drew her towards him until she was standing between his legs facing him then guided her over his knee placing the upper half of her body on the bed, her bottom directly over the top of his thigh so that it was well positioned for his discipline. He then closed his other leg against hers, trapping them between his own.

He kept one hand on her back to hold her in position, rubbing her backside while occasionally slipping his hand between her legs to check her arousal. Even though this was definitely going to be a discipline spanking, he wanted her to be aroused and ready to fuck when he was done with her. She moaned and tried to wriggle into a different position.

“Do you know why I’m going to spank you?”

“Because you can be a sadistic bastard?”

He surprised them both by laughing. Disciplining Devon was going to be a delicate balance. “Well, that too, but how did you earn this spanking?”

“I took off and you had to bring me back to the farm.”

Suddenly his hand descended on her right ass cheek causing her bottom to bounce and her to try to get away from him.

“Don’t think it’s escaped my notice that you refuse to call Sauvage home. This is your home, and you are my woman. Before I’m done with you tonight, we’re going to come to an understanding about that. Why are you getting spanked?”

“Because you had to come get me and bring me home.”

“That’s better. And what did I tell you would happen if I had to do that?”

“That you’d give me a spanking I wouldn’t forget any time soon.”

“That’s right. You, my beloved, are now going to find out what happens when you disobey me.”

Without another word, he started to spank her. First one cheek and then the other. He started off more slowly with swats that were also less forceful at the beginning.

As the spanking continued, he settled into a rhythm that combined powerful swats with precision targeting. No area got spanked to the point it couldn't feel the next time he chose to strike her bottom in that same spot.



Ronin didn't say another word but continued to send a hum that combined reassurance with arousal. She struggled and begged. He continued to spank her. He could feel her start to drip her arousal onto his jeans. He liked the way her bottom was turning a distinctive shade of red.



Devon remembered hearing a spanking described by someone as her lover smacking her bottom. Apparently, that woman had never been spanked by Ronin. There was nothing that felt like a smack. He swatted, spanked, and rained blow after blow on her poor backside. Her bottom felt like it was on fire, and she thought she'd never be able to sit down again.

Every so often he would leave her cheeks and target her sit spots and the tops of her thighs. She wailed and screamed until she began to cry and tell him how sorry she was and that she would never misbehave again.

He stopped and rubbed her punished bottom. "Are you ready to be done with this lesson?"

"Yes, Ronin. I won't make you come after me again."

"Spread your legs for me, Devon." She did as she was told, and he rewarded her by reaching his hand between them and fingering her until she came. "That's better, isn't it? Much better to have one's mate trying to pleasure her with his hand than using it to chastise her for bad behavior."

“Yes, Ronin. Please be done... with the spanking, I mean.”

He made a chortling sound and allowed it to combine with the hum to reignite the arousal her climax had just abated. He soothed her bottom with gentle caresses.

“I’m going to let you up, but I want you to just stand there. Can you do that for me?”

“Yes, Ronin.”

He released her and helped her stand. “Normally, I would send you back to the corner to think about your misbehavior. And I would enjoy the view.” Her facial cheeks blushed to match her bottom cheeks, although the latter were considerably redder and more swollen.

“But I know you’re still sore from last night, aren’t you, baby?” She nodded. “I want you to get up on your hands and knees in the middle of our bed.”

She scrambled into position as he climbed up on the bed behind her. Out of her peripheral vision, she could see him remove his shirt and open the fly of his jeans. Once open, his cock sprang free in search of her sheath.

He rubbed her bottom some more as the head of his cock probed the opening of her pussy. Devon pushed back, trying to impale herself on his cock. Ronin stayed just out of reach until he had them both positioned where he wanted. Grasping both of her hips, he allowed his cock to zero in on its target before he surged forward, ramming into her in a single thrust. Devon screamed out her passion as she came instantly.



He started to thrust in her with strong, deep, powerful strokes. She climaxed multiple times but winced every time he came into contact with her punished bottom. He continued to plunder her, savoring her response.

He wanted it to go on forever, but knew she was almost spent. He picked up the speed with which he plunged into her

and waited for her final orgasm to build. Just as she began to climax, he thrust hard and shot his semen deep within her.

Her pussy spasmed around him as his cock continued to empty itself into her. He wrapped one arm around the juncture of her hips and thighs molding her to his groin while he stayed mounted deep within her. With the other hand he reached up to play briefly with her nipples.

“Where are we, Devon?” he asked quietly.

“Home.”

“And who do you belong to?”

“The nasty sonofabitch that just spanked my ass and fucked my pussy until it may never be right again.”

Ronin knew that many dominant males would have punished their woman for that kind of answer, but he laughed. “You have a well-spanked bottom. Your pussy is going to be tender for a few days. I’m still lodged inside you, and you want to sass me? No wonder I had to claim you as mine.”

He kissed the back of her neck and then allowed himself to slip out of her. He patted her bottom and then her pussy very gently. “Stretch out on your belly, Devon.”

She did so and he lay down beside her. He started humming to her as he lazily traced circles along her spine and sides. She moaned appreciatively and turned her head to look at him. “Do you have any idea how much that hurt?”

He smiled, leaned down, and kissed her. “Do you have any idea how much more it’s going to hurt come tomorrow?”

Despite how uncomfortable he knew she had to be, she laughed. “Boorish Neanderthal.”

“I’m improving. Just a few minutes ago I was a nasty sonofabitch. By the time I’m done with you tonight I’ll have you purring in my arms again.”

“If you think you’re going to touch me in any sexual way again today or tonight, you are sadly mistaken.”

His smile broadened. “And if you think that I’m going to be denied because you misbehaved and got spanked, you haven’t been paying attention.” He ran his hand down over her bottom and she grimaced. “Do I need to give you a refresher course in how to behave?”

“No, Ronin. But it hurts.”

“I know it does, baby. It’s supposed to. I’ll put plenty of padding under your backside and I probably won’t take you from behind again tonight although that should be considered a magnanimous gesture on my part. Neither one of us is going to want to do without. Do you want to just lie here while I make us something to eat or would you like to put on my shirt and join me in the kitchen? If you choose to join me in the kitchen, we’ll get a pillow for the barstool so it’s a bit more comfy.”

“Couldn’t I just lean against the counter and not sit at all?”

He considered it for a minute. “I can be okay with that. After all, with just my shirt on, your pretty backside will be exposed for my viewing enjoyment.”

She laughed out loud and seemed to bask in the hum that surrounded and enveloped her. “I think Gage was right. Your grandmother must have used up most of her wooden spoons on you!”

Ronin helped her to her feet and back into his shirt, fondling her tits as he did so. “Devon?”

“Yes, Ronin?”

“If I have to come after you again, I will take my belt to you. Are we clear?”

“Yes, Ronin,” she said, wrapping her arms around him and rubbing her head on his chest.

## CHAPTER 9



The rest of the afternoon was spent enjoying each other—both physically and mentally. Ronin had been right, Devon needed to be fucked as much as Ronin needed to fuck her. She was sore, both from the spanking and from the sex. Sitting or lying on her back without a lot of pillows was painful. Ronin was solicitous and only teased her about it occasionally and didn't seem to mind when she fussed at him for doing so.

Between bouts of physical intimacy, they shared all of their secrets. They told each other everything, with no holds barred. They discussed their pasts and their hopes, dreams, and plans for their futures. Each admitted that those future plans were now being modified to include the other.

Devon realized that she was becoming very accustomed to hearing his hum. He didn't do it non-stop, but if she needed reassurance, soothing, or he wanted to arouse her, she could feel and hear it, even if he wasn't in the same room.

They heard Gage's car approach the house.

Ronin felt her tense and started to hum. He wrapped his arms around her and gently rocked her in his arms. "It's all right, sweetheart. I'll make sure Gage doesn't tease you."

"He's going to know, isn't he?"

"Yes. He drove me to the fairgrounds, and he knows how pissed I was at you. And he knows I planned to spank you. But even if he hadn't, he's been around the other naughty girls in the family enough to recognize when one of them has been



spanked. It's kind of an unwritten rule that we don't make fun of them."

"You said your father hummed to your mother. Do all of your brothers do it?"

"Some, but not all. And those who do, do so only to their mates. I know my dad can do it, as can one of my brothers. The other three can't. Dad thinks it's because they aren't married to their soul mates, but I just think some of us can and some of us can't. And the jury is out on Gage. I know for a fact, he has yet to find his soul mate."

"But Gage said the men in your family have had the ability to hum for generations."

"And so we have, but only some of us and usually just the alpha males. Let's face it, alpha males are a major pain in the ass to deal or live with. We have to have some way to compensate our mates for having to put up with us. I'm going to go out and help him feed the stock and reassure him that I didn't beat you to within an inch of your life."

"Can I come?"

"I think that's a rhetorical question considering your responsiveness when we fuck."

She playfully elbowed him in the ribs. "Boorish Neanderthal."

He laughed. "But if you're asking if you can come out to the barn, you can. If I were you, however, I'd probably wear something softer than jeans. And you, miss, are not allowed around other men without a bra."

"Jealous?"

He nibbled along her neck and down the top of her shoulder. "I have no need or reason to be jealous. Jealousy would indicate I don't or can't trust you. I know you better than that. You may have a naughty streak, but you would never betray me. However, I am territorial as all get out and no one gets to see, or touch, these beauties except me."

He brought one hand up to play with her nipple, causing it to immediately stiffen under his touch. Devon responded by pushing her breast deeper into his hand and rubbing her backside against his cock that was beginning to harden in his jeans. He chuckled in her ear and began to hum to her. “And does my pretty want to be fucked again before we go out to the barn?” She leaned back into him allowing him freer access to her body.

“Yes, please,” she said as her breathing started to become ragged.

As she was wearing only his shirt, Ronin continued to fondle and arouse her as he moved her to the sofa. “I want you, Devon.”

“Good, because I need you to fuck me.”

He chuckled again. He knew he should take her back to their bed where he had plenty of pillows for her bottom. And he knew he should lie her on her back and be gentle with her, but what he knew he should do and what he wanted to do warred within him.

His more feral side won the day. He put her up against the rolled arm of the club chair and bent her over it, spreading her legs with his foot and stepping between them. He reached for her clit from behind and as soon as his hand brushed the outer lips of her pussy, she came. Knowing that she would be more than wet enough for him, he steadied her hips and mounted her from behind, hearing her gasp in both surprise and pleasure.

He leaned over her, pressing her upper body over the arm of the chair as he started to stroke her. He felt her begin to quicken.

“Oh, God, Ronin.”

“You like that, don’t you, Devon?”

She nodded and made incoherent sounds of pleasure laced with some discomfort.

“I know, baby. I know. But I need you. Just relax and let me have you.”

Again, she nodded and surrendered herself to him. Recognizing she was exhausted from the day's activities, he began to stroke her faster and harder, pushing himself to join her in the climax she was already building.

They came together with Ronin pushing deep and flooding her with his semen and Devon's pussy urging him to do so and tightening around his cock as he came.



As they stood there leaning over the chair, Devon could feel his hum spread out over her like a warm, soft blanket. He was content and satisfied and she knew she was the reason for that. She reached behind her and cupped his neck, pulling his head down to her. She wanted to say something profound. Something that conveyed what she was feeling and what she could feel emanating from him. But words failed her.

Instead she whispered, "You're welcome," and laughed.

He pulled out of her, chuckling. "You're lucky your bottom is still so red and swollen from your spanking. Otherwise, Ms. Cooper, you'd be getting a couple of good swats for sassing me."

She turned to face him and rolled her body up the length of his. "Nah. You like it when I sass you."

He laughed again, agreeing with her. "Sometimes. But that doesn't mean there aren't other times when it will get you put across my knee." He patted her gently on her bottom, not to cause her discomfort but to remind her that she was his. "You sure you don't want to just stay up here and wait for me?"

She shook her head. "I'll be ready in just a minute." She went to leave his embrace and he pulled her back to him to kiss her.

"Keep that up and we won't make it out there to help Gage with the stock."

"Sass. Again with the sass," he said, chuckling.

He followed her into their bedroom and took great delight in watching her pull on her clothes. She winced as she pulled up her leggings and then gingerly tried to sit down to put on her boots. He offered to help her put on her bra, but she declined. They went out through the French doors and joined Gage at the barn.



Gage looked up, surprised to see Devon and Ronin approaching. He was especially surprised to see their arms wrapped around each other. They looked to be at peace with one another. He shook his head. He'd never spanked a woman for discipline and while he understood the theory, it still always amazed him that a man could put a woman over his knee and give her a sound thrashing and have her respond so positively.

His brothers all spoke of the incredible sex that followed any kind of spanking, be it erotic or discipline. They also talked about, and Gage had been witness to, the fact that when there was a disagreement in their relationships, that a spanking cleared the air and the matter was dealt with once and for all.

If it wasn't, then you knew you had failed your woman and you put her back over your knee to remedy the situation.

He couldn't argue with success. The best relationships he knew belonged to his parents, his four married brothers, and now Ronin and Devon. He smiled, happy for all of his brothers.

Gage wondered if Devon knew that she was not destined to be single much longer. He doubted Ronin would wait very long to get a ring on her finger and have her take his last name. His eldest brother had waited a long time to find and claim his woman. He seemed to hum at her frequently. While Gage could not actually hear Ronin's hum, he could certainly see its effects on her.

Gage reached out to Devon and kissed her on the cheek. "Good to see you home, Dev."

“Thanks, Gage. I wasn’t given much choice in the matter,” she said, laughing.

“Yeah, well he’s kind of that way. He’s pretty bossy and a bit of a bastard most of the time.”

“I know, but he makes up for it by being hung and great in the sack.”

Gage laughed out loud, and Ronin growled at both of them. “You two do know I’m standing right here. And little brother, I warned you about encouraging her to misbehave. And you, miss, had best not follow him down a garden path. It won’t be his ass that pays the price.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” Devon said as she moved away from Ronin. “Seriously, Gage, if you haven’t done so, you should ask your big brother for pointers. I believe you know about his having all the girls lined up waiting for his attention.”

Gage put his arm around her. “I do believe my eldest brother now has the only girl he has any interest in.”

“Damn straight. And get your grubby hands off my woman.”

“Lighten up, bro! It seems like you’re the only bloke she has any interest in as well.”

Devon snorted a laugh. “Damn straight.”

Gage was relieved to see Ronin laugh. He shook his finger at her, and she grabbed it and pulled him to her and kissed him.

*He really must be one helluva fuck.*

Gage was certain Ronin had thoroughly punished her for trying to run off. She moved like her backside was painful, but yet teased him and obviously wanted to be close to him. And he to her. One of the things he liked best about Devon was how happy she seemed to make Ronin. His spirit seemed lighter and more open. And she seemed to have absolutely no fear of him.

The three of them worked together to get all of the livestock fed. It was obvious that Devon knew horses but

knew little of sheep. She was a quick learner and asked intelligent questions. Ronin watched her with pride and managed only just barely to keep his hands off her.

Gage was certain that if he hadn't been there, his brother's pretty blonde woman would have found herself bent over something and getting plowed from behind by his eldest brother. Gage had to continually suppress his laughter. He couldn't wait to get back to the family farm to give them all the latest news.

Once the animals were fed and the barn swept and secured for the night, Devon invited Gage to stay for dinner. The brothers exchanged a look, and Gage knew his presence for dinner would not be welcome tonight.

"I'd love to Dev, but I've got plans." The relief on Ronin's face was too evident for the fun-loving Gage not to tease him. "That's not true. I have absolutely no plans and would love to stay for dinner, but big brother has plans that don't include me. Of course, if you want to come meet the family, they'd love to meet you. But again, the big bad there is shooting me all kinds of dirty looks."

Devon turned to look at Ronin, who most definitely looked like he wanted to strangle his younger brother. "You be nice. If Gage wants to stay, he can. After all, it's his home, too."

"I knew the two of you being friends was a bad idea. Little brother, you need to go to Mom and Dad's. And you, woman, need to come over here and kiss me."

"See? The big bad."



Devon grinned and walked over to Ronin, taking his face in her hands and bringing it down for a kiss. Ronin wrapped his arms around her and started to hum pure arousal at her. Devon could feel her nipples tighten and her pussy start to produce the slick she knew would allow him to take her back to their bed, mount her, and bring her immeasurable pleasure. Maybe sending Gage back to his parents' wasn't such a bad idea.

When she came up for air, she rubbed her head against Ronin's chest and nuzzled the hollow of his throat with her nose.

"Oh, good lord, you're as besotted as he is," exclaimed Gage.

"Not my fault. When the big bad here starts to hum at me... Didn't you tell me there's no escaping it? And when I made my one valiant attempt to escape his evil clutches, you helped him drag me home. So really, you are partially responsible for the fact that jeans are not a comfortable item of clothing for me to wear at this time."

Ronin laughed out loud but continued to hum to Devon. "She's got you there, little brother."

"No way. You do not get to blame the state of that poor girl's backside on me. You really are stuck with him. You know that, right?"

Ronin seemed to hold his breath to see how she would respond.

"Yes. He's made that abundantly clear," she said, blushing.

All Devon could think about was all the ways and times he'd made her call his farm 'home' and acknowledge that she belonged to him. The hum changed as he sensed her unease. Once more there was reassurance along with arousal.

Gage seemed worried that he might have caused her some distress.

"I'm sorry, Dev. Annoying Ronin for fun is one thing. Upsetting you is another matter entirely." He put his hand on her shoulder. "You're not really stuck with him."

"Oh, yes, she is," insisted Ronin. Devon burrowed into his throat once again, hiding her face.

Then she pulled away, opening her eyes and looking directly at Gage. "Oh, but I am. That damn hum of his is a force to be reckoned with. Did I mention he's hung and great in the sack?"

Gage laughed out loud and danced away before his brother could cuff him. Devon, however, was not so lucky, as Ronin landed a sharp swat to her backside that made her yelp before he mumbled something about sassing him.

Ronin turned her toward the house and said, "You go on up to the house. I want to talk to Gage for a minute."

"Be nice. He didn't say anything to upset me. He's just teasing you."

He smiled. "I know, sweetheart. This is all part of his little brother shtick. I just need a moment with him."

She looked at Gage. "Would you like me to stay here to protect you?"

"Nah, just tell him he'll have to do without for the rest of the day if he hurts me."

Ronin and Devon both laughed.

"Did I mention that damn hum of his?" She started to give Ronin a light kiss that he deepened until she was out of breath. "And the sex... Did I mention the sex was amazing?"

Gage laughed as Ronin turned her around to the house and said, "Go."

She laughed again and then headed towards the house.



"All right, little brother."

"Seriously Ronin, if I upset her, I didn't mean to."

Ronin could see Gage was really concerned that he'd upset Devon. "I don't think you did at all. I'll double check with her to be sure, but she's pretty spirited, so I wouldn't worry about it."

"Then what's up?"

"I need a big favor and one I want you to keep to yourself."



For all their teasing, Ronin was closest to his youngest brother. The two of them shared a bond and a trust that ran deeper than with the other members of their family.

“You know you can trust me.”

“I do. I need you to go to the safety deposit box and get Nana’s ring.”

“No shit? Do you think she’ll say yes?”

Ronin chuckled. “Do you think I’ll give her a choice?”

“Not if you’re half as good in the sack as she says you are.” Again, Gage danced away from his brother, but then flung himself back into a bear hug with Ronin. “You are one lucky sonofabitch. That’s one helluva woman you got yourself.”

Ronin smiled. “Don’t I know it. I could scarcely breathe this morning when she was gone. It wasn’t until I had her back at the house and started to spank her that I knew it was going to all work out. And if you ever repeat that to anyone, including Devon, I’ll thump you.”

“When you were spanking her? You are one twisted bastard,” Gage said only half-jokingly.

“Just you wait little brother. You enjoy your time getting between the legs of any girl that’ll have you. But some day, the right one will come along, and it’ll all be over except for the shouting. I will not even begin to explain how much better the sex is with her than with any other woman.

“My God, Gage, I hope you can hum. I can feel her pick up on it and watch it work on her. Being able to reassure or soothe her is one thing, but being able to get her aroused before you even touch her? Best thing ever.”

“Just between you and me? I didn’t expect her to be all peaceful and happy after you disciplined her. And it was discipline, right? Not just erotic?”

“No, she got disciplined this afternoon for running off. You walk a fine line sometimes, but basically if they know they deserve it, then you can give them the discipline they need.

And in the right relationships it can build communication and arousal. Keep in mind, little brother, not all spankings are administered for discipline.”

He liked being able to talk to his kid brother in frank terms, but liked even better how it made Gage blush.

“Since it’s just you and me... and since I trust you, I will say that the sex that followed was the most deeply erotic, sensual thing I’ve ever experienced with a woman.”

“And lord knows you’ve had a lot of experience,” Gage laughed.

Ronin grinned. “And that information, little brother, is information you can keep to yourself.”

Ronin waved as Gage went back to his car and drove away. The nature of their relationship was beginning to change. Gage was maturing, and Ronin now had Devon to think of.

## CHAPTER 10



After dinner, Ronin and Devon drove back into Toronto to check on Pax and Dreamer. They got out at the barn Dreamer was in.

“I really should get him out, but I’m not sure I can ride,” she said, blushing.

Ronin hugged her. “Probably not. One of us could lunge him or I could ride him, but other than the flying lead changes I haven’t a clue how to ride a reiner. That’s something you’ll have to teach me.”

“Not tonight. I want to be able to sell tickets to that,” she said, laughing at him. “It’s not as easy as it looks.”

“I don’t doubt that. I know just enough dressage to know the degree of difficulty involved in what you do. It does look like fun. But maybe not for you tonight, huh? I mean, you have been spanked and fucked without mercy.”

She giggled and kissed him. “I think I can lunge him. Why don’t we walk him over to your barn and I’ll lunge him while you ride Pax.”

Devon held Dreamer while Ronin quickly groomed him and put exercise bandages on his legs. He grabbed a lunge line and lunge whip, and they walked over to where Pax was stalled. Ronin brought Pax out and they introduced the two horses, who seemed to be fine with one another.

“Think you can hold both while I get Pax ready?” Ronin asked. Devon nodded, tilting her face up for Ronin’s kiss. He went into the team’s tack room, where he made short work of

grooming and saddling Pax, and then they walked to the arena and found a few others making use of the less crowded ring and cooler night air.

The lunging area was already in use, so Devon found a place out of the way and hopped up on the wall to hold Dreamer and watch Ronin ride. She'd almost forgotten how much she enjoyed watching him in action. He was so physical and yet had such grace and elegance.

He reminded her of a time when she was a child and her grandmother had taken her to see Mikhail Baryshnikov dance. She knew she was watching something magical—something few others could even attempt to emulate.

One of Ronin's teammates, having ridden and cooled off his own horse, came to stand close to her. "Amazing, isn't he?" said Michael Collins.

"Yes, and I don't even know what I'm really watching. They just move so well together."

Collins nodded his head. "Like dance partners, the two of them."

She laughed. "I was just thinking he reminded me of Baryshnikov in his prime."

"That's a good analogy. I've got an interview tomorrow with *Equus*. Mind if I borrow that line?"

"Be my guest."

They watched as Ronin put Pax through his paces in the stadium, and then put him through a few dressage movements. Pax was all power and drive when Ronin was actively riding him, but when they were done, Ronin threw the big horse the reins to allow him to stretch his neck. Hanging onto the buckle in the center of the reins and using just the pressure of his legs, Ronin guided Pax over to where Collins and Devon were talking.

"You trying to steal my woman, Mikey?"

Collins snorted. "Of course, I am. You have the best horse, it's not fair that you get the best woman, too."

Ronin hopped off Pax and handed Collins his reins. “Take him. He’s yours but leave my woman alone.”

Normally this was the kind of male posturing that annoyed Devon, but it was obvious the two men were friends, respected one another, and were merely teasing.

“Don’t I get a say in that?”

Ronin walked up and stood between her legs. He pulled her to him and kissed her. “Nope, and I don’t want to hear any sass out of you about it.” They all laughed, and he kissed her again. “Want me to lunge Dreamer for you?”

“Would you mind? That’ll give Michael and me time to make our getaway.”

Collins laughed. “Good going, Dev. Keep the dirty bastard on his toes.”

Ronin walked backward as he led Dreamer to the lunging area and shook his finger at Devon. “I warned you about that sass.”

Devon laughed and hopped off the wall, managing to only grimace a little as she took Pax from Collins, who had looked decidedly uncomfortable holding him. Pax nuzzled her, and she responded by wrapping her arms around his head and stroking the side of his face.

“You all right, Devon?” asked Collins.

“I’ll be fine. I just need to get acclimated.” Acclimated to what she didn’t tell him, and diplomatically he didn’t ask.

Collins watched Dreamer lunge, bucking and playing on the end of the line. “He’s quite nice, that gelding of yours. I love his coloring.”

“Thanks. He’s a good boy and gives me one hundred and ten percent every single time I throw a leg over him.”

“Is she talking about that appy of hers or Gutherie?” Devon froze when she recognized Jake’s voice.

“See here, Rutherford, that’s a bit out of line. You either apologize to Ms. Cooper or go find yourself another place to

stand.”

“It’s okay, Michael. That’s always been Jake’s problem—he’s all talk and very little action. And I do mean little,” she said, staring pointedly at his groin.

Collins roared with laughter, drawing Ronin’s attention. “Spot on, Dev. Take a hike, Rutherford.”

Ronin had joined them and quietly handed Dreamer’s lunge line to Collins. “You know, Rutherford, I distinctly recall telling you never to speak to or about my woman again or you’d answer to me.” His voice was low and full of menace.

“Ronin?”

He glanced at her and was just turning back to Jake when Devon touched his arm.

“Sweetheart? Do you think maybe Michael could help us with the boys, so we can go home? I hear our bed calling our name.”

Collins repressed a chuckle. It was still early evening, and her meaning was lost on no one.

Ronin turned back to her, “You all right? He didn’t hurt you, did he?”

“Pax would never hurt me, would you Pax?” she cooed at Ronin’s gelding, who looked as happy as anyone had ever seen him with his head resting against Devon’s chest as she stroked him.



Ronin quirked his eyebrow.

“Surely you don’t mean Jake?” she said and laughed, not the enchanted, joyful sound he was used to but one full of venom and ice.

“Jake doesn’t have enough equipment to be able to hurt a woman. He doesn’t have the full package like you do,” she

said as she patted his genitals.

It was hard to say who was more shocked: Rutherford, Collins, or Ronin. Unfortunately for Rutherford, Collins and Ronin both burst out laughing and Rutherford went scurrying away.

“Oh, my God. Please tell me I can tell people what she said and did? Please? That’ll be the story of the whole event. Hell, it’ll even top you slinging her over your shoulder this morning. By the way, Devon, let me apologize for every man other than Jean Paul who was there and didn’t check to see if you were okay.”

Devon grinned up at him. Ronin was fairly sure it had not escaped Collins’ notice she had yet to move her hand from resting on his groin. “Not necessary. The Neanderthal and I were having a bit of discussion about where I would be residing.”

“During the event or on a more permanent basis?” Collins asked nonchalantly. This was shaping up to be a very informative little gathering.

“That was kind of the nature of the discussion,” answered Devon.

“Devon was of the opinion that she should remain in Texas. I am quite certain she belongs here in Ontario.”

“I know I don’t get a vote, but it would be great to have you here in Canada.”

“I think Ronin was thinking he would prefer to have me at his place and in his bed.”

“I can’t say I blame him,” said Collins. “No offense intended.”

“None taken,” said Devon.

“I think that was intended for my benefit,” said Ronin with a smile.

Devon rolled her eyes.

“Actually both of you,” said Collins, “just for different reasons. I didn’t want Devon to be insulted; I didn’t want you to punch my lights out. So if I’m going to have the juicy gossip, I need to have the decision.”

“Devon will be with me,” Ronin stated strongly, before catching the expression on Devon’s face and adding, “won’t you, sweetheart?”

“Better,” she said.

“I see,” said Collins chuckling. “Then let me be the first to congratulate the two of you. And I’ll be happy to take Pax back. I think he’s probably the easier one to handle.”

Ronin nodded. “Perhaps, but not nearly as much fun.” Devon blushed, and he kissed her. “Come on sweetheart, let’s get Dreamer put away and you can tell me how we should answer our bed. You sure you’re okay with Pax, Michael?”

Collins nodded. “Yes, he got a good workout from you and then he got snuggle time with her. Seems to have put him in a right good mood. You must be charmed, Devon. You seemed to have soothed the two most savage beasts on our team.”



## CHAPTER 11



The next morning, Ronin came awake to the realization Devon was not nestled beside him. “Devon?”

She kicked open the bedroom door as he sat up and looked around, carrying a big tray with juice, coffee, an omelet, something resembling homemade hash browns, and toast.

“I hope you don’t mind. I woke up hungry and thought I’d get us something to eat. I just helped myself to what was in the pantry and fridge.”

Ronin smiled. While he had awakened with his usual morning erection, the smell of the food she’d cooked and knowing she’d fixed it for him, made him think he could wait before having his way with her. Again.

“What’s to mind? It’s your home too. Anything I have here or anywhere else I gladly share with you. It smells like you can cook. And you’re bringing me breakfast in bed. What a great morning.”

“I would have made biscuits, but you didn’t have all the ingredients.” She said, grinning at him and arranging the tray in the middle of the bed for them to share.

“Oh, my God, you’re going to make me fat. I love those things. Hot biscuits dripping with butter and raspberry jam? Heaven on a plate. I do, however, see one thing wrong with all of this.”

Ronin watched her mentally check off all of the items on the tray.

“What did I miss?”

He leaned across and kissed her. “The fact that it all needs to be eaten now and my cock is not happy about having to wait.”

“Really?” she said moving the tray to the side and drawing the sheet back. Her smile grew even wider when his now fully erect cock was revealed. “I think I can fix that.” She crawled over to him and straddled his legs. Taking his cock in her hand, she deftly lowered herself onto him.

Ronin groaned in pure pleasure, pulled his shirt over her head to get her naked and began to hum.

“Not so fast,” she said. “I’m hungry and now your poor hard cock has its nice soft pussy to snuggle in.” She leaned over and cut a piece of the omelet with the fork and offered it to him.

Ronin’s deeply appreciative chuckle combined with his hum caused Devon’s breathing to become ragged and shallow. She thought better of her plan and made as if to move off him. Ronin put his hands around her waist and pushed her back down onto his cock.

“No, baby, your first idea was the right one. You stay up there with my cock deep in your pussy and feed both of us. After we’re done, I’ll put you on your back and fuck you properly.”

She giggled. “I thought the proper way to fuck me was the way a stud horse fucks his mare.”

“You have a point. So, you feed me first, then I’ll move the bed tray while you get on your hands and knees and then I will mount and fuck you properly, my little broodmare.”

He could feel her withdraw and hummed reassurance to her. “What’s wrong, Dev?”

“We’ve never really talked about what happens after this event is over. I mean, I know we’ve both indicated that this isn’t just an affair and that we’ll be together, but not specifics.”

He rocked her gently until he could feel her body respond to him. He took the fork from her and gave her a bite. “That’s on me, Dev. What is it you want to know?”

“Do you really believe in soul mates and that I’m yours?”

“I do. I was raised believing that each of us has a soul mate and knowing that a man can only hum to his true soul mate. What else?”

“So, you’re stuck with me because somewhere in time we became linked?”

“I’m not stuck with you. Oh, Jesus, I’m an idiot. It’s the Neanderthal in me. I love you, Devon. I think I was falling in love with you long before I recognized you as my soul mate. I plan to marry you, grow old with you, and live happily ever after with you.”

“For a man who doesn’t talk about his feelings, once you get started you just jump in with both feet.”

“Yes, and right at the moment I’ve just jumped off a cliff all by myself.”

She leaned forward, rubbed her stiff nipples against his chest and kissed him. “I love you, too. I’m not sure when that happened, but you made me believe in happily ever after again.”

She offered him another bite of the omelet. “It occurs to me if we’re going to live here, I’ll need to make some permanent arrangements. I can work from anywhere so that’s not a problem, but...”

“Whatever help you need sweetheart. You marry a Guthrie, you get him, a ring, a new passport and a piece of bubble gum.” He grinned at his own joke.

Devon took a moment to realize that he was joking. When she did, she gave it right back. “Hubba Bubba or Bazooka? What flavor?”

Ronin pushed the tray out of the way and rolled Devon onto her back. “Whatever flavor you want.”

“I thought you were going to fuck me proper?” she said giggling.

He chuckled. “I think you like being fucked proper. But who says you’re only getting fucked once this morning? I figure I’m already mounted, may as well use you this way first. But trust me, baby, I’ll have you on your knees from behind before you leave this bed.”

He meant to make sure Devon would always know she could take comfort in knowing he was a man of his word.



The next few days flew by. They quickly settled into a routine of sorts. They would make love before leaving their bed and then help with the morning chores. After that, they would run into Toronto to make a preliminary check on the horses and then return home.

Even with Gage working full time, there was a lot of work to be done with the horses, sheep, and the land itself. There was an antique partner’s desk in the office in the house that Gage and Ronin shared. Gage offered to clear out his side so that Devon would have a place to set up her computer and equipment.

“Babe?” Ronin said as he walked up behind her and was looking at her ass as she bent over to get something off the floor.

“Yes?” She sighed as he nestled his hardening manhood against her.

“I think we need to talk about Gage.”

“He should come home. But we’re going to have to restrict our amorous activities to the bedroom. It’s one thing for him to know it. It’s another thing for him to see it.”

He laughed. “That would be my point. We both know I’m not going to restrict where I fuck you in the house. The back of that couch and the rolled arm of the chair have proven to be very good spots for using you.”

She blushed. She had never been fucked so many times nor come so often and so easily as she did with Ronin. He had no trouble getting and keeping her wet and aroused and always ensured she came numerous times before seeking his own pleasure.

“You know the old dairy goat barn down by the hay barn?” Ronin had built his hay storage well away from the barn and cottage. It had a cement foundation that extended ten feet on every side from the exterior walls. The old dairy barn was past that down by the stock pond.

She nodded.

“What would you think of converting that into a small home for Gage? We could turn what was the hayloft into a bedroom and then put in a small kitchen, bath and sitting room downstairs. And we could convert the smaller tack room into a proper office for him. That would give us our privacy and ensure that he doesn’t have to listen to you screaming out your pleasure or wailing when I have to spank you.”

“You won’t need to spank me. I have been a very good girl, haven’t I?”

“Yes, but that won’t last forever. We both know that. I’d rather not have to take into consideration where my little brother is when I want to fuck my woman or need to discipline her for something.”

He loved how she blushed when he talked of spanking her or reminded her of the spanking she had received. While erotic spankings were fun, they didn’t have the power exchange dynamic that discipline spankings did.

Late mornings and afternoons were spent on various things either for work, their schedules or general household chores. They would then help with the afternoon and evening chores before heading back into Toronto to ride. Devon’s bottom had recovered enough that she, too, could ride in the evenings.

The Canadian team had become her staunchest supporters. They often gathered in the evening to watch her as she put Dreamer through his paces. Most evenings the team would go

to dinner and there would be animated discussions about how dressage and reining related and what were the things that could be learned from each other.

As Michael Collins had predicted, and with help from him and the other team members, the story of Devon dealing with Jake Rutherford had spread like wildfire. The whole thing was even more titillating when combined with the story of Ronin throwing her over his shoulder and carrying her off to his home where she was now happily ensconced.

The local and international press had caught wind of the story and had pestered Devon until it became clear that not only would the Canadian team rally behind her, but the other teams had her back, as well.

One thing Ronin had discovered was she had a bad habit of speeding. She explained that the speed limit in Texas was well over what the limit was in the area around Toronto. The second time they got stopped and she was given a ticket, he made her switch to the passenger side.

When they arrived home and went into the house, Ronin delivered three hard swats to her backside. “Enough, Devon. You get another ticket, and you’ll earn yourself another trip over my knee.”

“We’re too close to my performance demonstration ride. You can’t spank me.”

Ronin thought about it for a minute and nodded. “You’re right and this demo is important to you and your sport, so let me be clear. If you get another ticket, you will earn yourself a punishment spanking for both the ticket and for not being able to refrain from speeding this close to your ride.”

“Ronin, that is stupid. You cannot simply ground me from driving.”

“That’s where you’re wrong, love of my life. I am exactly the one who punishes you in whatever way I think is most beneficial. I am also the only one who decides when, where, what for and how hard you will be spanked for misbehaving. Speeding is stupid, illegal, and dangerous. If you needlessly

endanger your life, you will face the consequences of those actions.”

“I am not going to agree to be spanked again.”

“Whether you agree or not has very little to do with it. If you behave, you won’t get spanked. If you don’t behave, I’m going to spank you until you decide to mind me.”



Devon was set to ride on Saturday. Ronin would ride Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. He’d been working on bringing up his dressage scores and several things Devon had shown him had worked well with Pax. In fact, it was Devon who often schooled Pax in dressage. Ronin’s teammates had teased him endlessly that the big horse seemed to enjoy having her legs wrapped around him almost as much as Ronin did.

The Canadian eventing squad was at the barn, mapping out what they thought their best strategy would be, when a member of the Aussie team interrupted their meeting. “Ronin, you’d best come. Rutherford is starting something with Devon. He’s in a nasty mood.”

Ronin ran for the arena with his teammates close behind.

Jake was drunk. “She might as well mount his gelding because God knows he’s mounting her every night.”

Ronin ascertained that both security and the head coach of the U.S. team had been called.

“You know, Devon,” Jake continued drunkenly, “I’d have fucked you that much if you’d just been a little less frigid. What’s he do for you that I didn’t do? Oh, I know he’s supposed to be hung like a horse, but how big does it have to be to melt the ice from your cunt?”

Collins and several of the others held Ronin back. They feared what he would do to Rutherford. And while Rutherford insulting Devon was completely inappropriate, he wasn’t capable of physically hurting her. Ronin realized his teammates were right and indicated they could let him go.

Devon was standing strong, but he could feel Rutherford was getting to her. There were times to step in and be the “big bad” as Gage liked to call him, and there were times to lend your strength to your woman so she could deal with whatever was happening.

This was the time for the latter. Ronin started to hum reassurance and strength to Devon. He could see the moment she felt it. Her spine straightened, her shoulders came back and there was a definite tilt to her chin that didn't bode well for her ex.

Her body became still and quiet. Pax responded to Devon's relaxation by losing the tension in his body. Devon moved the horse towards Rutherford in a shoulder-in movement, a maneuver that had long been used by mounted patrol officers to control crowds.

The move had always been a difficult one for Pax, but after having Devon school him they had become more fluid together. Ronin recognized what she meant to do and started to smile. So did the other dressage riders on his team.

“Get ‘em, Dev,” whispered Collins.

Devon moved Pax into position and started to back Rutherford into the arena wall. Rutherford tried to escape but she had Pax bump and trap him with his strong shoulder and barrel chest.

“Fuck you, Cooper. Move this piece of shit.”

“As I recall, Jake, many was the time you weren't up to the task.”

There was quiet laughter all around. Devon then stroked the big gelding's neck.

“Did he call my baby a piece of shit? That's not nice, is it, Pax?” she cooed at the gelding.

She cued Pax to bump him with his shoulder again. This time the ‘bump’ had more power and as Rutherford was already up against the wall, he hit it harder.



The head of the U.S. team arrived. “That’s enough Devon, let him alone. I’ll deal with him.”

“Will you?” she challenged. “Because I’m not seeing much progress in that direction so far.”

The coach didn’t reply. Ronin could feel the anger rolling off of her. He smiled. His teammates knew that smile. It never led to anything good.

Devon backed Pax off just enough, so the coach could escort Rutherford to relative safety.

“What a bitch,” called Rutherford as he passed by Pax. Devon cued Pax to do a forehand pivot with some speed behind it which resulted in Pax swinging his powerful hind quarters into Rutherford, knocking him into the wall and from the look and sound of things, dislocating his shoulder. Rutherford screamed in pain and Devon guided Pax directly into a canter depart, a very elegant move for such a tall horse, worthy of all the praise to come. They left Rutherford writhing on the ground.

Devon cantered over to the team who quickly surrounded both her and Pax. Several team members who had never had a kind word to say to or about Pax were suddenly petting him and praising his performance. Pax was uninterested until Ronin came up beside him. Ronin scratched the big gelding’s neck and then unwrapped a peppermint for him.

“Those things are terrible for his teeth, you know,” said Devon, who seemed serene and unaffected by the whole incident. “Who’s my good boy?” she said, stroking Pax’s back behind the saddle.

Collins joined Ronin. “I do think she’s talking to your horse, buddy. She knows you too well to think you’re a good boy.”

Ronin and Devon both laughed. “That’s all right Michael, Devon likes bad boys, don’t you Dev?”

“Not true. I like Neanderthals.”

“Not many of those around,” offered one of the female members of the team.

“That’s all right. I think she’s found the one she wants,” replied Collins, who noticed, as did numerous others, that Ronin’s hand had never left Devon’s leg.

The security guard approached them, keeping a wary eye on Pax. “You keep that beast under control.”

All the riders in the arena laughed. It was Jean Paul who told him, “That horse was always under control. What you saw was no accident. Devon took aim and used her horse’s hind quarters to execute a perfect hit against a drunkard who had repeatedly insulted her. Well done, Devon.”

She received a warm round of applause.

The medics arrived at the same time as the police. After hearing several descriptions of the incident, the cops rode in the ambulance with Rutherford. They assured everyone that Rutherford would not be back at the event and would not be filing charges of assault.

Devon rode Pax back to the barn surrounded by both her own U.S. team and the several others who had seen the incident. As she slid off Pax, she found herself in Ronin’s arms.

“Did you see that perfect canter depart? You’d better get that right tomorrow because if you don’t everyone will know it was rider error.”

He laughed at her. “Sass. Why is it I get so much sass from you?”

“Because you’re such a Neanderthal.”

He nuzzled her neck and grinned. “Keep sassing me Dev and the first thing that’ll happen after you ride on Saturday is a collection of debts owed.”

No one had heard him, but Devon blushed nonetheless and felt her nipples go stiff and her pussy start to moisten as they always did when he threatened to spank her.



Friday came and all of the eventers rode their dressage test and waited for their scores to be posted. Once they were, a cheer went up from the Canadian team. For the first time in anyone's memory, the three-day event team was in first place after dressage.

Collins turned and called to Ronin. "You took the top spot and guess what clinched it for you? The canter depart."

Everyone laughed.

## CHAPTER 12



The sun streaked through the French doors as if run through a soft golden filter. Devon could see the lush green earth bathed in tangerine light with a raspberry sky above.

She stretched languorously, Ronin's hard frame pressing along her back. His hum had become integral to Devon waking up in the morning and by the time she was fully awake, she was more than ready for them to fuck, which they did.

Today, however, she could feel great peace and strength intertwined with the strains of arousal. She smiled. He really did know what she needed. She still felt the hum gave him an unfair advantage, but she couldn't argue with the fact that it made her feel wonderful.

He had loved her long and hard the previous evening. Several times he had made mention of the fact that it no longer seemed in any way painful for her to take him into her pussy. It was still a snug fit, but she welcomed him each and every time he got between her legs. Most times she would climax for him as soon as he entered her and drove home.

"You do know that after your ride, I'm going to ride you even harder than I ride Pax. When I'm done, you'll be every bit as wet as he is."

"You'll do nothing of the sort. You'd never put Pax away wet, and you damn sure won't turn a hose on me to rinse me off."

He laughed, swatting her backside and mumbling something about sassing. As she stretched, Ronin ran his hand down her body and began to play with her clit. She could feel the hum invade her.

She gave over to it and rolled onto her back, spreading her legs for him. He rolled on top of her and his hard cock immediately found its way to her waiting pussy.

He pounded into her with an almost feral intensity to which she responded, crying out as she came and reveling in his embrace. Their coupling was fast, furious, and very rewarding.

Ronin came out of the bath to see Devon shimmy into a pair of tight black jeans, which she had tucked into a pair of black lizard cowboy boots. She was threading the handmade belt through its loops when he reached out to help.

She inhaled his scent and smiled. “God, you smell good.”

“So do you. You look amazing and I’m going to have a raging hard on once you put on those black chaps. I think one day I’m going to have you wear those chaps around the house for me with nothing else on.”

Devon laughed. “There’s a look—black chaps, my tits hanging out and my pussy and ass exposed. You really are one twisted Neanderthal.”

He started to hum to her. “No, twisted is when I think about spanking your sexy ass in those chaps and making you stand in the corner with your spanked bottom on display, framed by black leather. And I do wonder what it will feel like to fuck you in them.”

She ran her hand down the front of his body gently squeezing his quickly hardening dick. “I must be twisted, too, because I like the way you think.”

He chuckled and kissed her as he increased the hum. “You wait until I get you home tonight, woman. I’ll give you a practical demonstration of twisted. Now off with you. I need to get dressed and we need to get to the fairgrounds.”

Devon sat on the edge of the bed and watched as he pulled on his black breeches.

“Are those things going to zip up? You look pretty swollen, babe.”

“Just keep sassing me, woman. If it won’t fit in my breeches, I know a nice, tight pussy it’ll fit in to take care of the problem.”

“Do you think you’ll be able to watch me ride today?”

“Yep. I’m riding anchor. That makes me the last to go. In fact, if it works out, can you warm up Pax while I coach Kelly through the last part of the course? She’s really worried about the final few obstacles. Collins said if we get tight for time to bring Dreamer to our barn and he’ll make sure he’s taken care of.”

Devon wrapped her arms around Ronin as he finished buckling his belt. “Ah, but who’s going to take care of me?” she said seductively.

Ronin started to hum. It seemed to him that often the hum started without him actually thinking about it. There were times when it simply kicked on in response to Devon. He ran his hands down her body and cupped her ass, bringing her mons in direct contact with his groin.

“That would be me just as soon as I can get you naked after my ride.”

“Want me to bring my chaps home?” she teased.

He laughed. “No. There won’t be enough time for that this evening.”

“Do we have plans for the evening?”

“Yes. We have plans to come home, get you naked, and spend the night seeing how sore I can make you before morning.”

She giggled. “Neanderthal.”

“That would be me. Now, come on. We need to get to the fairgrounds.”



Even though reining was listed as a demonstration sport, it was still to be scored and judged as if it were a regular competition. Devon kissed Ronin as he dropped her at the barn.

“I’ll see you later.”

“Need me to help you into those chaps?” Ronin asked with an exaggerated lustful tone.

“For Christ’s sake, Gutherie. Do try to keep it in your pants until she’s done today,” said one of the other female riders. “If you’re not careful you’re going to split those breeches from the stress of trying to restrain that thing.”

Devon and the other women of the team laughed; the men looked slightly embarrassed; Ronin just grinned. “Don’t blame me; this is her fault.”

“Lucky girl.”

Devon smiled as she finished pulling the zipper down on her chaps. “You have no idea.” Again, there was laughter all around.

Ronin kissed her again. “Good luck, babe, though you don’t need it. Go kick their asses.”

He watched her mount Dreamer and head toward the warm-up pen.

The head coach of the U.S. team approached Ronin. “She’s not coming back with us, is she?”

Ronin shook his head. “No.”

“Will Canada be putting up a reining division?”

“Not sure. Collins keeps threatening to make her ride dressage for the team.”

“What do you want?”

“Whatever she wants, as long as she wants it here with me.”

“Rutherford was a fool. You do realize how special she is, don’t you?”

“I do indeed. I’m the luckiest bastard that ever lived because I get to spend the rest of my life with her.”

Ronin walked away and popped his head into the U.S. eventing squad’s tack room. “Best of luck, guys. You’re going to need it.”

They laughed and threw grooming towels at him.



Devon was watching the rider ahead of her finish. He’d had a difficult run, missing two lead changes and then having a bad stop and a bad spin to the right.

She’d been happy when she saw the posted pattern. It was one that gave many people trouble, but one she personally liked. It was difficult enough that it really separated the good horse and rider teams from the poor. She and Dreamer were one of the best.

She squared her shoulders and entered the arena as the previous competitor left. As usual, she’d put herself in the zone. She was aware of things around her, but really couldn’t hear or see anything but the task in front of her. The hum, however, was ever present and made her feel like lying in Ronin’s arms after they’d made love—safe, secure, and like she could do anything.

She rode to the center of the arena at a walk and acknowledged the judge. She asked Dreamer for three spins to the right. He was fast, low, and nailed the stop. She then asked him for the same maneuver to the left and again, Dreamer nailed it. She could just barely hear the crowd cheering them on.

Dreamer stepped into the lope for a small, slow circle to the right. The big gelding was relaxed and his lope perfection. As they came to the starting spot, she leaned forward and kissed him. Dreamer stepped into a large, fast circle to the



right at a gallop. As she crossed the center line, he executed a perfect flying lead change from right lead to left and galloped a large, fast circle to the left. At the designated spot, she sat back, and Dreamer went from gallop to collected lope in the same stride, flowing seamlessly into a small, slow circle to the left.

As they crossed the center line, she asked Dreamer for another lead change, this time left to right and once again leaned forward and gave him a kiss. The big gelding made another flawless change and picked up speed as Devon guided him toward the far end of the arena at a hard gallop.

They rounded the end of the arena. She squeezed him and whispered “now,” and Dreamer accelerated down the outside rail. About fifty feet from the end, Devon sat back, shifted her hand and said “whoa.” Dreamer dropped his hind end, stuck his tail into the dirt, and then slid on his back feet for over forty feet as the crowd went wild.

At the end of his slide, Devon rolled him back over his hocks and sent him back down the same rail at a more sedate gallop. As they rounded the far end of the arena, again she leaned forward and made a kissing sound. Dreamer responded with another incredible burst of speed until she cued him for another slide stop. As he came to the end of his slide, Devon asked him to back up almost thirty-five feet. He did so, relaxed, and on a loose rein.

Devon once again acknowledged the judge, and with her performance over, exited the arena while the crowd cheered and gave her and Dreamer a standing ovation.

She looped Dreamer’s reins around the horn of her saddle and reached down to pat his neck on both sides. “Good boy. Such a good boy.”

She was greeted by both her own team and riders from other teams who congratulated her with enthusiasm.

But Devon had eyes for only one person. He stood at the back, letting her collect the accolades she was due. She rode up to Ronin, a smile beaming bright on her face.

“Hey, cowgirl,” he said, smiling back at her.

She swung her leg over Dreamer’s back and stepped down. Throwing her arms around Ronin, she kissed him. “Wanna fuck?” she whispered in his ear.

Nuzzling her neck, he replied. “You tell me. You’re certainly standing close enough to tell.”

Collins walked over to them. “Okay, you two, break it up. He does need to be able to ride. Why don’t I take Dreamer back to the barn and Devon can go warm up Pax while you go coach Kelly.” Devon unzipped her chaps and hung them over her saddle. “Thanks, Michael.”

“Spectacular run, Dev. Like you said, one bit, one hand, and a helluva lot more speed.”

Ronin grabbed the chaps and said, “We’ll just put those in the car.” Collins looked confused and Devon blushed. Even though Ronin was getting ready to go compete, he was humming at her.

They headed towards the Range Rover so they could move on to the eventing course, which was outside of the city. Once in the vehicle, Devon said to him. “He was so good. I can’t remember a better run on him.”

“You really do just focus in on him, don’t you? I saw several people speak to you and I don’t think you even knew they were there.”

She nodded. “I get pretty intense when I compete, but I could feel you humming the whole time. First time I’ve ever run a pattern with stiff nipples.”

He groaned. “You don’t talk to me about you having stiff nipples before I get ready to compete.”

“How about a wet pussy? Want to talk about that?”

“You’re sassing me again, Ms. Cooper. Keep in mind, sweetheart, that you’re done riding at this event. Your ass, tits and pussy are mine. And while I don’t have time to take care of those stiff nipples or wet pussy right this second, I could

probably find time to paddle that pretty backside of yours to a nice shade of red before we get home tonight.”

She giggled. “You’re going to kill them out there this afternoon. I just know it.” She leaned over and nuzzled his neck.

They got to the eventing field and Ronin sent Devon to get Pax to start his warm-up. He’d never allowed anyone to warm up his horse for him but had complete faith in Devon to get it done right.

Ronin waited for Kelly to get to the first of the last set of obstacles. Both horse and rider looked tired. He got the crowd whipped up so that she could hear them cheering and then stood just to the outside of the course’s boundary ropes and shouted instructions and encouragement to her as she negotiated arguably the most difficult fence on the course.

“Way to go, Kelly. Just two more. You can do this. Bring it home.”



Devon hopped aboard Pax. Hop was a relative term. He was almost seventeen hands, so one didn’t really hop on him. She looked around. The cross-country portion of the three-day event allowed the riders to be a bit more casual than either the uber formal dressage or the hunt coat required for stadium jumping.

Riders were dressed in breeches of either rust, black, or buff, with buff being the most prevalent, along with tall hunt boots and pressed polo shirts in solids and stripes. Devon, in contrast, was in black jeans, black cowboy boots, and one of Ronin’s linen shirts.

Devon loped Pax on a loose rein at first, letting the big horse stretch as he moved around the arena. Once she felt him flowing easily underneath her, she gathered him and started doing some bending exercises before she started taking him over some of the smaller jumps. She didn’t feel qualified to approach the larger jumps and Ronin had assured her that Pax

never failed to have enough jump to get them through the course.

She heard the cheers from the team as Kelly finished her course. She headed Pax to where she knew they'd be gathering to hand him off to Ronin.

She saw the team surrounding Kelly as she got off to hand her horse to a groom who would walk him first to cool him and then see him groomed. The event squad was discussing where they were currently standing. They were in good shape. They knew they were still in first place and Kelly's strong run had given them a substantial lead.

"I say go for it, Ronin. I don't think anyone can overtake us at the end of today, even if you DQ'd."

"Go for the bloody record."

Ronin turned to include Devon in the discussion. She swung her leg over Pax and slid down, ending up in Ronin's arms. "I say kick ass and take names."

He kissed her and looked at his team, "Well, you heard the lady. Let's do this."

Ronin mounted Pax. Devon could feel the hum emanating from him. She had learned that many times what he was sending to her was a good indication of what he himself was feeling. She let it wash over her and fell in with the rest of the team as they gathered at the starting line.

The clock started to tick down for his start. Pax was seasoned enough that he was well aware of what was about to happen. His ears were up, he was extremely alert, and his body was waiting for the touch of Ronin's heel to start him on their way.

Ronin carried no crop or whip of any kind. He'd never found his horses needed them.

*Although...Devon's ass might be gorgeous sporting a few weals from a crop.*

He shook his head to clear it of those thoughts. He needed to focus on the task at hand. He'd have his way with Devon

tonight.

The starter bell sounded, and they took off. Pax felt good and solid and wanted to gallop much faster than normal. Ronin let him have his head. The first jump was a stone circle with a high fence on either side. The circle was actually lower and not as wide, but was more technically difficult than the wall itself. Ronin guided Pax straight through the center and the big horse took it with little break in his stride. A great start.

Ronin and Pax were having a spectacular run. The crowd cheering and shouts from his teammates told him so and his watch confirmed it. They were well ahead of the fast pace his team had already established. As he rounded the last turn, Pax felt stronger than when they'd started the almost five-mile-long course.

They approached the last water obstacle. The safest and easiest way to maneuver through it was to have your mount jump down from the shorter embankment at one end, gallop the length of the water between the two sides of the obstacle and then jump up out of the water on the lower end of the embankment on the far side.

This allowed the horse and rider to come at the second part of the obstacle with more horse being able to take more strides between the two. It was easier, but it took more time to negotiate.

The faster way had a greater degree of difficulty, but was shorter and thus less time consuming. It involved taking the obstacle in a direct line between the one before it and the one after. It was purposefully left late in the course to test the endurance and bravery of the contestants.

In order to take the obstacle with the most difficult but quickest way through, the horse had to gallop straight at a small ravine—too wide to jump from side-to-side. The horse would need to jump down into the water from a much taller and steeper bank, galloping straight across the water to the bank on the far side, which was much taller than the ends of the obstacle. The horse and rider needed to jump up on the far

bank, take two strides and jump a simple oxer. Not one rider yet had taken the faster approach.

Ronin listened to Pax's breathing and checked to see if he could feel any stress or fatigue. Sensing nothing but strength and power, Ronin urged Pax forward to the steeper drop down. The crowd held its breath as the big horse jumped down into the water. As he landed sure-footed and galloped straight across, Ronin could hear them cheering. Pax easily cleared the first bank coming out and seemed not to even notice the secondary jump only two strides away.

Ronin didn't hear anything during the last two obstacles. All he was aware of was Pax's rhythmic breathing and powerful stride. As they cleared the last obstacle with no faults, Pax picked up speed. When Ronin didn't rein him in, Pax poured the power on and sprinted to cross the finish line in spectacular fashion.

Ronin brought Pax down from the gallop to a lope to a trot and then finally to a halt right in front of Devon. The big gelding put his head against her chest and waited for her to rub his face. He'd become quite fond of Devon.

"You were great out there," she said.

"Are you talking to him or me?" asked Ronin.

"Him. All you did was play navigator. You'll have to show me some real talent and effort to get any praise from me."

Ronin got off Pax. "Sass. I killed that course. You make googly eyes at my horse and give me sass."

"What can I say, his performance was terrific. We'll have to see if you can impress me."

Those who could overhear them were having a great laugh.

"Will we now?"

Her giggle turned to a shriek laced with laughter when Ronin scooped her up over his shoulder, handed Pax off to one of the grooms, and headed towards the Range Rover.

"Put me down, you Neanderthal."

“Not bloody likely.” He carried her all the way to the vehicle and put her inside. Getting in the driver’s side, he waited until he was certain no one could hear them. He leaned across and kissed her. “You once told me that Texas cowgirls know how to deal with studs like me. I have a news flash for you. This Neanderthal stud knows how to deal with a sassy Texas cowgirl.”

“And how’s that?” she purred at him.

“We take them home, strip them naked, mount them properly, and fuck all that sass out of them.”

“You should know, that’s going to take an awful lot of fucking.”

He laughed as he backed the vehicle out of its parking space and headed for the farm.

“So be it.”

## CHAPTER 13



When they reached home, Gage ran to greet them. “Way to go, you two. I was watching down at the pub. The commentators were talking about the rumor that the two of you were keeping company. Throwing Devon over your shoulder while she giggled her fool head off certainly cleared up any doubt anyone might have had on that score. Not to mention that the local girls were somewhat disappointed that Ronin is off the market, but certainly impressed by the show of Neanderthalism.”

Ronin kissed Devon, turned her toward the house and swatted her behind. “Inside woman. You and I are going to have a little discussion about your sassing me all the time.”

Devon could feel the pure arousal of the hum he was sending her. Her nipples were tight and painful, and her pussy was frantic to feel him thrusting inside her.

“Doesn’t Gage need help with the chores?” she asked, trying to sound innocent.

Gage laughed and Ronin growled. “Should I regale you with a recount of all the sass I’ve endured since you got spanked? Just because I let it pass to ensure you sat properly for today’s ride doesn’t mean that I will continue to do so.”

She blushed, feeling her pussy start to throb as the hum deepened.

“Get your tail in gear, woman.” He swatted her again with just a bit more heat, causing her to yelp before heading to the house.





Gage watched his oldest brother, who was completely enthralled by the sight of Devon's swaying backside. There was no doubt in Gage's mind that Devon would have trouble walking come tomorrow. Ronin was definitely on the muscle and meant to flex that muscle with Devon this evening.

"So, you haven't had to spank her again?"

"I've chosen not to because she had to ride today. And not that it's any of your business little brother, but I haven't fucked her as hard or as much as I would have liked, either. You don't really need my help doing chores, do you?"

"What? You think I'm stupid enough to say yes and have you vent your frustration on me? No thanks, I'll pass. You go see to your woman. By the way, Mom and Dad are expecting the two of you for dinner tomorrow."

"Tell them we'll be there." Ronin started towards the house. "And Gage?"

"Yeah, bro?"

"Thanks for everything. Devon and I have an idea about you moving back that I think you'll like. And don't forget, we'll have Dreamer and Pax with us tomorrow when we come home."

"You're welcome. I've got both stalls ready to go except for feed and fresh water."



Ronin was not prepared for the sight that greeted him. Devon had obviously stripped as soon as she entered the house. He found her left boot and then her right. He collected both and then saw her belt by the fridge. He opened the fridge and realized there was a tray of meats, cheeses, and fruits missing as well as several bottles of water.

He began picking up her clothes, the trail of which led him to the bedroom.

By the time he got there, he was humming nothing but pure lust to her and could feel her response. He'd picked up each piece of clothing along the way. All but her panties.

She must not have worn any. She was on her knees in the middle of their bed. She had stretched out her upper body so that her ass was high with her head resting on the mattress. Her legs were spread. Her pussy was wet and waiting for him.

Ronin chuckled appreciatively. "I take it my little cowgirl would like her big, bad stud to give her a proper fucking?"

"Oh, God, yes. You've been humming at me since I finished my ride on Dreamer."

"Something I expect you to thank me for, by the way."

"You make me crazy horny for you when there's nothing you can do about it, and I'm supposed to thank you?"

She started to raise up on her hands, but he swatted her backside and pushed her down. "No way. Good girls stay in position while their mate gets ready to fuck them good, hard, and proper. I only hummed at you before and during your ride. Trust me, with those black chaps, it took great restraint on my part."

He trailed his fingers down her naked spine and into the crack of her ass.

She moaned. "Please, Ronin. I ache for you."

"You may find that preferable to being sore from me."

She laughed.

"Laugh now, but you have no idea how hard and how many times I'm going to make you come for me, before I drive deep and empty myself in you. By the time I'm through with you, you'll be sprawled out in our bed, exhausted and raw from my attention. And then you'll have to dress and become the respectable girlfriend of the winner of the event before we drop off the boys and head to my parents' house for dinner."

“We’re having dinner with your parents?” she squeaked.  
“You cannot make me sore right before I meet your parents.”

She tried to rise for the second time. Ronin grabbed her around the middle to hold her still and swatted her bottom six times with some resulting sting.

“Ouch, Ronin.”

“Mates who don’t want to meet their future in-laws with a well-spanked backside try to avoid misbehaving so their man doesn’t feel the need to give them a spanking to settle them down.” He reached under her to pinch her nipple. “I thought I told you to stay down.” He ran his hand over her slightly pink bottom.

Devon lowered herself back into position. “Yes, Ronin. Please, babe, can you just fuck me now?”

He chuckled as once again he ran his hand down her body, feeling her quiver as he did so. He reached between her spread legs and played with her clit. Her breathing indicated that she was on the verge of coming.

He stopped playing with her just as she neared the abyss. He sat down on the edge of the bed near her head and began to remove his boots. As he pulled his own clothing off, he fondled her, idly playing with her nipples and avoiding her swollen clit and hungry pussy.

Devon opened her eyes when she felt him stand up. His cock was fully aroused. The hood was drawn back, and he was dripping pre-cum. She licked her lips.

“Does my woman want to kiss her mate’s cock?”

“No. Your woman would like to suck her mate’s cock until he comes in her mouth and then suck him hard again.”

“Too bad my woman hasn’t been a good girl.” He stroked her body, once more trailing a finger down her spine and pushing two of his fingers up in her pussy. She was as wet as she’d ever been.

“Ronin, please.”

He could hear, see, and feel her frustration.

He stood so that his cock was towering over her head. “You can get up on your hands and place one kiss on the head of my cock, then you will lower yourself back in position and wait for me to fuck you.”

She raised up and started to reach out for him with her hand.

He slapped her hand away and then swatted her bottom twice. “No, Devon. I said you could give the head of my cock one kiss. Next time you’ll get your bottom and your pussy spanked.”



Devon could barely contain herself, she was so aroused. The hum coming from him and the sight of his cock ready to fuck her was almost more than she could stand. She leaned over and lovingly kissed his cock, sucking the bit of pre-cum that glistened on the tip.

He rubbed her bottom, slipping his hand between her legs to lightly touch her clit. She moaned.

“Now get back in position.” When she had done as she was told, he patted her bottom. “Much better. Now does my woman want to be fucked?”

“Yes, Ronin, please?”

Devon was wondering how this had gone so terribly wrong. She thought by presenting his aching cock with a viable target he would just come in, open his breeches, and have at her. Instead, she found herself wobbling on the edge of coming and practically begging him to use her.

Ronin got up on the bed behind her. Guiding his cock to her entrance, he surged forward, holding her hips so that all she could do was take him. She cried out as he drove home, and she climaxed in response.

“That’s how a good girl thanks her mate for knowing how to fuck her proper.”

Ronin started thrusting in and out of her. He hummed at her, and she purred in pleasure almost to the point of yowling like an alley cat in heat.

“You feel so good. But you’d better watch sassing me. With no equestrian events on the horizon for a few months, I won’t need to show so much restraint about how hard I spank or fuck you.”

“No, Ronin.”

“You don’t tell me no, Devon.” He punctuated each word by stroking her hard, burying his cock to the hilt.

“Yes, Ronin.”

“That’s better,” he said contentedly.

He went back to the rhythmic stroking and fucked her through another orgasm that took her breath away.

He continued to thrust in and out of her like some automated fucking machine, except for the fact that she could feel his cock throb as she climaxed around him and the hum felt like it had taken over her body. All that existed for her was Ronin’s hand, his hard cock, and the hum.

“Ronin, please!” she cried.

“What happens to Texas cowgirls who sass their mate?”

“They get fucked.”

“And what else? I don’t want there to be any questions in your mind. What happens when you continue to sass me after I’ve told you enough?”

“I get spanked.”

“And then what?”

“I get fucked from behind. God, Ronin, please, babe. I’ll try not to sass you so much.”

He chuckled. It was a warm, melodic noise, but also very masculine, an indication that he was very much in control of the situation.

“That’s a good girl. Now, come one more time for me.”

He increased the speed with which he thrust in and out, but still refused to release her hips or let her move with him. She climaxed one more time and felt him surge deep in her pussy to release his cum.

When he'd finally emptied himself, he leaned over her back and released her hips, but only so he could take her breasts in his hands and play with her nipples. The hum, which had abated somewhat as he came, started again and her body couldn't help but respond.

"Such a good girl," he said as he slipped his cock out of her and sat on the edge of the bed. Devon never moved out of position. He patted her bottom affectionately. "Now let's see what you've learned." He helped her to sit upright, only to draw her across his lap.

"Ronin, no."

His hand rained three hard spanks on her ass. "What did I tell you about telling me no?"

"That I wasn't to do it."

"That's right, and yet you did it again. Naughty girl. What happens to naughty girls when they don't mind their mate?"

"Ronin!" she wailed.

He swatted her backside, but not nearly as hard as he would if he was genuinely annoyed. It made no sense to her at all, but Ronin's spanking her increased her libido. It was as if he could release all her inhibitions and make her respond on a purely hedonistic level.

"What happens to naughty girls when they don't mind their mate?"

"They get spanked. I'm sorry. I'll behave."

"Yes, you will, but I'm going to warm up your backside to help you remember."

"Ronin, please. I thought you said you were going to spank me tomorrow—after I met your parents."

“No, Devon. Naughty girls get their bottoms spanked. And you’ve needed yours spanked for several days. I let that slide because of the event. I’m not sure in the future that having a competition will get you an extension when a spanking is due.”

He started to spank her slowly and with a little less force than he did the first time he spanked her for disobeying him. She could feel her bottom swelling from the strikes and could tell from the fire he lit that she was going to be very red by the time he finished. She could also feel him becoming erect, and her own arousal was beginning again.

“Open your legs, Devon. I want to check how wet you are for me.”

She thought about telling him to go fuck himself, but she knew that it would only get her bottom spanked again and that if she was being completely honest, she really wanted him to fuck her. She opened her legs and let out a small whimper when he plunged his fingers between her lower lips and stroked her.

“That’s right. A little preventative spanking from time to time should leave your bottom red and your pussy wet. I’m going to let you up and you’re going to go stand in the corner like a good girl.”

She stood up and he patted her bottom. “Go show me you can be a good girl.” She looked down at his cock and watched it harden, and then walked to the corner and stood.

Ronin got up and straightened the sheets. He watched Devon war with herself about whether or not to mind him and stay in the corner. He was glad to see that she chose compliance over defiance.

He joined her in the corner and reached around to play with her nipples. The hum started to roar arousal through every part of her being. He could feel her yield.

He pulled her hips out from the corner, kicked her legs apart and mounted her with a loud groan. “Good girl. I’m going to fuck you again here in the corner. Then I’ll let you

have some rest, but don't think I'm done with you for the night."

"Yes, Ronin," she purred.

She did like a bit of rough and tumble, his Devon. He was going to enjoy her for the rest of their lives. He knew she was exhausted from the day's events and from the orgasms he'd already given her.

"Devon, sweetheart, I may never let you out of this bedroom again."

He fucked her as he spoke, and she responded by surrendering her soul to his keeping.

"Really? And here I thought I was going to get fucked in the barn, in the Rover..."

He laughed. "You're sassing me again. Not your best idea when I'm already fucking you and your poor little bottom is all red and swollen. Maybe it needs a few good welts from my belt or one of the crops from down in the barn?"

"No, please, no. I'm sorry. I'll be good."

He whispered in her ear. "Not too good, I hope."

She laughed and came for him as he wrapped himself around her and once again emptied himself into her. When he was through, he uncoupled from her and gently patted her bottom, causing her to wince.

"You don't leave this corner until I tell you to. Is that clear?"

"Yes, Ronin," she said leaning into the wall. He grabbed a couple of grapes and popped one in her mouth.

He went into the bathroom for a shower. Would she join him or would she choose obedience? He walked out several minutes later, completely naked as he toweled off his hair, his cock at half-mast.

*I just can't seem to get enough of her.*

He looked down at his cock and said, "I told you I hadn't fucked you nearly as hard or as often as I wanted." He slipped



his hands beneath her to fondle and caress her nipples and clit.

“You’re nice and wet, sweetheart,” he said as he ran his finger from her clit to her pussy and back again. He led her over to their bed and sat down.

Smiling, he said, “On your knees. You can give me head until I’m hard again. When I tell you to get in position, you will get back up on our bed on your knees, with your front end down and your legs spread. Then I’ll have my way with you.”

She sank to her knees and took his cock in her hands and mouth. His moan was one of masculine power and pleasure. She’d always felt like she was in control when she was sucking a man’s cock. But not with Ronin, he made it equal parts desire and obedience.

He leaned back and stroked her hair as she took all of him into her mouth and ran her tongue between the foreskin and the penis itself, sucking as she did so. His response was to stand up, take her head in his hands to still her motions, and to start slowly fucking her mouth.

He stopped and looked down at her. “My beautiful woman. Let’s go. Get in position. I need to fuck you before I spill myself.”

She scrambled up onto the bed and he followed behind her, mounting her hard and fast as soon as her head hit the mattress. She came on his second stroke, and he rewarded her by stroking faster and harder. She came again and then he came with her, collapsing on her and following her down into the mattress. He rolled off of her and patted her bottom then pulled her close to nestle with him as they both drifted off to sleep.

## CHAPTER 14



Devon woke next to Ronin, who was still sleeping deeply sprawled on his back, his arm holding her against his body. Ever so gently, she moved away from him and went to take a shower. She stood under the rainfall showerhead and wondered when and how Ronin had so completely taken over her life. Even more interesting to her was how much she didn't mind.

She got out and dried off. She grabbed a pair of soft leggings, her sneakers, and one of Ronin's sweaters. It was warm this time of year in Ontario, but after the sun went down it could be chilly. She went through the French doors out onto the deck. It was dark, but the night sky was clear and bright with the stars twinkling in sharp contrast to the black of the sky.

She checked under the hot tub cover. The water was a little cooler than expected, but still very warm. She laughed as she realized she'd probably have more need of one now than she'd ever had. Ronin had a habit of fucking her hard and often. The very thought of it made her nipples harden and the vibrations in her pussy start.

She left the deck and started toward the barn. She opened the great hanging door and went in, closing it behind her. She checked the two huge open stalls. Gage had everything ready for Dreamer and Pax. All they would need was fresh water and feed when they got home the next day. She smiled as she thought of Sauvage as home.

She made a mental note to tell Ronin that. It would please him.

She walked through Pax's paddock and through the back gate into the pasture. One of the broodmares left the loafing shed and headed out to say hello. One thing about Ronin's horses was that not only were they well-kept and happy; they were friendly. She stood looking up at the sky and the sheer wonder of it. Suddenly the mare next to her became tense and started to sniff the night air.

The mare looked off in the distance and Devon tried to follow her gaze. It took a moment for her eyes to adjust to the darkness. She heard them before she could see them. As they crossed into the light cast by the full moon, she could see their silhouettes. Wild horses.

“Beautiful, aren't they?”

Devon wondered why Ronin's voice didn't surprise her as he came to stand behind her and wrap his arms around her waist, drawing her against the length of his body.

“Yes. I've always loved to watch them.

“Are they on free range or... How does that work here in Canada?”

“We still have some free-range land, but not as much as there used to be. Sauvage is about triple the size of what you see fenced. The rest I leave for the mustangs and other wild things. When the weather gets bad, we take the tractor and leave feed for them. Some people see them as pests. But others, like my family, think they are a part of our heritage and should be protected. There are several rescue groups and more than once we've found tire tracks on our land surrounded by hoof prints. I think they know I'm supportive so release them on my land.”

She nodded. “I know several individuals in Texas who work to keep the mustangs safe from illegal round-ups. Some ranchers will do what you do and offer them a kind of safe harbor on their land. But we also have federal land where it's illegal to try and catch them, so sometimes we...”

“We?”

“Yes. Sometimes I’ve been asked to help, and I have. It’s a fine line between what you can do legally and what you can’t, but each time I’ve marveled at how majestic they are.” Thinking to change the subject, she continued, “It’s so beautiful out here. Almost like I’m in a fairytale land.”

“So, does that make me the shining white knight to your beautiful princess?”

She snorted. “Hardly. I’ve never been anyone’s idea of a princess and if you were any character in those tales, you would be the dragon.”

He laughed and hugged her. “That’s all right. Dragons can make fire to keep you warm.”

“And then I can make s’mores.”

He threw back his head and laughed louder. “I am one lucky sonofabitch to be able to call you mine.”

“How do you figure?”

“You can ride better than most anyone I know and have a special way with horses. You can cook, including making biscuits and s’mores, you have no trouble pitching in with hard work, and you get very aroused when I spank you.”

“That’s what you like best about me? I can ride, work hard, cook, and you like spanking me?”

“No, sweetheart, what I like best about you is the way you respond to me. If I put my hands on you or start to hum to you, you respond and become aroused. And lord knows I like fucking you. You make me feel like a fifteen-year-old boy right after he’s had his first taste of pussy... I just can’t get enough.”

She laughed softly. “You should be back in bed.”

“Excellent suggestion.”

“To sleep. You have to ride and compete tomorrow.”

“Devon, I’ve been known to win competitions when I failed to get any sleep at all and am hungover.”

“Perhaps, but if you fall off, it’ll be all my fault.”

He chuckled. “No, my teammates would want to make sure I hadn’t hurt you with all of my amorous attentions,” he said, rubbing his cheek against hers.

“They adore you,” he continued. “In fact, they are all scheming about how to get you on the team. Collins is angling to make you a dressage rider. You’d look cute in tight white breeches and tails. That way you could keep those black chaps in our bedroom and just wear them for me.”

“You really have a thing for my chaps, don’t you?” She laughed.

“Baby, you have no idea. I have about half a dozen fantasies about you wearing them.”

“Do they all end up with your cock shoved up my pussy?”

“As a matter of fact, they do. I’m kind of a one trick pony that way.”

“Well, let’s go back to the house. You should go back to bed and try to sleep. I think I may soak in that lovely hot tub. Only problem is I don’t have a suit with me.”

“Why do you think I have it situated where it is? Anyone not coming out of the bedroom would be hard pressed to see it. You, my pretty, are forbidden to wear a bathing suit of any kind in our hot tub.”

“You are impossible.”

“No. I’m a Neanderthal with a gorgeous woman to call his own and I like seeing her naked as often as possible.” She elbowed him playfully in the ribs. “Careful mate. You might want to think before you try to clobber me or sass me too much. Let’s go back to the house.”

“You go. I want to stay here a while.”

“I’m sorry. Did you think that was a suggestion? Let me try again, turn your cute little butt around and let’s head into the house or I’ll pick you up and carry you.” He increased the vibrato of the hum.

“That thing ought to be outlawed or at least regulated to be used only to do good in the world.”

“I know. It’s not fair. Now do you want to walk, or should I carry you?”

“Neanderthal.”

“Yep, your personal Neanderthal alpha male.”

They walked back to the house with their arms wrapped around each other. Devon’s plan to send him back to bed to sleep and to slip into the hot tub didn’t go as planned. She ended up in the hot tub with Ronin who proceeded to fuck her there... much to her delight.

## CHAPTER 15



The day dawned bright and clear. As was their custom, Devon had awakened to feel Ronin pulling her underneath him and parting her legs, first with his hand to ensure she was wet enough for him, and then with his own thighs as he mounted her and began to stroke. God, but she loved waking with him.

When he'd brought her to orgasm before taking his own release, she whispered, "Stay," as she wrapped her legs around him.

He smiled and nuzzled her. "Good morning, my love. As much as I'd like to, I need to get ready and head to the fairgrounds. You can sleep if you like, and I'll have Gage run you over later."

"No need to trouble Gage, I can take the truck and drive myself."

Ronin propped himself up to look down at her. "Except for the fact that I told you that you were grounded from driving for two weeks just a few days ago."

"You are being unreasonable and annoying. And stop that humming. It is so damned irritating."

He chuckled. "Careful, baby. I'll have no trouble spanking your sexy ass before taking you to meet my family. After today, the season is over for a while. I mean to make it my chief aim in life to see just how many times and how hard I can fuck you."

She giggled. “Well, it’s good to have a goal for the off season.” She placed her fingers over his lips. “I know; I’m sassing you again.”

He smiled. “That’s all right, love. Don’t tell anyone, but I kind of like it that you sass me. Besides, it gives me a ready-made excuse to spank you.”

She threw a pillow at his head as he got off the bed, which he ignored. “Can you wait for me? If I can’t drive myself, then I don’t want to put Gage out and I’ll just come with you.”

“Then get a move on. I’d tell you to hop in the shower with me, but I think we both know that would end up taking a lot longer than if we showered separately.”

She laughed. When he was out of the shower, she went in and took her own. She dressed quickly, drawing her long wet hair into a ponytail and then putting on a Team Canada baseball cap and pulling her hair through the opening in the back.

He looked at her and grinned.

“What?” she said. “You said I needed to be the respectable girlfriend.”

“And you look very respectable. Those poor bastards will never know what you look like stripped naked, bright red bottom, sprawled on our bed with my cum dripping out of your pussy.”

“Neanderthal.”

“Yes, but a winning Neanderthal.”



They arrived at the showgrounds in plenty of time. As Ronin met with his team, Devon went to visit Pax, who greeted her with a low whicker.

“Hello, sweet boy. You keep him safe over those jumps today, okay? Then you get to come home for a few months and



just be a horse.” She picked up one of the grooming kits and started to curry and brush him.

Mic saw her. “Normally I’d object to anyone other than one of the team grooms touching one of the horses, especially on a competition day.”

“I’m so sorry. I didn’t even think of that.”

“Not to worry. I know who you are and more importantly, Pax seems to like you and responds well to you.”

She smiled. “He knows how I feel about Ronin.”

Mic smiled back at her. “I think everybody knows how you feel about Ronin. And how he feels about you. You two are good for each other.”

Unsure of how to respond, Devon said nothing. She finished with Pax and told Mic to let Ronin know she was going to see Dreamer but would be at the arena before they went in.

Devon headed towards the American team’s barn. She was greeted by the team members who were left getting ready to finish up the three-day eventing competition. The Americans had placed a respectable sixth in dressage and were standing third overall after the cross country.

The Canadian team had surprised everyone, including themselves, and were still standing in first place.

She went into Dreamer’s stall and groomed him. She looked down and wondered if respectable girlfriends were covered in horsehair.

The head coach stuck his head in the stall. “I know the answer, but feel I need to confirm with you. Dreamer won’t need to go home to Texas, will he?”

She turned to look at him and was touched by the warmth in his eyes and his smile. “No, getting home is only a little over an hour from here.”

“For what it’s worth, I’m glad you two found each other. You belong together and we wish you every happiness.”

She exited Dreamer's stall and placed her hand on the coach's arm. Reaching up she kissed him on the cheek. "Thanks. I appreciate everything you've done to support me and the reiners."

She left him but had to wipe away a tear. She felt like she and Dreamer were leaving their old life and starting a new one here.

She broke into a jog when she saw the Canadian team occupying one corner of the warm-up arena. Ronin was off Pax and in deep conversation with Kelly, who was puking into a bucket. "All you have to do is get round clean. Don't worry about the clock. I'm riding anchor again." He looked up and saw Devon. "I'll tell you what. Why don't you just stand here and take some deep breaths and suck on one of these peppermints. I'll go warm your horse up and Devon can warm up Pax."

Kelly looked up at him, grateful and concerned. "Are you sure? Don't you want to warm up Pax yourself?"

"Nah, she warmed him up for the cross-country yesterday and it's the best go I ever had." He lowered his voice, "Don't tell anyone, but I think he's almost as sweet on her as I am." Kelly smiled. Ronin turned to Devon, "You don't mind, do you, babe?"

"Not at all," she said, as much to reassure Kelly as to answer Ronin.

Devon took the reins from Ronin, and Collins gave her a leg up. She trotted the big horse out into the arena on a loose rein and put him on the rail to let him warm up. She kept one eye on what she was doing with Pax and one on Ronin with Kelly's horse. The horse seemed far calmer under Ronin's sure hands than he had under Kelly's.

It was time for Kelly to take her turn over the preliminary jump course. Devon took Pax over to where Ronin was giving her a leg up. "Now remember, just breathe and get him round. This is his kind of course and you should be able to go clean without any time faults. Quincy and Bobby both went clean, so we've already got two in the jump off. You can do this,

Kelly.” Kelly picked up her reins and headed into the arena. The gate closed and Ronin and the rest of the team waited there.

Devon smiled as she watched the team take every jump with Kelly. If the sheer will of her teammates could get her through the course clean, she had nothing to worry about. Kelly cleared the last jump and brought her horse across the finish line with one one-hundredth of a second to spare. Kelly was beaming as she came through the gate and passed by the next competitor as they entered to start their round.

There were shouts of congratulations from her team and the other teams, as well. Kelly was universally well liked. She slid off her horse and hugged Ronin, who hugged her back. “Told you,” he said, grinning at her.

“You guys are the best. I could feel you all with me in that arena. That’s three out of the four of us in the jump off, Ronin. It’s all on you now.”

“No pressure at all. If I crash through every fence, we should still be okay. No other team has more than one rider in the jump off unless Neil manages to—” He was interrupted as the crowd let out an anguished sigh.

Collins flew to the gate to see what had happened. “Holy shit! Neil’s horse just refused a fence and unseated him.” The man was grinning from ear-to-ear when he returned to his teammates. “I know I should feel bad about that, but I don’t.” He clapped his hands together. “That’s it, then. We’re the only ones with more than one in the jump off. You’re up Ronin.”

Devon threw her leg over Pax and slid to the ground, handing Ronin his horse as he adjusted the stirrup length on one side and Kelly adjusted the one on the other side. Ronin got up on Pax, leaned down to kiss Devon and then entered the ring.

Once again, the Canadian team gathered at the gate to watch one of theirs take the course. Pax and Ronin seemed relaxed as they approached the first fence and cleared it with ease.

“Sometimes he looks like he’s just out for an afternoon in the park. They make it look so easy,” said Kelly from her spot next to Devon.

“I know. Pax is amazing. Have you ever ridden him? There’s just so much power there.”

Collins, who was on her other side, laughed. “Apparently you don’t realize that you are the only person who’s ever ridden Pax other than Ronin. Not that some haven’t tried, but he can be a nasty piece of work. You seem to have a positive influence on both of their dispositions.”

Devon never took her eyes off of Pax and Ronin as they quickly and surely completed the course in the second-best time, with no faults whatsoever. Devon watched as Ronin’s teammates gathered around him to congratulate them and to talk strategy for the jump off.

Devon knew that in any stadium jumping contest, horses had to follow a specific course within an allotted amount of time. Faults were given for various things, such as a refusal to take a jump or knocking part of it down, rider or horse taking a tumble, not following the course, or not completing it within the specified time.

The win was awarded to the horse with the least amount of faults. If more than one horse and rider team completed the course with no faults, a jump off would be held in reverse order, with the slowest time being the first to go and the rider and horse team with the best time going last.

Ronin dismounted and called to her. “Sweetheart, can you come take care of Pax for me?”

“Sure,” she said and was caught unawares as he swept her into his arms and kissed her.

“Just do whatever you did before we went in. He was relaxed and happy,” he said and then whispered in her ear so only she could hear, “Kind of like me after we fuck.”

Devon laughed and whispered back, “Yes, I’ve noticed you both like being between my legs.”

Ronin threw back his head and laughed out loud. “God, I love you,” he said, kissing her a last time and then giving her a leg up onto Pax.



He turned back to the four riders who would be in the jump off. “Kelly, you’re first up.”

“Ronin, we all know I can’t win,” she shook her head as they started to correct her. “I’m thrilled to be in the jump off. But my horse simply isn’t as fast or as accurate as the rest of yours are. What do I do to set up one of you to win?”

Ronin smiled at her. She was right, although he never would have said that to her. The jump off would follow a different course and once again the goal was to go with as few faults as possible. Only this time, there was a clock running. The horse with the fewest faults in the least amount of time was the winner.

“Both of you are green. Your time will come. He’s a great horse. But you’re right. You need to go clean and give the rest of us the lay of the land. We don’t get to walk the jump off like we did the original course. Everyone will be watching you go to see what they can learn, but only our team will have the benefit of you having negotiated it and figuring out the sticky spots.”

Everyone nodded in agreement and laid out the rest of their game plan. All agreed that if three of the four of them went clean, then as in the cross country, Ronin would go for broke and see if he couldn’t put pressure on the last rider, Jean Paul of the French team.

Once again, Ronin gave Kelly a leg up onto her horse. She rode into the arena, did her warm-up circle and started towards the first fence. Ronin watched her go and realized that while she wasn’t trying to break any records, she was going at a respectable pace.

Bobby, who would be riding two horses in front of Ronin, said, “She’s doing a right good job of it out there.”

Ronin nodded. “She seems to be more comfortable this round than she was in the preliminary. And look at her poker face. Unless that course is a lot easier than it looks, she’s giving nothing away to the other teams.”

Kelly went clean in a good time. She exited the arena and was beaming. Her teammates congratulated her as she hopped off, giving her a horse a big hug and letting one of the grooms take him to cool off. Kelly quickly shared her insights into the jump off course.

Armed with good information, Quincy rode into the arena and began his run. Again, the whole team gathered at the gate to watch him go. Because of what Kelly had learned and shared, Quincy was able to make a couple of short-cuts which allowed him to go clean with the best time thus far.

Exiting the arena, Quincy quickly told Bobby and Ronin the things he had learned with the adjustments to Kelly’s navigation of the course.

When Bobby entered the arena for his go, Quincy was sitting in first place with Kelly in third. Bobby took off and ran a fast, smooth course utilizing the information from both Quincy and Kelly. Between the second to the last and last fence, Bobby’s horse stumbled, but was able to recover and clear the final fence. He too had gone clean, but his time put him behind Quincy and just above Kelly. So, the team were now in first, third, and fourth place.

Devon brought Pax to Ronin, and he brought her up-to-speed as to their standings as he got up on the big horse. “Knock ‘em dead, Ronin.” She patted Pax’s rump as Ronin picked up a trot and entered the arena. The gate closed behind them, and the whole team took up their spot to watch.

## CHAPTER 16



Devon found herself standing amidst Ronin’s friends and team members, hanging onto the fence, her eyes glued to him.

“They look so relaxed,” marveled Kelly watching horse and rider break into an easy canter before approaching the first fence.

All of the relaxation and nonchalance with which they had entered the arena was tossed to the wayside as Pax crossed the timed start. Both he and Ronin became a single, focused machine intent on only one thing—winning.

Combining Pax’s talent, speed, and muscle with his own considerable skills and the knowledge learned from his team, Ronin was able to lay down a blistering pace, taking short-cuts through the course no one else had seen or tried. Each time, Pax sailed over the fence in front of him as if he had been negotiating that fence in that arena all of his life.

“He makes it look so easy,” said Collins.

They cleared the second to the last fence and Pax charged for the final obstacle, a huge triple bar, and one of Pax’s favorite jumps. Pax stretched up and out with a huge push from his powerful hind end and easily cleared the fence, landing steady on his feet before pouring into a full gallop as he crossed the finish line.



Even before he could check the clock, Ronin knew from the crowd's jubilant reaction that they had put in a brilliant run.

He turned to look at the official clock and was surprised. They had been far faster than he had even imagined they could be. Ronin reached down and stroked the big horse's neck, rubbing up and down on both sides.

Ronin passed Jean Paul as he exited the arena and Jean Paul entered. Instead of the normal nod of acknowledgement, Jean Paul reined his horse in and held out his hand to Ronin who shook it. "Good luck, Jean Paul."

"I'll need it," laughed Jean Paul. "Spectacular run."

"Thanks. I'm blessed with a great horse."

Jean Paul looked back over his shoulder at Devon who was waiting for Ronin and Pax just outside the arena, "And an even better woman."

Ronin laughed and nodded. "Yes. I am one lucky bastard."

Jean Paul laughed again, "That you are." With that, he picked up his horse's reins and entered the arena.

The gate closed, and Ronin was surrounded by his overjoyed team. Ronin's run had put him in first place, Quincy in second, Bobby in fourth and Kelly in fifth. Regardless of what happened with Jean Paul's run, all four members of the Canadian team would finish in the top ten.

Ronin threw his leg over Pax's shoulder and slid off. He had planned to immediately embrace Devon, but Pax pushed his head into her chest.

Collins laughed. "Careful, buddy, I think your horse is trying to make time with your girl."

Ronin patted the big gelding but moved him aside so that he could take Devon in his arms. Ronin kissed Devon, tucking her under his arm as he ended the kiss.

The team had been so engrossed in congratulating Ronin that none of them were watching Jean Paul's run. A concerned cry went up from the crowd.



Kelly sprinted to the gate and then turned to her team, “Jean Paul’s horse lost his footing and went down. Jean Paul came off. They’re both okay. Holy shit! We’re all in the top five!”

The celebration bash at the Canadian team’s barn was in full swing by the time the horses and riders of the eventing squad returned. The horses were washed down, fed, and made comfortable. As they entered the area, Devon heard a familiar nicker. Dreamer was now occupying what had been an empty stall next to Pax.

Mic said to her, “I thought it’d just be easier to load him and all of your gear out of our barn into Ronin’s truck.”

Devon gave Dreamer a kiss on his nose. “Thanks, Mic. I appreciate that. I hope he wasn’t too much of a bother.”

“Him? He’s a piece of cake compared to that beast of Ronin’s. I’ll make you a deal. I’ll handle Dreamer and you handle Pax. Both he and his rider seem to have fallen under your spell.”

She laughed. “For entirely different reasons.”

Ronin came up behind her and hugged her to him whispering in her ear, “Different reasons perhaps, but the same location. Right between those pretty legs.”

She elbowed him playfully in the ribs, causing him to exhale sharply and release her from his embrace. “Remember what I told you about Texas cowgirls and studs who misbehave.”

He laughed. “I remember all too well, but I think you are far too fond of that part of my anatomy to follow through.”

Devon grinned at him. “Perhaps,” she said, as she allowed him to pull her back into his embrace.

They joined the rest of the team and had a celebratory nonalcoholic beverage. Everyone on the team had to load their horses and get them safely home. No one ever had a drink on traveling days.

Ronin and Devon waved Mic and the other grooms off and began to load their equipment into Ronin's rig. Once everything was loaded, they gathered up Pax and Dreamer, loading them into the trailer. Both horses were seasoned veterans at hauling, so loading them was quick and easy.

Once the back door and ramp were secured, Devon asked "Babe, do you want me to drive? I can if you're tired."

He hugged her to him and said, "I might take you up on that if you weren't grounded from driving. Besides, I'm not all that tired." Ronin escorted her to the passenger side and waited patiently for her to get in.

"You can't ground me," she said.

"You aren't paying attention, sweetheart. I already did."

He got behind the wheel and buckled his safety belt. Slowly and carefully, he negotiated his way through the other rigs, horses and handlers as he made his way out of the fairgrounds and then headed for home.

As he got up on the highway, he looked over at the set of Devon's shoulders and mouth. "No need to pout, Dev. I'll grant you, it's adorable, but I assure you it won't be very effective. All I want to do is get home, take a shower, fuck you, and then head over to my folks for supper."

Devon wondered why she loved him. He could be so infuriating and made the most outrageous comments sound normal. "Maybe we should fuck and then shower? After all, your family doesn't need to smell horses or sex on us."

"I'm good with whatever order you want as long as both happen before we head to their house."

She leaned over and kissed him on the cheek. "Then when we come back, maybe we can soak in the hot tub before we spend the night fucking our brains out?"

"I'm all for a good soak and seeing just how tired and sore I can make you by morning," he said reaching over to squeeze her thigh.

When they arrived at the farm, Gage greeted them, hugging his brother and congratulating him. “Well done, Ronin. That ride was brilliant. I swear, you need to get Devon to warm Pax up every time you ride.”

Ronin laughed. “Everyone keeps saying that. She does have a way of keeping both of us mellowed out.”

“Enough, both of you,” said Devon as she unloaded Dreamer and walked him to his new stall. She went in with him and removed his halter and the supportive leg wraps he’d worn for the trip home. She walked out into his private paddock that in turn opened into a big, shared field. Dreamer was going to love it here.

Ronin led Pax in, removed his wraps and turned him loose. He chuckled as he watched Pax trot out into his paddock to see Devon. Pax and Dreamer sniffed noses, arched their necks in a little male posturing and then stopped when Devon said, “Enough, both of you.”

Devon left them to get better acquainted and walked back into Dreamer’s stall. Ronin opened the door for her and let her out.

“Look,” he said, indicating their two horses.

The two geldings had decided to be friends and were scratching each other’s withers over the fence that divided their paddocks. Devon smiled and wrapped her arms around Ronin, bringing his head down for a kiss. He quickly took command of the kiss and had her breathless and highly aroused before he let her come up for air.

“Hey, you two,” called Gage, “remember you are expected for dinner. I’m heading out. See you later.” Gage sprinted up the drive and hopped into his car.

Devon turned toward the house, but Ronin pulled her against him before swinging her onto one of the bales of hay. He grabbed first one leg and then the other before pulling her boots off.

“Christ, I thought he’d never leave.”

He unzipped her jeans and then stood her up to strip her naked and set her atop one of the sturdy saddle stands.

“Grab the iron bars of the stall behind you. Arch your back and don’t let go.”

Once she complied, he knelt down and placed each of her legs over one of his shoulders.

“Ronin...”

“Hush,” he murmured before burying his face between her legs and inhaling deeply.

He reached up with his hand, cupping her breast and thumbing her nipple until it pebbled beneath his touch. He pinched it, making her gasp.

Ronin put his mouth on her, licking her labia and giving her clit some much needed attention. It was throbbing and he nuzzled it before sucking it into his mouth, swirling his tongue around it and giving it the barest edge of his teeth.

He was driving her crazy and she tried to sit up. The nip was more intense, and she hissed before leaning back into the position he wanted. His reward was to lick and kiss her little nub until all she felt was pure lust running through her.

Her body was more than ready for him. Her nipples were so hard they were painful and the attention he was giving her labia and clit were driving her out of her mind. The hum no longer offered any kind of comfort. The only thing she could feel was lust.

Ronin feasted on her sex, using his lips, tongue, and mouth to drive her into a frenzy. His tongue lapped up all her honey as he speared her pussy with it again and again.

Devon cried out as she hit the peak of her orgasm, her body arching up and then trembling from head to toe.

Ronin stood, opened the fly of his breeches, and thrust into her in a single push. Her legs locked around him as he began to find the rhythm that had become so familiar to them. He was still a lot to handle, but now the snugness and friction were part and parcel of what she loved about fucking him.

As she peaked a second time, he began pounding into her with a relentless fury, grasping her thighs to hold her still as over and over he drove into her, aiming for and finding her G-spot repeatedly. She wanted to hold out, wanted to keep some kind of control, but he knew her too well.

When her breathing quickened a third time, he leaned into her, hammering her pussy like a piston before he stiffened, grinding himself against her as he emptied himself into her.

“We won,” he said with a grin. “And I got the biggest prize of all... you.”

Devon looked down at her state of undress. With the exception of her ball cap, she was completely nude. “How do you suggest I get up to the house like this? Am I supposed to run up there naked and barefoot?”

“Of course not. I may be a Neanderthal, but I’m a fucking Neanderthal gentleman.”

With that, he tossed her over his shoulder, stooping down to gather her clothing. Devon laughed all the way up to the house.

## CHAPTER 17



They spent the rest of the afternoon pleasuring each other, taking a shower, soaking in the hot tub, and planning a future together. More than once, Devon tried to question the speed with which they were moving, but Ronin reassured her that they were right on track. He continually hummed reassurance laced with arousal. She found it impossible to resist him, a fact he knew and took full advantage of.

When it came time to leave to join his family for supper, Devon became agitated and reticent about meeting them. Ronin tried to help soothe her nerves with both the hum and staying in close physical contact with her. But it seemed the more he tried to calm her and allay her concerns, the more upset she became.

“I really don’t have anything to wear. Maybe we should put it off until next week and I can find something appropriate in Toronto.” Devon was standing with nothing but her bra and panties on, pulling things out of her travel bag and tossing them to the side.

“Devon, this is my family. They’re going to love you. Unless I’m mistaken, they already do. Gage has probably told them everything about you.”

“And what the hell does he know? That I can ride? That you like to fuck me? That you think it’s all right to spank me? He doesn’t know anything about me other than the fact that his brother considers me to be his personal fuck toy?”

“I see,” said Ronin.

“What do you see?”

Ronin increased the level of arousal in his hum to her.

“Stop that!”

He shook his head and took her by the hand. She tried to pull away, but he held fast. He led her to the bed and sat down, pulling her into his lap. She struggled to get away from him.

“Enough, Devon. I’m not sure why you are stressing yourself out, but you need to just take a deep breath and tell me what’s wrong. I can’t fix it if I don’t know what it is.”

“I don’t need you to fix anything. You know I am a capable, independent adult who has lived her life thus far without you, your domineering ways, and that God damn hum.”

“Sweetheart, you’d better hope I keep humming at you.” Ronin was trying to be patient, but his patience was beginning to wear thin.

Devon tried to get to her feet and to resist the pull of the hum. “I think maybe you should go alone. They’re not going to want some outsider horning in on their victory celebration for their oldest son.”

Ronin pulled her back onto his lap. “Devon, you are my woman. They want to meet you. They want to welcome you into the family.” He tried to lighten the mood. “They had about given up hope I’d ever mount anything other than my horses.”

“No. I’m not going.”

“Yes, you are. You can either get dressed and we’ll head out to a nice, fun evening with my family, or—”

“What’s my other option?”

“Simple. I stop humming, put you over my knee, spank that sexy ass of yours until you decide to tell me what the issue is and then we’ll go to my parents’ farm. What’s it to be, Devon? Do you want to share what’s bothering you or do you want to do so after I’ve warmed your backside?”

“Stop humming at me.”

“Spanked ass it is.” Before she was certain of his intent, he pulled her over his lap until she was face down. He lowered her panties and rained a series of hard slaps to her bottom until it started to show some color and she quit struggling. “Like I said, when you’re upset, you don’t want me to stop humming because that means you’re about to get spanked.”

“Ronin, please, stop.”

He stilled his hand. “Are you ready to talk to me?” When she didn’t answer quickly enough, he resumed spanking her until she ceased her struggles and just started crying. He stopped spanking her and began to rub her red bottom. “Do you talk to me or do I need to put more color in this pretty ass?”

“I want up.”

He started to spank her again. “That wasn’t one of your choices. Since you continue to choose not to talk, I will continue to put some more color on your backside.”

“No, please, Ronin. I’ll talk. Please?”

He stopped and waited. She tried to raise up and received another round of swats for her trouble. “You stay over my knee until I tell you that you can get up. And I’m not telling you that you can get up until you tell me what’s wrong.”

“All right!” she snapped.

He stopped again, but kept one hand on her upper back to encourage her to stay where she was and the other he rested on her heated backside. “I’m listening.”

“Can’t I sit in your lap? I don’t like being made to stay this way.”

“You had a chance earlier to talk to me sitting in my lap like the beautiful, reasonable woman I love. You opted out of that. So now, my naughty mate, you can stay across my knee face down, with a bright red bottom until you answer my question.”



“What if they don’t like me? What if Gage told them that you’ve spanked me, and I haven’t left you because of it? What if he’s told them that you like fucking me until I have trouble walking the next day and that I like that too?”

Ronin laughed. “So what? They already love you. It wasn’t going to take long before they knew those things. Sweetheart, I told you, the men in my family were raised with the idea that if a man truly loves his woman, he will correct her when she needs it and fuck her hard the rest of the time.”

As he talked he started to hum to her. This time she did not resist, and she began to relax. “There’s my good mate,” he crooned. “If I let you up, do you think you can find something to put on so we can leave?”

“Yes, Ronin. I’m sorry.”

He chuckled and kissed lightly on her mouth before helping her up. She started to pull on her panties. He shook his head. “No, give me the panties.”

“What?”

“You heard me. Hand me the panties. And since you’re having trouble deciding what to wear, I’ll choose for you. Put on the pretty gauzy skirt and a sweater. You can wear your boots, but no panties for you. If you get sassy with me, I want to be able to get to that pussy and that bottom without any obstructions.”

He held his hand out, waiting. She knew he was letting her decide to yield or not. He crooked his hand at her again.

“Give them to me, Devon.”

Reluctantly she handed them over. He took them and then pulled her close to him, rubbing her painful backside. “What a good mate you can be when you try,” he said as the hum began to reverberate throughout her body.

She picked up the skirt off the floor and paired it with a comfortable sweater and her favorite cowboy boots. She was straightening up from pulling on her boots when she caught Ronin watching her with little thought to trying to hide the lust that was starting to occupy his mind and invade his hum.

“Come here, mate.” It was said casually, but the underlying tone left no doubt in her mind that he wasn’t in the mood to be disobeyed.

She walked up to him smiling. “Yes, you Neanderthal?”

He chuckled and ran his hand up under her skirt, along the inside of her thigh and right up into her slit which was wet with her slick from the spanking. She parted her legs to allow him easier access. He put two of his fingers up in her and thrust them in and out while he circled her clit with his thumb.

She moaned. “Ronin.”

He stopped. “And that, my mate, is what you’ll get tonight when we get home, only it will be my tongue and my cock and not just my fingers. Would you like that, sweetheart?”

“Yes, very much.”

“Of course,” he said silkily “I could take you on a tour of my parents’ farm and find a nice quiet place to fuck you. I rather like the idea of you having to sit and be a civilized girl with nice manners with my hot cum up inside you dribbling out.”

She knew Ronin loved to see her blush. She had lost any inhibitions with him and responded wildly to him whenever he fucked her, and yet she would blush easily even if it was just the two of them.

He nuzzled her neck and ran his hands up under her sweater and traced the outline of her nipples over her lace bra. “I think my mate likes that idea as well.”

“No, I don’t. Please, Ronin. I’m already nervous about meeting your family.”

“Hush, love. Give them ten minutes and you’ll feel like you’ve known them all your life. But I’ll behave unless I have to discipline you. There are many private places that I can take you to put some more sting in your tail.”

She snuggled closer to him. “We could always just stay here.”

“And never hear the end of it from them? I think not.” Before she could protest, he kissed her, sweeping his tongue past her teeth to explore her mouth briefly. “Come on, sweetheart, we need to get a move on.”



The drive to his parents’ farm took about two hours. Devon felt bad that Gage was having such a long commute. “We really need to get the dairy barn reconfigured for him.”

“I agree. But don’t feel too bad. I think he stops off to get between the legs of a girl he might be sweet on, and doesn’t always make it home,” Ronin said, laughing.

“Gage has a girl?”

“He doesn’t talk about her, which tells me she means something to him.”

“Does she ride?”

“I think so. Why?”

“Maybe we should see if they’d like to go for a ride one afternoon and then have dinner at the house.”

Ronin smiled.

“What?” she said.

“I just like when you get all domestic.”

She snorted.

“I’m serious. I love how you can go from intense international competitor, to wild woman in bed, to helping my little brother with his girl, to needing a spanking and responding well to it.”

“You especially like the woman who can’t resist you when you decide to fuck her and generally gives in when you start to beat her and then gets crazy horny from it.”

He laughed. “And the woman who fearlessly sasses her Neanderthal mate.”

They turned down the long drive to the home where he'd been born, and where he'd grown up. Huge pastures with large herds of sheep lined either side. The house was a typical farmhouse with an enormous wrap-around porch.

They must have heard the Range Rover approaching because the whole family came out to greet them. Devon could see that the apple didn't fall far from the tree in terms of looks in Ronin's family. The boys looked like their father with just a touch of their mother thrown in. His brother's wives were all lovely and the welcoming smiles on everyone's faces seemed sincere.

"Maybe this won't be as bad as I feared," she said.

"Maybe next time you get scared, you'll tell me before I have to put you over my knee." He leaned across and kissed her cheek as she blushed.

"Maybe, but I'm not promising anything."

"Sass away, cowgirl. We'll see how sassy you're feeling later tonight."

He got out of the Range Rover to open her door. Devon got out and he wrapped his arm around her, increasing the hum to soothe her nervousness. "You can ride in front of millions of people and you worry about meeting my family? You're a silly mate."

She laughed and relaxed, but was happy to see Gage was there.

"Everyone? This is my beloved Devon. Devon, this is everyone." Then he introduced them individually. "Remember I warned you the whole male side are a bunch of Neanderthals. The women, however, are the most amazing group of females ever to grace this earth."

One of his brother's wives—Devon couldn't remember whose—said, "I remember thinking they all needed to wear name tags."

Devon smiled, feeling immediately at home and welcome.

At last, she was introduced to Ronin's mother who looked her over sternly and said, "I'd advise you to run now while you can, but Gage tells us you already tried that with as little success as I had."

She started laughing and pulled Devon into a long, comforting hug. Then she whispered, "Don't worry. They can be a bit overbearing, but they love with their whole heart and soul."

Devon saw wisdom and peace in the woman's eyes. "So, you never regretted his coming after you?"

"No, but don't you ever tell him that." She put her arm around Devon's shoulders and shooed the men away. "Gage tells me you can make wonderful biscuits." She led her into the kitchen. "Would you mind making some to add to the meal?"

"Not at all."

Devon had never cooked in a group before. It wasn't just the women. There were brothers, wives, kids, and dogs. It was fun. She looked over at Ronin who was beaming at her and humming to her.

One of the other wives— lord she'd never learn who belonged with which brother— said, "I can never decide if I love that hum or loathe it."

"I know exactly what you mean."

The rest of the evening was relaxed and filled with good food and plenty of laughter. It was obvious to Devon that Ronin came from a close-knit family, but one that welcomed new members.

As they left the farm, Devon said to Ronin, "Your family is wonderful. They may even be worth putting up with you."

Ronin started to interweave arousal into the hum. "Keep sassing me, cowgirl. We'll see how long that lasts when we get home."

Once they arrived at the house, they checked on the animals before going up to the house, helping each other

undress, and getting into the hot tub where they cuddled and caressed each other. Finally, Ronin stood up with her in his arms and carried her to their bed, where he made love to her several times before they collapsed in exhaustion and drifting off to sleep in one another's arms.

## CHAPTER 18



Dawn was just starting to creep above the horizon when Ronin reached for Devon. He did so more out of instinct than actual thought as he started to wake. Realizing she was no longer beside him, Ronin called to her. There was no answer, and no sound came from within the house. He pulled on jeans and boots. He was pulling on a sweater as he checked to ensure all the vehicles were still there.

He strode back through the house and out onto the deck. She wasn't in the hot tub. He walked down to the barn, but before he could open the door or call to her, he spied her out in one of the main pastures on Dreamer. She rode bareback with only a halter and lead. He went into the barn to feed the other animals and realized she'd already done it. No wonder they hadn't made a ruckus.

Hearing them returning to the barn, Pax left his feed and went to the end of his paddock whickering to her. Ronin walked through his stall and joined him. "I think Collins is right. You've gone sweet on my girl."

When she saw Ronin, she moved Dreamer into an easy lope and reached the barn quickly. It was only then Ronin realized the only thing she had on was one of his shirts and a pair of panties. He quirked an eyebrow at her.

"There's no one here but us. Gage won't be here for at least an hour or so."

"Ah yes, but my baby brother doesn't need to see my woman with nothing but my shirt covering her magnificent

body.”

“Didn’t you once tell me that wearing your monogrammed shirt was a dead giveaway that I was sharing your bed?”

“Yes, but he doesn’t need to see those milky white thighs or realize what incredible tits you have.”

“Boorish!”

“Truth.” He laughed. “Come, mate. Your big, bad stud needs to mount you.”

She giggled. “Are you going to fuck me in the barn again?”

She rode Dreamer into his paddock and up into his stall, sliding off and removing his halter.

He glanced down at her feet. “Barefoot in a barn? Not okay.”

“I do it all the time.”

“You may have done it in the past but do it again and you’ll get spanked for it.”

Before she could protest, he swung her up in his arms and carried her back to their bed.



Gage arrived and opened the big barn door. He was surprised when none of the animals called to him, telling him he had arrived fifteen minutes late. One of the horses looked over the wall of her stall, contentedly munching hay.

*Well, that explains it. Either Devon or Ronin must have fed them.* He continued into Dreamer’s stall to get a closer look. *God, he’s a beauty.* He wondered idly if Devon would ever let him take Dreamer for a ride.

He went to grab the broom to sweep up the barn and realized it too had been done. *Must have been Devon. Ronin hated sweeping.* He knew his big brother would want to know the impressions of their family about Devon. He’d be happy,



but not surprised, that they thought she was a keeper. Their father had laughed and remarked that Devon would keep Ronin on his toes. Gage had thought at the time: *Yes, and Ronin will keep her on her back, or her knees.*

He moved through the barn, checking water levels and ensuring everyone had enough. He grabbed the wheelbarrow and stall picker to clean the individual stalls first. Then he'd start on the big loafing shed where the broodmares were kept. Gage liked to be efficient and organized in his cleaning. He would start at the end furthest from the loafing shed.

He was surprised when Ronin showed up at the barn. "Asleep in our bed," he answered Gage's unspoken question.

Gage laughed and said, "You are truly one lucky bastard. I can't imagine why she puts up with you." He snapped his fingers. "Oh, that's right. She says it's because you're hung and great in the sack."

Ronin smiled, "As long as she thinks that, I'm fine. Have you had a chance to get by the safe deposit box and get Nana's ring?"

"I did. I've got it locked in my glovebox. Let me run and go get it for you."

Gage sprinted out of the barn and up to his car. He opened the glovebox and retrieved the ring, bringing it back and tossing it to Ronin. "All yours, bro. Have you thought about how you're going to ask her?"

"I have, but I haven't decided on anything. She won't be surprised. I think she knows it's coming, but I want it to be something special. She deserves it."

"For putting up with you? Good God, she deserves something spectacular."

Ronin laughed and cuffed his youngest brother. "You're an obnoxious sod. So, what did everyone think?"

"You are golden. Mom thinks she's absolutely perfect for you. Dad thinks she's gorgeous and will keep you on your toes. The rest of the boys agreed. And the other girls think that she'll make a nifty addition to the family. You do know that

once you two get engaged, you're going to be overrun out here with all the planning."

"I don't care, as long as she's happy and that when it's done, she is legally my wife. As for the rest, she can have whatever the hell she wants. By the way, Dev and I were talking about you coming home."

"I don't want to be a third wheel."

"Two hours each way is a long commute, although I understand you don't always make it home." Gage grinned but said nothing. "You don't want to be a third wheel, and I don't want to have to worry about an audience. What if we took the dairy barn down by the pond and renovated it into a small place for you? We could put a bedroom and bath up in what was the loft and then utilize the main floor for living space, kitchen, and a half-bath. Dev and I also talked about turning the ancillary tack room into an office for you up here in the barn."

"Really? Ronin, that would be great. But wouldn't it be costly?"

"It wouldn't be cheap, but long term, I think it's the way to go. We can do a lot of the work ourselves, but I want to hire out the electrical and plumbing. And it will only bring value to the property. But the rules about no casual sex here at the farm still hold."

"Says my brother who dragged his woman home from a horse show."

"I'm warning you, little brother. Nothing about Devon has ever been casual."

"No offense intended. I am in awe of your prowess and ability to convince Devon that she wants to be with you."

"Dad's right. The right combination of hum, spanking, and fucking will do the trick every time."

"She does get annoyed with you when you hum at her."

Ronin nodded. "Yes, because she's very susceptible to it."

Gage shook his head. “I wonder if I’ll be able to hum. I’ve never been able to in the past.”

“When you find the right girl, it’s the most natural thing in the world. You just seem to produce it in whatever way she needs.”

“Or will get you what you want.”

Dismissing that, Ronin continued. “So, tell me about this girl that lives between here and the folks.”

“There’s nothing to tell,” said Gage, averting his eyes. He’d never been able to lie to his oldest brother.

“That serious, is it?”

“I think so, but then I don’t know. She’s hard to read and kind of mysterious.”

“How so?”

“She’ll disappear for a week or so and then be back. She seems happy to see me, but she won’t talk about where she’s gone.”

“What’s her name? What does she do for a living? I need details.”

Gage laughed out loud. “Her name is Andrea. And she writes steamy romance novels. Apparently, she’s well known and fairly successful.”

“You’re kidding. I wonder if she and Devon know each other. Devon’s an editor. Not sure what kind of books, but that’s why it’s so easy for her to move here.”

“Wouldn’t that be a hoot? I’ll have to ask Andrea if she knows her. About six months ago she decided to leave home and come live here. She sort of brushes it off, but I get the feeling something happened.”

“So, she’s the girl in town who lives up over Jones’s bar?”

“Yep. Says she likes feeling a part of things. And that place is always so noisy, I don’t have to worry about how noisy we get.”

Ronin laughed. “Always a consideration to be sure. You’re kind of serious about this one aren’t you?”

“I could be.”

“Then I’d find out where she’s going when she disappears, and what happened to send her running in the first place.”

“I’ve asked and she just glosses it over and then distracts me.”

Ronin laughed again. “Ah yes, the fine art of distraction. Devon does that when she doesn’t want to talk about something.”

“What do you do?”

“I’ll try to persuade her to talk to me. Devon’s been on her own for so long that her default setting isn’t to share, but she’s getting better. And if persuading her verbally doesn’t work, I put her over my knee and let my hand spanking her ass persuade her to talk to me. That generally does the trick.”

Gage laughed. “Not sure how Andrea would react to that.”

“Probably not well, but you just spank them until they decide that doing what you want is easier than continuing to fight.”

Gage shook his head. “Okay, here’s what I don’t get. You’re having a disagreement. You put her over your knee and spank her. She gets madder, but you keep up until she gives in, but doesn’t she resent it or just stay angry?”

“No. Once she’s given in, and I mean the second she gives in, I stop spanking her, and try to soothe the sting in her backside. If your woman’s geared the right way, you’ll find you aren’t the only one who got aroused.”

“I understand my getting aroused, but why would pain turn her on?”

Ronin chuckled. “Little brother, it isn’t the pain that arouses them. It’s the display of dominance. You fan that spark of arousal into a full-blown flame. With Devon, it’s a bloody wildfire. After it’s over, she tends to be spent but very loving, content, and happy. It’s a serious thing to take a woman in

hand. It helps if about halfway through the spanking you start to hum to them.”

“But I don’t think I can hum. If I can’t, does that mean she’s not my soul mate?”

“Look, Gage, being able to hum is a gift. Not all of us get the same gifts. I know that Dad says if you can’t hum, she’s not the right girl. But you know not all of our brothers can hum and can you think of any of them married to anyone, but the one they’re with?”

Gage shook his head. “What if you couldn’t have hummed to Devon?”

“He wouldn’t have cared,” Devon said entering the barn. “I’m sure he didn’t know for a while. He was too busy being boorish and trying to figure out how to get me in his bed. After he accomplished that, he’s been too busy fucking me, haven’t you, babe?”

Ronin chuckled and walked across the barn to wrap his arms around her, allowing his hand to drift down and to deliver an affectionate swat to her ass. “Sass. I keep you well-fucked and well-laid and all I get is sass.”

Gage watched as his older brother and the woman he’d fallen for looked into each other’s eyes. There was nothing there but love. Oh, some might see a lot of lust, but what fueled that was love.

“And you wouldn’t change that about me.”

“Sweetheart, there’s not a thing in this world I’d change about you.”

Gage rolled his eyes. “I swear the two of you are so obnoxiously in love,” he said, happy that his brother had indeed found his soul mate.

Ronin laughed, “I know. Ain’t love grand?”

## EPILOGUE



Things had progressed quickly between Andrea and Gage, as had the work on the old dairy barn. The couple had been busy purchasing things to furnish their home and those things had been loaded in yesterday, with Devon and Ronin's mom staging the house for them to see.

Both Andrea and Gage had been banned from the house for the past forty-eight hours. One of their sisters-in-law had a green thumb and had come in and landscaped the place like she had done for Ronin when he'd finished their cottage.

Devon heard the trucks coming down the drive. One carried everything from Andrea's flat where Gage had been living, and the other the rest of the family. Just seeing and hearing the Gutherie clan as they arrived made Devon smile.

She'd never had a big family and loved being a part of this one. She saw Gage had joined Andrea in walking down to their cottage. Before they could get a good look, they were blindfolded. Given the nature of their family, Devon thought that very trusting.

Ronin got out of the truck. "Everything set?"

"Yep. I'm so excited," whispered Devon.

"I hope that's because you're marrying me."

"Why would I find that exciting? I didn't get much choice in the matter."

"Sass. Just remember what happens to sassy cowgirls." He watched her blush and hugged her. "God, can you make them

all leave?”

She giggled. “I wish. My nipples are so hard they hurt.”

“Naughty, sassy mate—now you’re being a tease.”

“I do what I can. And here they are. Okay, let’s get them lined up.”

The family arranged Gage and Andrea so that they were squared up and looking directly at their new home. With their family surrounding them, they were allowed to remove their blindfolds.

Andrea squealed with delight.

Gage got a bit choked up and said, “Oh my God.” He hadn’t seen it since the finishing touches, including the landscaping that had been done.

They went into the dairy barn with several people at a time to see everything. It was fun standing outside listening to the oohs and ahhs, and Andrea’s squeals.

Ronin took Devon’s left hand in his and realized the ring wasn’t on her finger. “Devon?” he whispered menacingly.

“Relax. It’s in my pocket. I wanted them to have this minute while everyone sees their new home. I figured you were right. Your mom looks at my left hand every time I see her.” She reached into her pocket and pulled it out.

Ronin grumbled something about misbehaving mates and took the ring from her. He placed it on her finger and whispered, “Take it off again, and you’ll get spanked.”

“Please don’t get growly. I just wanted them to have this moment for themselves. I love my ring, and more than that, I love the man that gifted it to me.”

He kissed her, somewhat mollified but still not happy to have found it off her finger.

Ronin got everyone’s attention. “Devon’s made food, enough to feed this army and several others.” They laughed. “I say we take a break, enjoy some food, and then get them unloaded.”

Everyone agreed and started making plates.

Ronin turned loose of her hand and wrapped his arm around her while she cuddled up to him. His arm had barely ceased moving when his mother let out a shriek. Everyone jumped.

“You finally asked her? And she said yes?” she cried with tears welling in her eyes.

Devon giggled. “Not exactly, but apparently we’re getting married.”

“About damn time, son,” said his father, hugging Ronin. “You got yourself one hell of a girl.”

Everyone laughed, even Devon, although she still blushed. The sisters-in-law all clambered around to see the ring and extol its beauty. Knowing she often found crowds of people, even family, unsettling, Ronin hummed soothing vibrations to her and tried to get her some space.

His mother waded through the crowd to embrace her soon-to-be daughter-in-law. “I know you’ve made him so happy, and I couldn’t be happier for both of you. My mother would have loved you. She’d have especially loved how happy you make him. You have given him such peace and joy—not to mention that you let him have his way with you often enough that he’s in a perpetually good mood.” She laughed.

“I’m just following the example of the matriarch of the family. Ronin tells me that you are often the target of his father’s overly enthusiastic attentions.”

The older woman laughed. “Yes, I suppose I should tell you before you marry him that they don’t get any better about being told no as they grow older.”

“God, I hope not. And I told Andrea earlier today that if he couldn’t hum to me after we’re married, I’d never have agreed to marry him.”

“Yes, that’s their great redeeming feature. So, have you two picked a date?”



“If it’s all right with you, we’d like to share your wedding anniversary. We thought we’d get married at the bonfire this year.”

Tears started to well again in the older woman’s eyes. “Nothing would make me happier. Once I get this one married to you, I’m going to get my youngest to make an honest woman out of Andrea.”

Devon hugged her. “Just between you and me? That’s kind of a done deal. They were waiting to say something until Ronin put Nana’s ring on my finger.”

“I’ll not say a word until they do, but this day just keeps getting better.”

Andrea joined them and Gage’s mother pulled her close. Andrea looked at Devon who nodded and mouthed ‘sorry.’ Andrea smiled and mouthed ‘no worries.’

Gage joined them and said, “Plotting against us, are you?”

“Always,” said Andrea, hugging him.

Ronin joined them and wrapped Devon in his arms. The afternoon was spent unpacking and putting things away and then celebrating and getting the bar-b-que set up for another meal. Devon stood apart, watching them all just enjoying being together.

Ronin nuzzled her. “They’re your family, too. Now more than ever. Do you want to go join them?”

She smiled and pulled his face down to hers to kiss him softly and deeply. “Happily.”

“Happily?”

“Yes, as in happily ever after.”



Thank you for reading *Claiming Her Heart*. The next book in the series is [Taming Her Heart](#).



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## BONUS SCENE



Thank you again for reading Claiming Her Heart (Wild Hearts)! This series was the first I wrote. They are different from what I usually write but I still love them because they started my journey into writing. Unfortunately, I do not have a bonus scene for this couple but I do have several free books and bonus scenes for some of my other books available. Signing up is easy. All you have to do is click the link below or scan the QR code with your phone, sign up for my newsletter, and you'll get an email giving you access!

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Other books by Delta James:** <https://www.deltajames.com/>

As a USA Today bestselling romance author, Delta James aims to captivate readers with stories about complex heroines and the dominant alpha males who adore them. For Delta, romance is more than just a love story; it's a journey with challenges and thrills along the way.

After creating a second chapter for herself that was dramatically different than the first, Delta now resides in Florida where she relaxes on warm summer evenings with her loveable pack of basset hounds as they watch the birds, squirrels and lizards. When not crafting fast-paced tales, she enjoys horseback riding, walks on the beach, and white-water rafting.

Delta loves connecting with her readers and tries to respond personally to as many messages as she can! You can find her on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/DeltaJamesAuthor> and in her reader group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/348982795738444>.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my Patreon supporters.

I couldn't do this without you!

Carol Chase

Latoya McBride

Julia Rappaport

D F

Ellen

Margaret Bloodworth

Tamara Crooks

Rhonda

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Linda Kniffen-Wager

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