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...until now.

**GRUMPY**  
**BILLIONAIRE**  
**COWBOY**

*New York Times* Bestselling author  
**TESS OLIVER**

# **GRUMPY BILLIONAIRE COWBOY**

BILLIONAIRE BAD BOYS CLUB

TESS OLIVER

## **Grumpy Billionaire Cowboy**

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# CHAPTER 1

## LUKE

My knees slipped forward, and I readjusted them for the tenth time. “Who the hell ever thought silk sheets would be good for sex?” I grunted. One hand held firmly onto Chloe’s hip, while the other teased her clit. “Shit, but you are tight.” A groan followed. I thought it had been mine, but the room was so fucking cavernous, the sound echoed and it was hard to tell. And, aside from being incredibly hot, and loving to be tied up while being fucked, Chloe tended to make a lot of noise. Some of it made me hornier. Some of it was a tad irritating.

“Yes, Luke.” Her small fists were turning white from the scarf binding them. “Harder, damn it.”

“Slippery damn sheets,” I growled. “Can’t get any traction.” I slammed my hips against her, giving her pussy a hearty spanking with my balls, while my fingers dug into her flesh. She liked it rough, and I wasn’t going to deny her that pleasure. I was all about giving when it came to fucking, I thought wryly.

A loud door slammed downstairs but I continued the onslaught. It would take a fucking cannon to my head to make me to stop now.

“Chloe!”

“Shit, Mike is home,” I hissed between clenched teeth. Still, I continued jamming my cock into her.

“Don’t you dare fucking stop,” she said. “That dried up old bastard never makes me come. You’re the only one who can

finish me right, Luke Maverick.” The ornate wrought iron headboard drummed a beat on the gold flecked wallpaper as I ground into her.

“Maybe if he laid you down on a bed of his money, you’d be screaming out his name,” I muttered through a tight jaw. My hand tightened on her hip and my fingers wildly massaged her clit. She was dripping wet with moisture. The woman bent in front of me might not make it to the end, but I was getting fucking close.

“Chloe!” her husband yelled up the vast double staircase.

“He hates climbing those stairs,” she said between ragged breaths. “Takes him forever on that bad knee.” Chloe was a great multi-tasker. She could just about recite her entire day’s agenda while being fucked. Again, sometimes it was irritating. Especially when her husband was coming up the stairs.

“Concentrate, Chloe. I don’t want to get shot in the back.”

She clenched her thighs shut, making her pussy even tighter around my cock. “Yes, yes that’s it, Luke. Fuck yeah.” She bucked her naked ass against me as I drove into her. “Fuck yes!” she screamed.

Between her lack of sound control, the iron headboard slamming the wall and the fact that her decrepit old husband never went anywhere without one hand on his gun, I figured I was going to be a dead man at the end of this. But I rocked hard against her. If I was going to get a bullet in my head, I at least wanted my cock to have one last good time.

I pulled my hand out from between her legs and held both her hips tightly as I pushed into her one last time. “Fuck, I love your pussy,” I groaned as I came.

Mike’s uneven footsteps were slowly ascending the massive staircase.

“Here he comes.” I hopped off the bed and pulled on my jeans.

“It takes him forever to get up here.” Chloe’s ass wriggled in the air. “Untie me.”



“I don’t know, you look pretty fucking hot all bound up to the bed like that.” I pulled my phone out and snapped a picture.

“What the hell are you doing?” she asked.

“It’s not blackmail, sweetheart. It’s evidence. If they ever find me with my brains splattered, they’ll know to come after your husband.” I leaned my mouth down next to her ear. “And when you’re lying next to the old prune tonight, you can think about me looking at this picture and it making me hard enough that my dick can cut glass.”

Her eyes drifted shut, and a soft mewl fell from her lips. “God, all you have to do is talk dirty in my ear, Luke Maverick, and I get wet again.”

“It’s a gift,” I whispered and then dragged my tongue around her ear for good measure. She flinched as I gave her one sharp slap on her naked ass. I went to slide my phone into my pocket and noticed the time. “Fuck, I’m late. I have to pick up my stepsister from the airport. She’s flying in for the funeral.”

The plodding footsteps drew closer. I reached forward and yanked free the satin ribbon around Chloe’s wrists. She yanked it from the headboard and jammed it into the nightstand for safe keeping.

“Stepsister?” She walked over and pulled on her silk bathrobe. “What’s she like?”

“Hell if I know. I only know her as stepsister number four who belongs to stepmother number five. And now that wife number five is dead, I suppose my dad will be looking for wife number six. Although I have to admit, he’s pretty broken up about losing this one.” I yanked on my boots and plucked my Stetson off the foot of the bed. Chloe always liked to start off our night’s activity with me wearing only my black hat and a rock solid hard-on. But the hat usually fell off somewhere between her being spanked by the ruthless outlaw gunslinger and being tied up by the dirty, no-good sheriff.

“Good lord, your dad is going to set a record. So, you’ve never met stepsister number four?”

“At the wedding. I just remember round cheeks and a mouthful of braces. She was sixteen or something like that. She stayed with her dad in California. Didn’t get along with her mom.” I really didn’t remember McKenna. She was the daughter of Linda, my dad’s most recent wife. She’d lived with her dad, and Linda rarely saw her. At first, I’d thought McKenna had just been getting back at her mom by staying with her father in California. But a month after Linda moved into my Dad’s house on Maverick Ranch, with her two hundred pairs of shoes and constant demands for attention, I’d concluded that McKenna had stayed with her dad because her mom was a pain in the ass.

The footsteps stopped for a second, most likely for ole Mike to catch his breath. “Here’s an important question. How the hell do I get out of here? I’m assuming the old man’s cataracts aren’t bad enough that I can just waltz right past him on the stairs without him noticing.”

Chloe bit her lip in thought as she glanced around the room. “You have no choice but to jump from the balcony.”

I raised a brow at her. “We’re two and a half stories up. I don’t think I’ll be winning any bull riding contests with a broken leg.” Mike’s heavy steps started again. I swept my gaze around the room, and an idea pushed into my head. I yanked the sheet off Chloe’s bed.

“Luke, those are three hundred dollar sheets,” Chloe protested as I dragged the sheet out onto the balcony. The vast green lawn and pool area were empty. I plotted out my escape route. I’d at least put in enough forethought to park outside the grounds.

“Then I’ll leave it to you to explain to your cranky, crouched over husband why your three hundred dollar silk sheet is tied around the balustrade of your balcony.” The doorknob turned. Chloe motioned me to go.

I grabbed her for a kiss before throwing my leg over the balcony railing and shimmying myself down on the silk sheet.

The slippery material made it an easy slide down. What do you fucking know? Silk sheets and sex did go together, after all.

# CHAPTER 2

## MCKENNA

The airport was coming into view. Damn, Texas was big. Just lots and lots of big. The pressure in my ears built as the plane descended, and I frantically chewed my fruity gum.

I'd spent the entire flight nibbling the tiny bag of stale trail mix and downing rum and coke, all the while, wallowing in guilt. The woman was in her coffin, no doubt a designer casket with gold leaf befitting a noble queen and dressed in one of her Chanel suits with that content smile that only comes with death, but she was still haunting me with guilt. The trauma of my birth had pushed my mom into cardiac arrest, and even though the doctors had explained to her that she'd had an undiagnosed heart condition, she had never forgiven me. It wasn't that I hadn't cried when I heard that she'd died. I had. I'd cried right into a pint of ice cream as I sat and watched *Pride and Prejudice* through blurry eyes. A love for Jane Austen was one of the few things my mom and I'd had in common. And while Mr. Darcy was espousing his love for Elizabeth, I was sobbing and shoveling in scoops of mint chip ice cream to the point where my head had ached from crying and from brain freeze. Once the tears had stopped, I'd felt a sort of calmness. My mom was gone, but sadly she had been a small, unimportant part of my life. My dad had raised me. When he'd died two years ago of cancer, I'd been lost and overwhelmed with grief. My dad had been my best friend. I'd always just been an inconvenience to my mom, even starting with my first breath.

The seatbelt lights went on, and the cute little white-haired lady next to me, Gretchen, who had spent the first hour of the

flight worried that the plane would crash, the second showing me all the pictures of her grandchildren she had tucked in her wallet and the third hour of the trip snoring, looked nothing short of terrified as the plane headed for the runway. I reached over and held her hand. It seemed to comfort her. She gave me a sweet, grandmotherly smile. I'd probably made more of an emotional connection with wonderful, lilac smelling Gretchen on a short plane flight than I had with my mom in the entire last decade. And now my mom was gone and our relationship would never improve. That thought brought an ache to my throat.

Before I'd left this morning, my mom's husband, John Maverick, had texted that something had come up and that his son, Luke, would be picking me up at the airport. I could hardly remember my stepbrother. I'd only seen Luke once, at the wedding, and I'd seen more of him than I needed to. I'd gone back into the bride's dressing room to grab my mom's flat shoes. I was only sixteen at the time and still ridiculously innocent, so I hadn't realized that the wild giggling coming from inside the room had been something other than a really funny joke. Luke Maverick was rolling on the floor with a long-legged female wedding guest. It was a tangle of naked limbs that had shocked and embarrassed the hell out of me. And, after I'd gotten over the shock, which took several more minutes of open-mouthed gawking, I'd snuck back out without the shoes. Luke and his guest had been too busy to notice me. That had been my first and last true encounter with my new stepbrother. I'd spent the rest of the reception downing butter mints and stealing sips of champagne.

The pilot announced for the flight attendants to take their seats. I pressed an arm against my stomach to keep the growling at bay. It'd been one of those mornings. I'd overslept, toothpaste had splattered in my eye ruining my mascara and the toast had burnt to the point that after a severe, rushed scraping, I'd been left with a measly piece of toast not even worthy of a dab of jam. The perpetual tangle of traffic on the Los Angeles freeways had only added to the headache of the awful morning. Now, after all the rushing around and lack of breakfast, I was starved. The two rum and cokes were

sloshing in my empty stomach and making me just a tiny bit tipsy and nauseous.

But I sort of needed to be tipsy today. I would be staying with a man whose only connection to me was the piece of paper he'd signed with my mom on their wedding day. Until now, when we were being connected again by her death. My mom sure knew how to do things in big style. No 'why don't you come out for a weekend, we'll chat and have lunch' with my mom. Nope. For her it was either an absurdly posh and almost revoltingly luxurious wedding or an equally elaborate funeral. The irony of it all was that for the first time ever I'd be staying at the Maverick Ranch, only now, my mom wouldn't even be there.

As much as I dreaded having to stay at a house with John and his two sons, basically complete strangers, I was relieved to have a place to disappear to. Not that my mom had planned it, but her death had given me the perfect opportunity for an escape from California and from Joshua. I glanced down at the red bruising on my forearm, then quickly turned my hand so Gretchen wouldn't see it. I'd mentioned to John that I needed to find a new place to stay and a new job. He'd insisted I give Texas a try. California, he claimed, had too much organic food and sunshine. Two things I hated leaving, of course. But I wasn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth. Although I was looking forward to looking at a real horse, and John had plenty of them.

It felt good to get up and stretch my legs after the plane ride. During the weird, slow ride on the people conveyor belt where I'd held tightly onto Gretchen, who looked even more terrified than during the landing, I decided a smoothie was a higher priority than my luggage. I was determined to have something cold and fruity. Maverick Ranch being a Texas ranch occupied solely by men, I could only assume that rare slabs of beef would be served for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The humidity inside the terminal was horrid. I wondered if they'd made the place uncomfortable on purpose to keep people from lingering. A long blonde curl came down across my forehead to tickle my nose. With one hand on Gretchen's

carry-on and the other on Gretchen herself, I had to do an awkward shoulder to nose maneuver to rid myself of the curl.

“Why on earth would they fill the terminal with hot steam? My hair is going to be an explosion of curls,” I complained.

Gretchen was stiff with fear as she held the railing, but she managed to peer sideways at me. “The curls look lovely, dear. And what steam are you talking about?”

“The air around us, it’s like the bathroom after a really long, hot shower.”

She smiled. “That’s not steam, dear. That’s Texas.”

“You’re kidding? Then I guess I dragged my flatiron along for nothing.”

Gretchen’s son was waiting for her. He looked like a nice man who’d grown up in a nice house with a wonderful mom. I handed him Gretchen’s carry-on bag and hugged her good-bye.

I elbowed my way through the crowded terminal toward the food court. I groaned in frustration as I reached the smoothie kiosk. Apparently I wasn’t the only one worried about scurvy in the land of beef steak. After a long line and a mind debate between strawberry or peach, I ended up with a neon orange mango smoothie. It felt cold and soothing going down my throat. And I quickly assured myself, it had been worth the wait.

A voice over the loudspeaker mentioned that the luggage was coming down the chute. Suddenly I had the terrifying thought that someone would grab my bags, and I’d be forced to wear jean cut-offs and sandals to my mom’s funeral. I raced toward the luggage carousel. No matter which direction I was going, I seemed to be traveling against traffic— story of my life.

A tall, handsome man was looking around at the crowd. As much as I’d tried to push that wedding day from my mind, I vaguely remembered that, along with being a man whore, my stepbrother was tall and handsome ... in that cocky,



despicable, rich asshole kind of way. I walked right up to him. “Luke?”

“No.” The man, obviously a complete stranger, took the time to rake his eyes brazenly over my body. “But I wish I were.”

“Excuse me, I thought you were somebody else.”

I spun around and smacked right into a man’s chest. My hard won mango smoothie splashed against his torso. It cascaded down his white t-shirt.

“Holy crap,” I gasped, and made a futile attempt to wipe it off. But the damage had been done, and it was quite bad.

The man stared straight down at the spreading orange stain. “Fucking hell, I hate airports.”

“I am soooo sorry.”

I stared at the dark hair on the top of his head as he pulled his shirt away from his skin and gave it a shake. He had to move his expensive but worn cowboy boots out of the way of the orange trickle. He took the black cowboy hat that he held in one hand and shoved it down low over his head. “Now I’m orange and I smell like fucking— what the hell is that anyhow?” He lifted his face.

I sucked in my bottom lip in an attempt to not show any reaction. However the lip biting might have been a noticeable reaction by itself. I had just covered the man with mango, and yet I was gawking at him. He was nothing short of breathtaking. The phrase *brutally handsome* came to mind. I wasn’t even completely sure what the hell the phrase meant, but something told me that to fall in love with a man like him would be brutal. He definitely looked like a ‘take no prisoners’ and ‘leave no heart unbroken’ type of man.

His pale green eyes assessed me from beneath the shade of his hat brim. Then Mr. Brutal, in the same manner as his predecessor, the man I’d accosted thinking he was my stepbrother, let his gaze drift boldly over my body. A glint of what I could only term as a slightly wicked smile turned up the

corner of his mouth. Sure I'd covered the man with a sticky, cold drink, but it did not give him the right to be an asshole.

"Oh, great, you too," I said. "What is it about the men in this airport thinking they can just openly check me out? Although, I do apologize about the shirt," I added quickly.

His gaze held mine for a long, tense moment. I fidgeted on my sandals and wondered if I should just dash off and save myself any further torment.

"Well, sweetheart, if you don't want men checking you out, then I suggest you hide those fantastic tits of yours under a sweater or something, cuz that tight tank top is just inviting guys to look."

I balled my fingers in a fist, and my teeth ground together in anger. "If you weren't standing here covered in my smoothie, I'd slap you for that rude comment. But I'll just have to walk away satisfied in the notion that I've ruined what looked like a perfectly good shirt. It's mango, by the way, and frankly, I think it suits you." With that, I turned away and hoped to hell that that stupid stepbrother of mine would show up soon and get me out of this airport.

# CHAPTER 3

## LUKE

There were only two pieces of luggage left on the carousel from the California flight. Most of the other passengers had met their friends and family and gone home. The crowd had thinned to just a few stragglers. Maybe Linda's daughter had decided not to come after all.

I texted Drake. "Hey, bro, do you remember what the hell stepsister number four looked like?"

My brother texted back. "Was she the one with the red hair and high pitched laugh?"

"No, that's number two. Four was chubby with braces, I think. She would have been at Dad's last wedding."

"Shit, I don't even remember that one. There's been too many. Are you at the airport?"

"Yeah, but I'm not sticking around much longer. I think she decided not to come. Later."

My shirt was sticking to me with mango scented glue, and plenty of people had had a good laugh as they walked past me. The smoothie culprit stepped out from behind the carousel with her purple rolling bag and her exceptional body. Curves in just the right places and a long sleek pair of legs to go with them.

She was staring absently out the window of the terminal, so I allowed myself a second to imagine those smooth thighs wrapped around me. She bit her lip in worry as she pulled out her phone to check for messages. Shit, the hell with those legs around me, I wanted those luscious lips around my cock. She

was fiery too, like the kind of girl who knew how to have a damn good time. My kind of girl.

I was done waiting for Linda's daughter. She could take a taxi or something. I glanced around one more time, and the hottie with the great lips did the same. It seemed her ride was late. Who would be stupid enough to leave a girl like her standing around an airport terminal with those amazing ... My thoughts froze, and I stared at her. There was something familiar about her button nose profile. As if she sensed me watching her, she turned her round blue eyes my direction.

Her mouth dropped and mine followed.

"Fuck." I walked over to her. "McKenna?"

"Luke?" Her long lashes drifted down as she stared at the stain on my shirt. She smiled up at me with a blush that only made her that much more beautiful. "Oops."

"Yeah, oops. At least you only poured mango down my shirt. I'm the one who commented on my stepsister's tits." I looked down at her body again. Even knowing who she was, I had no self-control when it came to a sweet set of curves. My gaze lifted to her face. "What happened to the braces and the —" Once again couldn't keep my eyes off her body.

"The puberty pudge?" she asked. "It disappeared with the braces. Plus, I grew three inches in one summer." She peered up at me. "You were eighteen at the wedding, but it seems you grew too."

"Little bit." I was having a hard time focusing on the conversation.

The girl, hell, woman standing in front of me just couldn't have been the snot-nosed brat at the wedding. I scrubbed my face with my hand suddenly feeling a little off. 'Your stepsister, McKenna, will be spending a few months of summer with us' Dad had told me in passing the morning before. I hadn't given it even an ounce of thought. But I hadn't expected this. She might as well have hung a sign on her ass that said, *completely fuckable*, because my cock was already thinking of her in those terms. Damn, I was going to have to

risk my life and spend a lot of time in Chloe's bed. Otherwise, I was going to go fucking nuts.

I reached for the handle on her bag.

"Nope, I've got it," she insisted. "Just show me the way."

We walked out to the parking lot. "Uh, sorry about your mom," I said, finally realizing that I was being a damn heel.

She shrugged lightly, but I could tell there was more sadness there than she wanted to let on. "Thanks. She had that heart condition, and I guess I always figured she'd die young. We weren't very close, but you probably already figured that."

"Considering she's been living with my dad for six years, and I didn't even recognize you when you were standing six inches in front of me trying to wipe a smoothie off my chest, it's sort of obvious you two didn't talk much."

She laughed quietly. It was a sad sound that reached up and pressed on my chest. I couldn't remember the last time I'd had that feeling, that pressure of feeling bad for someone. But then, she was my stepsister, after all. Fucking hell. What a day. I wasn't related to this girl any more than I was related to the sexy girl with the sweet smile who served me coffee at the donut shop, but there was that weird sense of propriety that told me I was supposed to treat her like family.

We reached the jeep. She wouldn't let me help her as she lifted up the luggage and swung it into the back. Her short, snug shirt lifted up with the movement, exposing a creamy stretch of ivory skin on her back, along with a dragonfly tattoo that started on her hip and disappeared somewhere below the top of her low cut shorts. My imagination and my cock stirred into action trying to assess exactly where the long tail of the ink insect ended. Had to be somewhere below her panties. Yeah, treating her like family should be no problem. I was fucked.

We climbed into the front of the jeep. The mango smell had evaporated and now, the only fragrance in the car was McKenna's shampoo or soap or perfume. Whatever the hell it was, I liked it.

“So, are you the brother who rides bulls?” she asked.

“Yeah, I’m the crazy one. Although Drake used to compete too. Took a few too many spills. The doctor told him to quit or plan to be a vegetable by the time he’s forty.”

“And you?” she smiled my direction. Self-preservation told me to just keep my eyes on the road. Those lips were going to haunt my dreams tonight for sure.

“I guess I’m better at holding on,” I said. “Dad said you might stay a few months?”

She tucked her blonde hair behind her ear. “I hope you don’t mind.”

“Why should I mind? The house is bigger than a city. We’ll probably never cross paths.” Those words were more for me than her. “I’m usually out with the horses.” Her face lit up. “I take it you like horses.”

She nodded. “I’ve only ridden them at those crummy little rental places but— shit this is embarrassing.”

“After our first meeting at the airport, I think we’ve probably already gone past the embarrassment thing.”

“True.” She glanced at my shirt and was obviously holding back a laugh. “Anyhow, I used to walk around with this book under my arm, it was called *The Album of Horses*. I had every breed memorized. And now this tale gets even more humiliating. One day, my dad took me to this farm just to look at the horses. They were throwing out an old, faded halter. I pulled it out of the trash and nailed it to my wall. It was the closest I’d come to actually having a horse.” She covered her face to hide the blush. I noticed a chain of bruises around her wrist. “Oh god, how pathetic does that sound?” she asked.

“Not pathetic. Sweet.”

She looked at me with an ‘oh, come on’ expression. It was a damn cute look.

“All right, a little pathetic. Well, we’ve got thirty horses, so I’m sure you’ll get your fill of them during the visit.”

“I’m so excited about that.”

“Did your mom know about your obsession with horses?” I asked.

“When I was little,” her tone softened some, “and when she was still around, I used to carry a stuffed animal pony with me wherever I went. His name was Arrow, and he slept with me. She knew I was crazy about them.”

“Sorry but our horses sleep in the barn.” I’d never been fond of Linda but knowing that she’d been living on a ranch with dozens of horses and that she’d never invited McKenna out to stay, made her that much less likable.

McKenna reached for the radio. The bruises circled her thin arm. I took hold of her fingers. My first big mistake because the one touch caused every cell in my body to react. The second big mistake followed before I could stop the stupid ass half of me from coming out. Without putting a fucking ounce of thought into my head before speaking, I blurted something that was typically Luke Maverick. “Looks like you like it rough, huh?”

She pulled her hand away and crossed her arms to hide the bruises. Her long lashes blinked feverishly as if she was pushing back tears. I wanted to kick myself in the ass.

“Sorry. That was just plain stupid,” I said, but it was too late for an apology.

She turned to stare out the side window. I’d gotten it all wrong. Those bruises weren’t from too much fun. Some asshole had hurt her. My fingers tightened around the steering wheel, and I wanted badly to throw my fist at the fucker who had done it to her. This whole stepsister thing was messing with my head big time, only my urge to protect her had nothing to do with brotherly love.



# CHAPTER 4

## MCKENNA

I'd felt a little disappointed yesterday when Luke had just dropped me at the front door. He tore off in his jeep as if the devil was chasing him, and I hadn't seen him since. I'd had to walk into the house alone. But his father, John, had made me feel immediately welcome. He was angry at both sons for missing dinner, but it had given us the opportunity for a nice, long chat. John had told me some nice stories about my mom that had made me smile. I'd gone to bed feeling a little depressed but woke to marvelous sunshine.

The Maverick estate was a giant expanse of buildings, or wings. The main house, where I was staying, was John's section, the center house. Apparently, each of the brothers had his own wing. My room in the center house was bigger than the entire house I'd grown up in. I'd nearly gotten lost on the way from the bathroom, also massive and luxurious, to the small sitting area that had quickly become my favorite spot in the room. It had an extremely comfortable velvet couch, complete with fluffy down throws, enough pillows to bury myself in and an incredible view of the stables. I even had my own personal refrigerator that had been jammed full with goodies that I actually loved, like lime yogurt, fresh strawberries and, of course, ice cream.

Even though Luke and I had gotten off to a rough start, his dad had been extremely kind and made me feel comfortable. I sensed that he was truly heartbroken about my mom's death and while I hated to see him suffer, I was glad that he had loved her. My mom had never been an easy person to love. Now that I was there in the house that she'd been mistress of

for the past six years, I could suddenly feel her around me. It made me sad. I would have given anything to have had a better relationship with her. ‘Your mom was just too darn young when she had you’ my dad had always told me. For some reason, he’d always felt the need to make excuses for her not being there for me. But my dad had more than made up for her absence with his constant love and attention.

A loud yell rang up from below, and I walked over to the window. A cloud of dust had been stirred up in the round pen adjacent to the stables. Luke was riding, or more accurately, flying through the air, on a black horse. Somehow, he managed to keep his hat on his head and his bottom on the saddle. A few men, ranch hands it seemed, were hanging on the railing watching him ride.

I’d come here to see horses, and even though Luke seemed to want nothing to do with me, in fact, I seemed to repel him, nothing was going to keep me from visiting the stables. I yanked on my jeans, t-shirt and high top tennis shoes.

John was standing at the counter giving instructions to the cook when I stepped into the kitchen. It was a vast room of granite and gleaming stainless steel. Bigness was definitely a way of life in Texas, especially when money was no object. The Mavericks had been an oil family from way back, or at least that was what my mom had always bragged. Apparently, the great grandpa had made enough money to keep the entire family living in luxury for generations.

John had one of those big faces that could morph into different expressions from one second to the next. With sunlight from outside glinting off the shiny steel of the appliances, he resembled a jolly Santa. He handed me a cup of coffee.

“Now, Pierre is a Paris trained chef, so just tell him what you want for breakfast and he’ll fix it right up for you. Then, I highly suggest a swim in the pool. It’s been heated to just the right temperature.” His round, Santa-like cheeks sagged some with a frown. “Your mother used to float in that pool for hours.”

I placed a hand on his arm. He forced up a grin. “Anyhow, why don’t you eat something and get changed into your suit.”

“I had a yogurt and banana from my room refrigerator this morning, so I’m fine.”

He laughed. It was big, rumbling sound and I liked it. I liked the man. If nothing else, my mom had had great taste in men. My dad was a perfect example of that. “Yogurt and banana? Why that’s a snack. But I guess for a skinny little thing like yourself, it’s all you need. Then you can head straight out to the pool.”

“Actually, I was hoping to visit the horses first.”

“Really? You like horses, do you?”

“Very much.”

His gray brows bunched together. “That’s strange. Your mom never mentioned it.”

I shrugged. “Maybe she’d forgotten.” It would have been easier for her to forget that I was a girl than that I had a huge obsession with horses. I’d spent my entire childhood dreaming and talking about them.

“I’d walk you out there, but I have some calls to make. There are still some arrangements to finalize.” His sad tone returned.

“I’ll be fine on my own, and please, let me know if there’s anything I can do to help.”

“You go out and have a good time. I think Luke’s out there breaking one of the colts. If you’re lucky, you might even see him get bucked off. Would serve him right for just dumping you at the doorstep like an abandoned kitten yesterday.”

“John, please don’t fret about that. I’ve felt extremely welcome since I got here. And, thank you for letting me stay until I get my feet under me. I’ve had some bad luck back home, and I’m in desperate need of a new job. And a new life, for that matter.”

He put his giant arm around me for a quick hug. He smelled of pipe tobacco and cologne. It was a nice

combination. “You stay as long as you like. My house is yours.” The father was far more likable than the son. That was for darn sure.

I headed out into the sunlight. It wasn't quite as steamy as it had been at the airport, and I was thankful for that. My hair had curled into long, wild ringlets, my *Woodstock look* as Dad used to call it. There just wasn't any use in straightening it in this humidity. A breeze pushed the smell of green grass off the pastures and the wonderful aroma that was uniquely horse drifted toward me. There were three horses standing in a nearby paddock. They all looked up but continued to munch on their mouthfuls of grass as I walked past.

The horse Luke was riding had slowed down some, but all four of its hooves were still jumping off the ground at once, as if it had springs on its feet. The ranch hands laughed and talked as the sweat-lathered horse half-trotted, half-bucked around the pen. It snorted loudly from its spread nostrils. Luke was concentrating on hanging on, but he rode the energetic horse around with cool confidence.

I walked up to the pen and smiled at the ranch hands. They tipped their hats in return.

Luke reined the horse around and peered up from under his hat. His gaze landed on me. That was when the horse decided to go straight up in the air. Luke flew out of the saddle, his hat going one direction and his body going the other. The horse went an entirely different direction altogether.

Luke grunted as his body slammed against the dirt. The ranch hands climbed over the bar of the pen and caught hold of the horse before it stomped on the man lying stretched out on the ground. I slid between the metal piping and raced over to Luke. There was a bloody scrape across his chin. His long, black lashes fluttered open. He stared up at me with pale green eyes. Angry pale green eyes.

I jumped back as he sucked in the breath that had apparently been knocked out of him when he hit the ground. “Fuuuck,” he grunted.

My shoulders relaxed. He was conscious and obviously lucid enough to find the right cuss word for the situation. I knelt down next to him. “Anything broken?” I asked.

“Yeah, my pride,” he snarled. “Hat,” he demanded.

I scurried over to retrieve the dislodged hat. I dusted it off and held it out to him.

His arm shot up, and he grabbed it from me. He sat up slowly like a man in considerable pain and jammed the hat down over his head. “Well, McSlick, welcome to the world of horses.” He pushed to his feet and gazed down at me. Tiny drips of blood trickled down his chin and along his neck to the base of his throat to mix with the sweat on his skin. The man somehow managed to make blood and sweat extremely erotic.

Feeling suddenly warmed, I discretely fanned myself with my hand. “No broken bones?” I repeated. I couldn’t think of anything else to say because his nearness was now flustering me.

“Don’t think so.”

The ranch hand walked the horse over to him, and he took hold of the reins. He walked over to the side of the horse. “You’d better climb out. Unless you want to get trampled.”

“You’re getting back on?” I asked.

“If I don’t, then the horse wins and he’ll think throwing the rider is the best way to get back to the comfort of his stall and his mound of hay.” He raised his boot to the stirrup. I hurried out of the pen.

He threw his leg over the saddle. “Why don’t you head into the barn and visit the horses inside,” he said almost coldly. It was obvious the man couldn’t stand to have me around. “You’re too distracting.”

“To the horse?” I asked.

“No. To me.” I could hear the muffled chuckles of his ranch hands as they listened raptly from their end of the pen.

“I don’t understand. I’ll just stand here quietly.” I turned the invisible key on my lips.

He walked the horse around and stopped it in front of me. It stood still obediently, but its nostrils were still flared like a dragon about to shoot fire. The dragon on top of the saddle looked about to breathe flames as well. He stared down at me with a cool green gaze that sent a shiver through me, but it wasn't an 'ooh, almost stepped on a lizard' type of shiver. It was something completely different. It was just the black hat and boots and fact that he was on a horse, I assured myself. I'd always had the romantic fantasy of my prince riding up on a horse. But this was no prince staring down at me. Quite the contrary. This was the villain. The extremely handsome, green eyed villain.

“The distraction has nothing to do with you talking.” His gaze dropped to my mouth. “Although those cherry red lips are part of the problem.” His attention dropped to my breasts. “And those amazing—” More chuckling from his men, only this time they didn't even bother to muffle the sound.

I crossed my arms. “You are so fucking rude. And I'm wearing perfectly acceptable and non-provocative ranch attire. It's a little warm for a giant wool sweater. Not that I have one. I'm from California, after all. Our sweaters are just for show.”

His white teeth sparkled from beneath the shade of his hat. “Darlin' it's not the *attire* that has me distracted. It's what's underneath it that's throwing off my concentration.”

“God, you are a mannerless swine,” I grunted. His men tipped their hats as I strode past, but this time I didn't respond with a smile. I headed into the shade of the barn to cool the angry and embarrassed blush from my face and to get as far away from the green eyed villain as possible.

# CHAPTER 5



## LUKE

The newest addition to the Maverick Ranch was throwing me off big time. When I wasn't thinking about her, which was rare, I was busy fantasizing about what I would do to her if she was mine. But she wasn't mine. She was Linda's daughter, and in some weird, nonsensical, rules of society way, off limits. Taboo, as they termed it. Even though she was a complete stranger and not related to me in any way, the very erotic thoughts I'd been having about her were wrong.

I smiled to myself thinking about the fact that she'd considered a pair of snug fitting jeans and t-shirt somehow less provocative. They were just more pieces of clothing I could rip off her to get to the smooth, delectable girl beneath. Fuck, I needed to cool off in the pool. Pool? Hell, I needed a long dip in the frigid Arctic Ocean.

I was covered in sticky grit from head to toe and decided to go straight to the pool. I pulled off my hat and sunglasses and reached back to yank off my shirt. It was drenched in sweat. I turned around the edge of the neatly trimmed hedge, a natural wall that provided privacy for the pool area. "Damn," the word fell out of my stunned mouth.

McKenna was stretched out on one of the chaise lounges. A big straw hat covered her face. She had on a bright blue bikini and a whole lot of flawless, golden skin.

"Fucking California girls," I muttered to myself.

I stayed down at the deep end of the pool. Dad had put in the biggest pool he could manage in the space provided. Blue

water rippled on forever like a small lake, and I was glad for space between the tempting blue bikini and me. I would jump in, cool off and get back out before she even drew her face out from under the hat. I would just not look at her. I would pretend that she wasn't there.

I sat on a chair, and with some effort, yanked off my boots. I stripped down to just my boxer briefs and dove in. After a long dusty morning with the horses, the water felt like fucking heaven. I was going to need aspirin for my shoulder tonight, and the scrapes on my chin were going to make shaving impossible for a few days. But the good news was that I'd gained a lot of ground with the colt today.

I stayed submerged long enough to clear my head. By the time I popped up, McKenna had gotten off her lounge. She was wading in the beach style entry at the shallow end. She'd made a futile attempt at piling her long silky curls up on her head. Her lean, muscular thighs and flat stomach were slathered in suntan lotion.

A low groan caught in my throat, and my cock pressed against the front of my underwear. There was no possible way to hide an erection in boxer briefs. I would have to stay underwater until my *pain* eased. If that was even possible given my extremely sexy pool mate. Shit, get a fucking hold of yourself. I scrubbed my face, forgetting about the scrapes on my chin. Fresh blood trickled from the cuts again. I was a goddamn basket case and all because of one girl. How the hell did that awkward, little metal-mouth grow up into such a fucking goddess?

"This pool is amazing." She leaned down to stir the water with her hands, and her astonishingly beautiful tits nearly spilled out of the two tiny blue triangles pretending to be a bathing suit.

Don't engage. Don't get too close. I was fucking talking to myself. The girl was causing me to talk to myself. "Uh huh," I answered coldly.

She stood there at the end of the pool. I tried not to look at her, but it was impossible, like when they tell you not to look

at the sun during an eclipse but you look up anyway because you're certain you are missing something amazing. Even though you know it is dangerous to look at it, you look anyway.

Her bottom lip was pushed out. There was no way to misread her expression. She was hurt by my curt response. "Was it something I said?" her voice wavered ever so slightly. "Is this still about that mango smoothie?"

"It's not about the damn smoothie."

She lowered her body into the water and pushed off. While I was relieved that she'd submerged her incredibly hot form, she was heading my direction and that was not good. Truth was, I was pretty fucking pathetic when it came to denying myself something I wanted. And I wanted McKenna. I wanted every fucking inch of her.

My cock strained against the cotton fabric as she glided through the water to me. She turned, and I released the breath I'd been holding. If she'd swam right up to me there would have been hell to pay. She pulled herself up onto the small built-in seat in the deep end and stared at me with round blue eyes, looking ever so innocent with her clumps of long wet lashes. Maybe it was that innocence that was making me so damn crazy.

I stayed in the center of the deep end treading water. The top curves of her breasts stayed above the surface. They rose and fell with her soft breaths.

"I've never had much family." She swallowed, and the movement along her creamy white throat stole my attention. Kissing that throat became my newest obsession. Along with kissing every other part of her. "My mom nearly died having me. I'm sure you've heard that story. She always liked telling it as if I'd been some kind of a demon child or something. Of course, she couldn't have any more kids. So it was just me and Dad. And now that he's gone ..." The sadness in her tone made me swim closer. I knew it was stupid, but she sounded so lost and genuinely upset.

She smiled weakly. “I’ve always thought it would be nice, you know, to have someone I could be close to that wasn’t just a friend or an acquaintance. Like a sister or brother.”

I froze and an icy knot formed in my stomach. She sensed my sudden mood change.

“Are you all right, Luke?”

“You don’t fucking get it, do you, McKenna?” I swam to the side and climbed out. She peered up at me from the step looking even sadder than a few seconds ago. “The last thing I want to be is your goddamn brother.” I grabbed my clothes and boots and walked out of the pool area.

# CHAPTER 6

## MCKENNA

The slope we stood on was dotted with elegantly carved headstones, patterned in a perfect array amongst the bright green blades of grass. A massive brown hawk with a limp garter snake clutched in its beak had flown a slow, majestic circle over the gravesite during the ceremony. I tried to decide if it was somehow symbolic or just a creepy coincidence.

The interminable humidity, the warm stickiness that I'd come to expect but had not yet learned to ignore, permeated the air. Even the breeze wafting up the lush green hillside from the highway below, did nothing to dry the moisture on my skin.

I stood next to John and Drake, John's eldest son, stood on the opposite side. Luke was across the circle. I was surrounded by a sea of unfamiliar faces hidden by designer sunglasses and custom hats, fashionably big ones like those worn on derby day for the women and crisp cowboy hats for the men. There was no shortage of alligator boots, giant bellies or cumbersome silver belt buckles either. And I knew no one. I was at my mom's funeral, the only child and living blood relative of the woman in the pearly pink casket, and with the exception of the Maverick men, I didn't know one damn person. I was a stranger at my mom's funeral, an outsider.

Mom must have loved living here with this circle of rich friends to keep her social life roaring. Posh parties and snooty lunches were what my mom lived for. Aside from a new pair of heels, of course.

Long before this day had come, John and Mom had discussed final wishes. Mom had insisted that she didn't want anyone staring down at her dead body in an open coffin. For that, I was grateful. I wasn't completely sure I would have been able to look.

Following the funeral, John had invited everyone back to the ranch for a wake, an expensive, gourmet affair complete with rare wine and hundred year old whiskey. I desperately wanted to spend time alone, maybe down in the stables rubbing soft muzzles and listening to the musical chorus of snorts. But I was the daughter, and I was expected to endure an afternoon of chatting with people who I didn't know and who I had absolutely nothing in common with.

And, then there was Luke. We'd hardly spoken two words since his harsh comments and rude departure from the pool. The man despised me, and since I had no idea why, there was nothing I could do to repair the relationship. He'd been right about the size of the property being so big we'd hardly ever cross paths. I was thankful for that.

I'd met his older brother Drake the day before. He was a bit smaller and not quite as spectacularly handsome, but he had qualities Luke lacked. Like kindness. And charm. And manners. Like his father, Drake had made me feel like a member of the family rather than a nuisance.

The last flowers were tossed into the grave, and the mourners began the slow and almost precarious descent down to the cars. John turned to take my arm.

"If you don't mind, John, I'd like to stay here alone for just a few minutes. I will meet you at the limo."

Even with dark sunglasses covering his face, I could see the raw emotion in his expression and it brought tears to my eyes. "Of course, McKenna. Take as long as you need." He turned and walked away.

The gravediggers moved right in to lower the casket to its eternal resting spot at the bottom of the deep hole. I'd held it together throughout most of the ceremony. John had given a truly poignant eulogy. He seemed to have understood her

much better than me, or my dad, for that matter. It was as if John had been her true soul mate and it had just taken them both years to find each other.

As the pink casket disappeared, a thickness swelled in my throat. My eyes ached with tears. She was gone for good. She'd been the source of so much irritation and grief throughout my life, but in the end, she'd been my mom. There was only one person on the planet who you shared a true physical connection with, even if it was only for nine months, and that was your mother. After my birth, my mom had had to stay in the hospital recuperating from her heart attack. My dad had taken care of me that first month. He'd been the one to get up every few hours and feed and change me. It seemed that with my unorthodox first month, my mom had lost that connection with me. The umbilical cord was cut and then they took me away. Shit, we'd never really had a chance.

The tears streamed faster now. I crossed my arms around myself to keep from shaking. She'd left me for good. They both had left me for good. I was completely on my own. My shoulders jerked with sobs. After holding it together like a damn stone statue throughout the entire funeral, the plug had been pulled and I fell apart.

I held tightly onto myself and closed my eyes waiting for the tears to stop flowing and the ache in my chest to subside. A large arm circled my shoulder and cradled me. I assumed it was John and continued for a few seconds longer, figuring I deserved this little moment of despair. I'd been holding back pretty well, especially after the ugly crap I'd gone through back home with Joshua. He'd been my only other family for the last year, but in the past few months, I'd discovered that I'd given my heart, body and soul over to a cruel asshole. I'd blocked his texts and calls, and I hoped never to see him again. So, it seemed, a little self-pity was long overdue.

The arm tightened. That was when I realized that what I really needed at that moment was some human contact, some compassion. I was so utterly alone, and that prospect left me terrified.



I turned into John's chest. Something didn't feel quite right. The usual tobacco and cologne combination was absent. The large, round beer belly was missing as well. The chest my face was pressed against was hard, rock hard. The arms that held me were like protective steel. An unexplained sensation fluttered through me— I wanted to stay locked in those safe arms forever. Drake, perhaps? He seemed like the type who would readily offer a hug.

I drew in a long, shuddering breath and took a couple of futile swipes at the tears pooled in my eyes. I peered up into the face of the man who held me. Pale green eyes stared back.

I sucked in a sharp breath and pulled away. "I thought you were John."

"Nope. Sorry to disappoint." It seemed my abrupt departure from his arms had bothered him. Or that might have been my imagination with some wishful thinking sprinkled in.

"Guess you miss her more than you thought," he said. A sleek black suit. He'd donned a black suit for the grim occasion. He looked so handsome, it made my already aching heart hurt more.

I swallowed hard, trying to soothe the dryness in my throat left behind by the cry session. "She was my mom, after all. And, well, you know, we only get the one real mom. I wish we'd patched things up before she decided to leave me here alone."

"You're not alone, Slick. You've got us Mavericks, and not many people get that lucky." He smiled. He was being charming and nice and ... likable. I decided my safest bet was to stay completely on my guard. His mood could change at any time.

He held out his arm for me to take. "Your chariot, or, in this case, a stretch limo, awaits."

Cautiously, just in case it was a prank, I took hold of his arm. It was the occasion, I assured myself. I'd just watched them lower my mom into her grave, and he'd caught me

balling in a crumpled heap. That was surely the reason for his sudden kindness.

“Drake and I hardly ever see our mom now. She left when I was eight, right after the divorce. For the longest time, I was so pissed at her for taking off. I was sure she hadn’t even put up a fight for us. Years later, when I was old enough to understand the power of wealth, I’d discovered that she had fought like hell for custody, but Dad’s lawyers were just too good.” And now he was embellishing his sudden attempt at humanness with a sentimental mom story. Who was this incredibly perfect man?

“That’s rough for you and for your poor mom. Divorce is always ugly.” This I knew too well.

The extremely beautiful brunette who had attended both the church and the graveside service with an elderly man, who I’d assumed was her grandfather until I caught him goosing her ass on the climb up to the gravesite, walked carefully across the lawn in her black pumps. She wore a diamond necklace around her neck that looked as if it weighed more than her, which probably wasn’t an exaggeration. The woman was bone thin. She looked as if she ate nothing more than celery and spent the first two hours of every morning with a personal trainer. I was probably not far off with that assessment.

“Luke,” she called. Her trek in spiky heels was nothing short of harrowing ... and entertaining. Several steps into her journey, she got her heel stuck. She looked helplessly across the grass. “Well, Luke Maverick, are you going to just stand there, or are you going to come and help a lady in distress?”

“I’ll be right there, Chloe.” Luke nodded an apology for his abrupt departure.

“Go, brave knight,” I said. “Danger awaits you.”

I caught a glimmer of a smile beneath his hat as he hurried to rescue the damsel.

I watched him for just a second longer. A stark black suit fit him just as perfectly as the cowboy look of dust covered

jeans and boots. I was a little bummed that our conversation had been interrupted. I was sure he'd change my opinion soon enough, but for a brief second, it seemed that Luke had some amiable qualities after all.

# CHAPTER 7

## LUKE

Chloe's long nails dug into my shoulder as she braced herself against me. "Don't ruin the heel," she warned. "These shoes cost a thousand dollars." Chloe had an annoying habit of putting a price tag on everything. She had not grown up with money. She'd been working as a receptionist in a doctor's office when Mike met her. He was an aged, extremely wealthy widower, and Chloe had been one bad check away from a jail sentence. The match was magical for both of them. Although, the bleak reality of being married to a man in his late seventies had hit the wild thirty-year-old hard over the head. She'd quickly found other *hobbies* to keep her happily married, only none of those included Mike.

"She's pretty, that *stepsister* of yours." Chloe said the word *stepsister* with extra emphasis.

"Uh huh." The shoe was free. I straightened and she kissed me.

My attention shot to the street. Her husband's blue Mercedes was gone. "Where's Mike?" The guy was kind of a stodgy old prick, but I didn't need Chloe to be kissing me right in front of him.

She waved her long pink nails. "I told him to go home. He was too tired to go to the wake." She wrapped her arms around my waist and smacked her body against mine. My gaze quickly went to the limo. McKenna had already climbed inside, and the car was pulling away from the curb. I'd seen McKenna standing alone by her mother's grave looking so sad and vulnerable and alone. I couldn't stop myself from walking

over. My plan was to just lend a supporting arm around her shoulder, a relatively safe, non-committal gesture but then she'd turned into my arms. I could have held her there for the rest of the damn day. It felt right comforting her, holding her, and she seemed to have felt the same way. Until she looked up and realized it was me.

"I guess that means you'll have to drive me to the ranch," Chloe's voice interrupted my thoughts.

"Yep, the jeep is down there. Can you make it without breaking a heel or your neck?"

Chloe blinked her long, fake lashes. "I think I might need you to carry me."

"Seriously?" Any other time, I'd take a flirty invitation from Chloe and run with it. She was insatiable in the bedroom and worth every second of sneaking around and hiding from her gun wielding husband. But somehow, today, I didn't have the enthusiasm for her.

Of course, from the look on her face, she had her mind set on me carrying her. I swept her into my arms. She rested her head against my shoulder as I carried her down the steep slope of grass. We climbed into the jeep. Before I could even start the motor, she was unzipping my pants.

"Shit, Chloe, we're in a cemetery."

"So? Don't tell me you've never done it in a cemetery." She leaned over to nibble my ear as her hand slid down the front of my pants. Her fingers wrapped around my cock, and I sucked in a breath.

"Yes," I said with a hitch in my throat, caused by her thumb running over the tip of my cock, "but I was drunk at the time, and it was night. And I hadn't just come from a damn funeral." I took hold of her wrist. As I pulled her hand from inside my pants, I wondered if I was fucking crazy.

She leaned back hard against the seat with a pout. "Shit, I might as well have stayed with my husband." She turned to me. "Is this about that little west coast tart that's staying at the

ranch? She's very pretty. Don't think I hadn't noticed that you barely took your eyes off of her during the funeral."

I didn't respond. Shit, had it been that obvious?

"Well, Luke, answer me. Is she the reason you just pulled my hand out of your pants?" she asked angrily.

I turned up the radio to drown out this conversation. Chloe didn't say another word the rest of the ride.

# CHAPTER 8



## MCKENNA

The front of the house resembled a luxury car sales lot. Gleaming paint jobs and ornate hood ornaments sparkled in the late afternoon sun. Inside, a mouthwatering feast had been laid out on the twenty-foot, polished mahogany dining table. As delicious as everything looked, my unexpected little breakdown and the long, slow ride in the back of the limo had left me with little appetite. John made a point of showing me the beautiful red strawberries that he knew were my favorite. I picked up a small plate and loaded it with berries and a dollop of the whipped cream to go with them. I grabbed a glass of wine and walked into the main room.

Once again, I found myself sitting amongst a crowd of well-dressed strangers. Many made a point of politely nodding or giving me a thoughtful look of sorrow, but that was the extent of my interaction with Mom's friends.

Drake caught me looking a little lost and completely out of my element. Gentleman that he was, he strolled over to save me from my awkward state of looking completely out of place. Luke had driven to the funeral in his jeep, and I hadn't seen him since he'd gone off to wrench the expensive shoe from the cemetery lawn. I was relieved. Even though we'd shared a few, rare congenial moments at the gravesite, I always felt even more out of place and awkward whenever he was around with his disconcerting green gaze, wry sense of humor and short temper.

"You couldn't look more unhappy having to stand here in the center of my dad's uppity friends," Drake said.

“I really do feel out of place.” I took a sip of the wine. “Hmm, but this is delicious. Perhaps after a few more of these, I’ll find it easier to strike up a conversation. Of course, probably none of it will make sense because I’ll be buzzed. But what the hell.” I lifted the fluted glass. “Bottoms up.”

His eyes widened as I drained my glass. I winced as I swallowed the last gulp. “Guess I should have taken a breath between sips,” I said in a hoarse voice. I was a lightweight. It wouldn’t be long before I felt the effects of it. Which was exactly what I wanted. I grabbed another glass from a passing server’s tray.

I went to take a sip, but Drake caught my wrist. “You might want to take it a little slower.”

“Right.” I lifted the glass again and took another long drink.

Drake glanced around the crowded room. “I haven’t seen Luke. I wonder if he even made it back here.”

“I haven’t seen him since he walked off to help a brunette woman whose spiky heel got stuck in the graveyard lawn.” I had no idea why, but my words came out angrily.

“Brunette?” Drake asked. “Was she wearing a strand of rocks that looked as if they were weighing her down?”

“That’s the one.”

“That explains it,” Drake said, cryptically.

I stared up at him. “I guess you’re not going to explain why that *explains* it.” Shit, two glasses and my words were already sounding a little long and stretched out. Drake apparently noticed it too.

He smiled down at me. “Someone is really enjoying that wine.”

“It’s better than the drugstore box wine I usually drink.”

“I’ll bet it is,” he laughed.

I’d assured myself that I was relieved that Luke was noticeably absent, but at the same time, I couldn’t stop

thinking about the annoying man, the green eyed man who had looked perfectly stunning in his black suit. A tiny bit of alcohol on an empty stomach and my mind went right to lascivious daydreams, only, I wasn't cast in them. It was the woman with the heels. The beautiful brunette looked like the kind of trophy wife who would avoid contact with her rather wrinkled husband and go straight for a boy toy. And there just couldn't be any choicer looking boy toy than Luke Maverick. From the way she'd called to him for help, and with the speed that he'd rushed off to help, it was highly likely they were having an affair. For a second I imagined what they might be up to. Luke seemed like the type who would be fierce and demanding in bed. For some stupid reason, my line of tawdry musings made me quite irritated. Not that I cared who my charmless stepbrother was sleeping with. It was none of my damn business after all. Even if she was a rather skeletal looking woman with her sharp, protruding shoulders and elbows.

A tall, nice looking guy, who I'd noticed earlier because of his piercing blue eyes and humongous pair of arms, joined our circle of two. He spoke to Drake but stared directly at me. "Maverick, how many times do I have to ask you to introduce me to this angel."

Drake looked less than anxious to introduce us. "Cody, this is Linda's daughter and, therefore, technically, my stepsister, McKenna." Drake seemed to have a much easier time admitting that I was his stepsister than his younger, more opinionated, brother.

Cody's hand shot out. "Pleased to meet you, McKenna. I understand you're from California."

"Nice to meet you. Yes, I'm from California."

"Well, hell," Cody said, "then the rumors about California girls being exceptionally hot are true. I'm going to be traveling there next month, and after meeting you, I'm more excited than ever about my trip."

Drake winked discretely at me. "If you get to California and all the girls look like McKenna, then you let me know. I'll

be catching the next plane out.”

“If you two are through discussing McKenna as if she wasn’t standing right here.” I smiled into my glass and took a quick sip. “I guess by addressing myself in the third person, I’m doing the same.” I tossed back the rest of the wine. “If you men don’t mind, it’s getting a little close in here. I’m going to go out and sit on the swing in the rose garden.” I bowed politely and grabbed another glass of wine on my way out.

The afternoon sun was sitting low in the sky. The temperature had dropped some, but the humidity was still just as annoying as ever. I’d gotten used to my curls and not having to dry or flatiron my hair had been pretty damn nice. I sat on the gleaming white bench rocker and stared out at the ranch. It was a beautiful piece of property, more like a park than a private estate. It must have been grand growing up here. I couldn’t even imagine what it was like.

Footsteps sounded behind me. Much to my chagrin, my attempt at solitude was ruined. Drake’s friend, Cody, had followed me out. He sat, uninvited, on the bench, and immediately, his long legs started pushing against the ground to rock the bench back and forth. It was a motion I would have enjoyed if my head and stomach hadn’t been swimming with wine.

“So, how long will you be in Texas?” he asked.

“Not sure yet.”

The swing lurched forward and back. “What are some good beaches to see in California?”

I sipped more wine deciding it was the only way to make this conversation less painful. “Depends on what you’re looking for.”

He shrugged, and the movement of his massive shoulders made the swing jar side to side as well as forward and back. My relaxing moment outside was turning into a wine induced Disneyland ride. “The usual, sand and water.”

“I meant is your priority good waves? Then try Laguna or Malibu. Or if your priority is bikinis and beautiful girls then

try Huntington or Malibu. I guess you can't go wrong if you head to Malibu. It's a beautiful strip of coast." I could almost hear the wine sloshing in my head as he rocked the bench back and forth. I put my hand on his thigh. "Stop, please. Unless you want to be the one stuck holding my hair when I puke, please stop."

Just then, a tall figure stepped around in front of us. Luke stared pointedly down at my hand, which was still on Cody's thigh. I yanked it up as if I'd touched a hot stove.

"Lukester," Cody bellowed, "wondered where you'd gone off to." He laughed. "Or should I say gotten off with?" Obviously a big fan of his own humor, Cody laughed again, managing to give the bench a good shake.

Luke wasn't quite as amused. In fact, it seemed good ole, mean and asshole Luke had returned. I figured he wouldn't be far behind the kinder, more charming version I'd met at the cemetery.

Cody seemed to fidget now under Luke's harsh scowl. "I was just out here chatting with your pretty stepsister," he said quickly. "She was telling me about California beaches," Cody added unnecessarily. Luke's unrelenting, cold green gaze had shifted over to me.

He stared straight at me as he spoke. "She's not my stepsister. She's Linda's daughter." His cold tone seemed to make the big man next to me uncomfortable, but I refused to be intimidated by the incredibly handsome and extremely annoying man in the black suit.

I smiled sweetly at Cody. "You'll have to excuse him. Luke does not like me, and the notion of me being his stepsister leaves a bad taste in his mouth." I peered up at Luke. He hadn't shaved since he'd scraped his chin on the dirt, but I could still see his jaw clenching beneath the black stubble. I now offered him a sweet smile. "Isn't that right, *stepbrother*?" I was pleased that I'd met his asshole behavior with some of my own but then I made the mistake of standing up. Apparently I'd downed more wine than I realized, and that, coupled with the wild amusement ride I'd just endured on the

bench rocker, made my head spin like a tornado. I fell forward. Right into Luke's arms. But not before I'd managed to once again spill the contents of my glass on him. Or more accurately his expensive suit.

He looked down at the wet stain, then lifted his gaze to mine. "I think you've had enough wine."

I pulled back and nearly fell on my bottom. I was really sloshed. What a damn lightweight. "You can't tell me what to do. You're not my brother, after all." I somehow managed to sidle past him and got my feet, but not necessarily my head, going in the direction of the barn. I didn't hear anyone follow, and I was relieved. I just wanted everyone to leave me the hell alone.

# CHAPTER 9

## LUKE

I knocked once, hard and loud. There was no response. I'd practiced my manners by knocking. She didn't wake. I turned the knob and pushed the door open. The heavy curtains were still shut, and the room was dark.

McKenna looked ridiculously small in the giant four post bed with the mound of downy quilts piled on top of her. And she looked ridiculously hot with her long, wild curls spread over the pillow and the blush of last night's wine still on her cheeks. She was out cold.

She mewled softly in her sleep, and her long lashes twittered as she stretched her thin arms out from the covers. The movement made the blanket slip down from her breasts, her naked breasts, her extremely perfect naked breasts. My cock reacted immediately.

My manners had finished after the first knock. I didn't turn or look away. In fact, if I hadn't been completely sure that it would earn me a hard slap across my face, I would have leaned down and pinched one of her taut, rose-colored nipples. That thought made my cock harden more. It seemed I'd had a perpetual hard-on since this girl had stepped onto Texas soil, and it also seemed that nothing was going to relieve the ache.

I kicked the side of the bed with my boot.

She gasped and shot up to sitting. The blankets dropped down to her waist. Her mass of hair was a giant pile of untamed golden curls. She blinked into the mostly dark room in complete confusion. Then her gaze landed on me, and she



drew in an audible breath. She pulled the blankets up over her breasts.

“Well, that’s disappointing,” I drawled. “They are even perkier looking in the morning. And I have to say, seeing them naked did not disappoint.”

She swept some of the rogue curls back off her face. Her lips were full and pouty and mad. “What the hell are you doing in here? And why are you watching me sleep?” She pressed her hand to her forehead. “And why is someone playing the bongo drums in my head?”

“I’m not watching you sleep. I’m waking you. Put on some jeans and proper shoes. I’m going to teach you how to ride.”

“Ride what?” she asked.

I sighed. “Hell, Slick, don’t sit there buck naked in that big fucking bed and ask a question like that.”

Her face lit up like a little girl’s. What a fucking inconsistency it was with the naked body beneath the blanket. “Ride a horse? Holy shit. I think you just cured my hangover. What should I wear that you, with your high moral standards, would consider appropriate?”

“A suit of armor,” I muttered wryly. The comment stemmed from the realization that the only way McKenna could look anything less than completely fuckable was for her to suit up in armor. Even then, I’d probably just be obsessing about what was under the metal plates.

She laughed at my comment, completely misconstruing the meaning. “You’re not going to put me on that black horse I saw you ride the other day, are you?”

“Nope, I think we’ll start with a little tamer mount.” I headed to the door. “Meet you at the stables.”

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Ranger was a plodding, easy-going gelding, perfect for a beginner. I wasn’t completely sure what my motives were

other than I'd obviously put on my best asshole impression for McKenna, and now she hated me for it. I couldn't stomach the idea that she hated me. The attitude I'd given her was strictly out of self-defense.

I was putting Ranger in the crossties when I heard light footsteps in the barn aisle. She'd pulled on some skin tight jeans and a t-shirt. Not exactly a suit of armor. She'd swept her hair up in a ponytail but some of the curls had already broken free. They framed her face with golden waves, as if it needed framing. It was already a damn picture.

A bright white smile broke out on her face as she hurried over to Ranger. "Is this my horse?" She patted his neck. "I love paint horses. They remind me of the old west."

"Ranger is a good confidence builder. He rarely does stupid things. Note the word *rarely*. Every horse does something unexpected and silly given the right set of circumstances."

I dropped the crossties and slid on the horse's bridle. McKenna watched the whole thing with keen interest. Her excitement about going for a ride was fucking adorable. "All right, Slick, I'll let you lead him out of the barn. We're going into that same round pen you saw me get bounced around in. Ranger likes to keep all his feet on the ground, sometimes even more than he should, so you won't have to worry about getting bucked off."

Once we were outside, I pointed to the stirrup. She grabbed the edge of the saddle, stretched her long leg up and pushed her foot in.

"Take hold of the reins, and I'll give you a little boost up."

She reached up and hung in that awkward position of a rider with one foot unnaturally high in the stirrup while the other was still on the ground. I moved behind her. A second earlier, it had been an innocent enough idea to give her a hand up, but suddenly, I was just inches from her. Her shiny hair was swept up and away from the back of her creamy neck. I temporarily lost focus as I visualized myself running a trail of kisses along that neck. A fragrance that was somewhere

between fresh lemons and a field of lavender drifted off her silky skin. I closed my eyes briefly to absorb her scent, her intoxicating scent.

“Uh, that push up?” Her voice woke me from my fleeting fantasy, a fantasy that included a field of lavender and her naked body.

“Yep, here goes. Now, remember to stop in the middle. I’ve seen people swing right past the saddle to land on the other side.”

The sound of her lyrical laugh coupled with my hand on her bottom, giving her a lift up, brought back another round of erotic visions. This was going to be harder than I thought. I’d started the morning convinced that I had enough grip on myself to take her out for a riding lesson. But now, the reality of just how badly I wanted McKenna was like a slap in the face.

She smiled proudly down from the saddle. “Pretty good, huh? I guess now I just have to learn how to make him move.”

Her enthusiasm for the lesson forced me to focus. I’d started this, and I needed to follow through like a gentleman. Gentleman, fuck, I was going to deserve sainthood after this.

# CHAPTER 10

## MCKENNA

The sun had nearly brought the moisture in the air to a boil. My shirt clung to my back, and sweat dripped into my eyes. But I was having the time of my life. Ranger was a great horse. After an hour in the saddle, I'd learned to trot and stop and even back up. The horse was a patient teacher and so was the man. The friendlier Mr. Jekyll version of Luke had shown up for the morning lesson. Of course, I knew too well that Mr. Hyde could return at any minute. For now, I was too thrilled to be riding a horse to care.

Luke was sitting on the railing, looking every bit hunky cowboy. "Well, Slick, I think that's good for today. Ranger isn't used to being ridden much anymore, so he'll be tired too."

I didn't even have to pull the reins for the horse to throw on the brakes. He released a snort that sounded like a giant sigh of relief. I patted his neck. It was wet with sweat. "Thank you so much, Ranger." I looked over at Luke. "I'm in love."

He stared at me, his green eyes looking extra striking beneath the black hat. "Yep, I know the feeling."

It was a strange response, but I decided to wave it off. I was tired and sweaty and I smelled like horse. I was nearly giddy with the thought of it. "Wait, before I get off. This is such a dream, take a picture of me up here. That way I don't have to pinch myself."

That perfectly crooked smile propped up one side of Luke's mouth as he pulled out his phone and took my picture.

Then he looked at it and smiled again.

“Do I look like a true blue horse person?”

“You do. And Ranger looks like a true blue horse. I don’t get it. If you’ve been this crazy about horses, why didn’t you learn to ride?”

“Money. The only girls I knew who rode were the ones who could afford it. When you live in the city and not on a big ranch, you have to pay a lot of money to keep a horse.”

“Makes sense. Well, you’re a natural.” Luke hopped down from the pen and swung open the gate. I led Ranger through, or more accurately, the horse led himself through. He headed straight for the barn. Luke followed up the rear.

“Stop him before you get to the barn or he’ll carry you right into his stall and go straight to his pile of hay.”

I pulled Ranger to a stop. Luke walked up next to the horse. I swung my leg over and dropped a little too quickly to the ground. I collapsed on wobbly legs. Luke caught me.

“Who replaced my legs with wet noodles?” I laughed.

Luke’s arms stayed around me. My back was against his hard chest. I could feel his warm breath on the back of my neck. As tired and sweaty as I was, my body reacted in a way I hadn’t expected. His strong hand was pressed against my stomach, and suddenly, all I could think about was that same strong hand sliding beneath my t-shirt and along my naked skin.

“I think I’ve got my land legs back,” I said weakly, completely stunned by my physical reaction.

With obvious reluctance, he lowered his hand and stepped back. His sudden silence had a chill to it, and I wondered which Luke was standing behind me now. Ranger shook his body, saddle and all, and it startled me out of the strange moment of tension.

I led the horse into the barn. The other horses poked their heads out to watch us walk past. A few, including the one that

was Ranger's neighbor, nickered at him as he plodded through on heavy hooves.

I hadn't turned around to look at Luke, but I was hyperaware of his presence. We'd been having a perfectly fun, normal day out in the round pen, but something had shifted in those last few moments. His closeness, his hand on me, his breath on my neck, all of it had stirred feelings that I'd thought I'd just been imagining up until then. Luke was extremely handsome, the kind of man who would turn every woman's head in a crowded room. But I'd assured myself my fleeting moments of feeling attracted to him had been nothing more than that, fleeting lusty moments.

This morning, when he'd seen me topless in bed, I'd felt too miserable from the wine binge to care. But now, thinking about him staring openly at my naked breasts made my nipples harden, and I thought about what it would be like to be touched intimately by Luke Maverick.

Luke went about his business of *undressing* the horse. We'd both fallen awkwardly silent. He carried the unwieldy saddle and blanket over to a sawhorse and lowered them down. I stood by rather helplessly. A bucket of brushes was sitting on the ground. Ranger had a saddle shaped sweat mark on his back. I plucked out a brush and ran it along his wet coat.

I heard Luke's footsteps behind me. "Like this." He covered my hand with his and showed me the proper grooming technique. It was probably a valuable lesson that I would have easily learned if Luke's hard, hot body hadn't been right behind me. I could feel waves of heat and something else, tension maybe, rolling off of him as he held my hand longer than needed.

"Got it," I blurted. Luke stepped back, but I could sense his gaze on me. He was watching me and something told me it had nothing to do with my technique. Without warning, he strode purposefully out of the barn, leaving me alone with Ranger.

I continued brushing the horse's coat until my arm felt as rubbery as my legs. More than once, Ranger turned his big head to eye me, almost mockingly. It seemed the horse was well aware that I had no idea what I was doing. He picked up his big front foot and stomped it down right next to mine. I gasped and pulled my foot away.

"He's not mad. He's just stomping away a fly."

I spun around. Luke was walking back into the barn. He held his hat in his hand and his dark hair was dripping water down onto his shirt. The fabric of his shirt clung to the muscles of his chest. His face was wet too, as if he'd held a hose over his head. He slicked his hair back and what a sight. He was even more handsome dripping with water. With his broad shoulders, glinting green eyes and water dripping off him, he looked like Poseidon, god of the sea, just emerging from his watery kingdom. He dropped his hat on a hook on the front of a horse stall and walked around the horse to check out his coat.

"I feel guilty because Ranger carried my butt around for an hour and put up with my clumsiness, but after ten minutes of brushing," I said, holding out the brush, "my arm hurts too much to continue."

"You got the saddle area. That's the most important part. Gets the blood circulating." The harsh tone had returned. I already missed the smiling, even tempered man who had been out giving me my first riding lesson. "I'm sure you're tired. Go on back to the house." He dropped the hook and rope that was attached to Ranger's halter. "I'll put him away." He led Ranger to his stall.

I stood there for a moment feeling completely confused. It seemed I was back to being a bother to have around. "Well, thank you for the lesson. I had a great time," I called to the stall he'd just led the horse into.

"Yep." His voice drifted out.

I'd had the most awesome morning, but I left the barn with a heavy heart, once again hurt by Luke's sudden mood change.



# CHAPTER 11

## LUKE

I was a damn idiot. For a short piece of time, I'd thought this could work. I could just hang out with McKenna, give her a riding lesson, and not think about her naked and willing in my arms. It had been a good hour too. I could not have found a more enthusiastic pupil. Everything about her was cool. She was easy going and funny and, unlike most girls I knew, she didn't mind laughing at herself. But once she'd climbed down from the safety of the horse's back, and once I'd gotten physically near her again, every form of dirty thought raced through my head. It had been nothing but a mere brush against her as I kept her from collapsing on tired legs, but my cock had grown stiff. Even dousing myself under a spray of hose water hadn't taken away the lingering effects of touching McKenna.

I scrubbed my wet hair with the towel. Once again, I'd turned to cold water in the shower to cool my head and my body. Once again, it had done little to help. Chloe had sent me a dozen texts, but I'd had little interest in reading them. They were always the kind of texts that sent me straight over to her house for a good round of wild sex. I'd never ignored her requests. Never. Until now.

McKenna was a drug of some kind and the only way I could reach that high I craved was to have her. No one else would do. Apparently, I was going out of my fucking mind.

I walked down to the kitchen and grabbed a cold beer. I glanced through the window. The morning sky had been clear blue but thick, gray thunderstorm clouds had floated in over

the plains. I needed to bring the three pregnant mares in from pasture before the storm broke.

Our newest addictive, intoxicating family member was standing at the pasture fence chatting with the mares. The horses seemed quite taken with her. It was never easy to pull their attention from the grass, but all three mares had crowded around McKenna to get a neck rub.

“Guess you haven’t had your fill of horses yet,” I said.

She spun around. “Didn’t hear you walk up. Nope. If they’d have me, I’d bring a pillow and quilt and sleep right out here under the moon with them.” She peered up at the sky. “Although I have to say, the sky looks rather uninviting at the moment.”

I pulled all the halters off the gate just as the first raindrops fell. “We need to get these girls in before it breaks. You can help me.” I put on the halters and handed one lead rope to McKenna, avoiding any contact as I did so. Even a brush of her fingers was too much. I grabbed the other two ropes, and we all walked toward the barn. Halfway there, the first streak of lightning creased the blackened sky. Seconds later, thunder rumbled overhead, but it was only a low roar. It was still far away. The mares pricked up their ears and their hooves moved a little faster. They were anxious to get inside the safety of the barn.

A second streak of light lit up the entire barn, agitating all the horses. Thunder rumbled again, but it still sounded distant.

“As a kid, I always hated thunder,” McKenna said as she waited for me to take each horse into its stall. “Used to climb into my closet with my stuffed animals and hide there until the storm passed. I’ll bet you’re not afraid of anything, Luke, are you?”

I closed up the last stall. She was standing in the center of the aisle with her long wavy hair and her tight jeans and sultry pink mouth waiting for an answer.

“I’m more afraid of myself than anything else. I’m notorious for making stupid ass decisions.”

She nodded but didn't prod any further. I was relieved. I sure as hell didn't need to let her know what was going through my head as I gazed at her, my supposed stepsister, standing in the shadows of the barn looking so damn beautiful and feminine and ... Shit.

"Let's go." I knew my tone was harsh again. It had been my defense. Stay cold. Stay distant.

Ranger snorted and hung his head over his stall. She walked over to rub his nose. Rain began to drum a steady beat on the metal roof of the barn. I walked up behind her. She reached up to stroke Ranger's ears and her t-shirt slid up with the movement. The dragonfly stared back at me from the hollow of her back. Lightning temporarily illuminated the barn, and I could see every curve clearly. It hadn't even been a conscious decision. It was as if my body had just moved on its own. My arm wrapped around her, and I pressed my chest against her back.

She stiffened at first, not the reaction I'd been hoping for. Then she relaxed in my arms. As she took her hand from Ranger's ear, I glimpsed the bruises on her arm. They had faded to a pale yellow, but they were still visible.

"Luke," she said softly. Her head leaned back against my shoulder as my hand slid under the hem of her shirt.

"Like silk," I said on a ragged breath. "I knew you'd feel like silk."

I smoothed my palm over her stomach and her breasts rose and fell with her short, quick breaths as I ran my hand over the lacey fabric of her bra. She didn't pull away. I'd thought, no feared, that she would. But she wanted this. She pushed her breasts harder against my palm. She fucking wanted this. Everything about this was going to earn me a well-deserved place in hell, but I needed to touch her.

My hand slid down to the button on her jeans. I flicked it open and pushed the zipper down slowly.

"Luke," she said again in that same sultry tone that made my cock grow hard.

“Shh,” I said against her ear. “I just want to make you come. Please let me touch you.” She relaxed again. I pushed my hand down under her jeans and panties. My fingers found the slick moisture I’d been hoping for. “God, you feel like warm cream.”

A quiet moan slipped from her lips, making my cock throb. But I wasn’t going to fuck her. As badly as I wanted to, I was just going to allow myself the pleasure of touching her. And from the moisture surging between her legs, it seemed she wanted this just as badly.

My fingers slid through the wet folds of her pussy to her clit. She sucked in a breath as I found the sweet spot that made her nearly limp in my arms. She clutched at the arm that held her to keep herself from sinking to the ground. But I had no intention of letting her go.

Rain pounded overhead, but not as loudly as my own heartbeat. She moaned in pleasure as my fingers massaged her clit. She began to rock with the motion of my hand, pushing her pussy harder against the friction of my probing fingers. She held tightly to my arm in a silent plea for me to continue.

“God, Luke, please,” her quiet voice was absorbed by the storm outside.

I pushed my fingers inside of her, and she cried out. Moisture dripped through my fingers as she writhed against the onslaught of my touch. I pushed my fingers deeper, all the while making sure my palm rubbed against her clit. Her ass pushed back hard against me, making contact with my cock, which now ached painfully. She moved frantically against my hand now, squeezing her thighs shut around it and bucking her ass back against me. Each rhythmic bump of her round ass against me made my fucking head spin.

Her fingers dug into the flesh on my forearm. “Fuck yes, Luke, yes,” she cried out as her pussy clenched around my hand. Her head dropped back and slowly she relaxed. I still had a hold on her, certain that she would collapse if I let her go.

As her breathing returned to normal, she pulled away from my chest and zipped up her pants. Reluctantly, I lowered my arm. She kept her back to me and seemed determined not to look at me. The rain was coming down in sheets and thunder rolled in behind it. The only other sounds came from the horses. I stood behind her staring at her small body, her shoulders slightly rigid and her head bowed down. Then without another word or glance at me, she tore out of the barn and into the rain.

# CHAPTER 12

## MCKENNA

The storm had traveled on, leaving only a quiet, starlit sky behind. I'd gone to bed early, claiming a headache. I just wasn't in the mood for dinner or conversation or most of all, seeing Luke.

My legs were sore from the morning's ride as I stretched them out under my blankets. It had been a whirlwind of a day, a mind-blowing, confusing, hell of a day. Never in a million years would I have expected what'd happened in the barn. At first when Luke had touched me, I had stiffened with shock, not knowing what to expect. He'd been so damn unpredictable, it was impossible to know what he was thinking. But the thing that really confused and shocked the hell out of me was my own reaction. By the time his strong callused palm had brushed over my skin, I'd melted into putty. I'd wanted him to touch me and damn if I didn't come easily for the man. His confidence, his obvious skill from what was more than likely a great deal of practice, had brought me to climax almost instantly.

I had no idea what to do now. I was horrified at the thought of running into Luke, knowing that I'd submitted so easily to him. He knew me intimately now. But why the hell had he done it? I would have to leave the ranch. It was the only logical solution to get out of this embarrassing predicament. He was John's son, for fucksake. Yep, as wonderful as it'd been having a family and a secure roof for those few days, I would have to brave it out in the world alone. It was a frightening and depressing thought, but I saw no other way. As



if my stay here hadn't been awkward enough, my weakness today had made this whole thing that much worse.

I reached for the lamp and turned it off. The room fell into darkness. Just as my eyes drifted shut, the bedroom door pushed open.

I sat up and squinted into the light in the hallway. A large figure stood in the open doorway. Luke stepped into the room.

He stared at me with that same cold look I'd seen too often. But even in the dim light I could see that this time there was something different in his expression.

After a long, chilly silence, he spoke. "I'm tired of this sainthood shit."

# CHAPTER 13

## MCKENNA

**M**y bedroom door swung shut. Luke stood in the center of the dark room with his fierce green gaze. The set of his broad shoulders and the way his fists were clamped into steel balls at his sides made him look dangerous. I should have been frightened but, somehow, I knew the only thing that I was in danger of with Luke Maverick was losing my heart to him. After the intimate moments in the dank, warm barn where he'd made me cry out in pleasure by just touching me with his strong, capable hands, I shivered now at the prospect of having him take me in his arms again.

Even in the shadows of my bedroom, I could see the determination in his finely chiseled face as he stepped around to the side of my bed. After my shower, I'd pulled on a long t-shirt, panties and socks before climbing under the plush downy quilts. It was hardly a sexy or enticing fashion statement but then I hadn't expected the man to push into my room uninvited. He'd spoken sharply as he entered, something about giving up on sainthood or some such thing. It hadn't made much sense to me, and my stepbrother had hardly been acting saintly around me. Devilish would have been much more accurate. Kind and almost charming one moment, and then, when I least expected it, a cold, harsh Luke would appear, leaving me confused and hurt.

I clutched the blanket beneath my chin but considering he'd had his fingers in my most intimate parts just several hours earlier my attempt at modesty seemed a bit comical. His chest rose and fell with each ragged breath as he stared down at me.

“Just one word, one syllable from those lips and I’ll leave. I’ll go. But I will tell you right now, I haven’t stopped thinking about you for one fucking minute since I met you.”

“I did sort of mess up your shirt with my smoothie,” I said with a faint smile. “And then there was the matter of your suit.”

He stood like a tall, ferocious stone statue over my bed. He was waiting for me to say *leave*. If I’d had one ounce of decency, or common sense, or self-control I would have blurted that one syllable word. I would have told him to get out. But that list of qualities flew out of my head the second Luke stepped into my room, in all his unbelievable glory. He was strong and beautiful and he made my heart race. He was quite simply breathtaking. It was hard to know if in the end it had been my head or my heart or possibly even my pussy that had made me cave but I pushed the covers down. His gaze was hard as flint as I rose up to my knees. Teasingly, I reached down to the bottom of my t-shirt. His Adam’s apple moved up his throat as he watched me lift it up above my thighs. A low groan rolled up from his throat as I lifted the hem above my panties and belly button. For almost a week, I’d endured his rudeness and his unpredictable mood swings. I decided to go slow and make him wait.

He had a different idea.

“All fucking week,” Luke grunted as he leaned down and pushed my hand off my shirt. He grabbed the fabric and swept the shirt, none too gently, up and over my head. Aside from a barely there pair of lavender colored panties and a pair of socks with frogs on them I was completely naked. He straightened and his throat moved again with a hard swallow as his gaze drifted over my naked skin. With the intense way he looked at me, it felt as if he’d reached out and run his fingers over my body. Cool air swirled around the room but heat was coming off his hard body in waves. “I’ve been waiting for this all fucking week.” His deep voice sounded strained. He was holding back. “All damn week.” He reached down, took hold of my arms and dragged me off the bed. My feet landed on the floor. I stood between the bed and his hot,

unyielding body. His shirt stretched tight across his chest and shoulders but I sensed that his muscles were drawn tight with tension. It seemed it wouldn't take much to spring him from his controlled state. That thought and the reality that I was nearly naked in front of him sent a delicious shiver up my spine.

“I need to see you completely naked, Slick. I want to see all of you.”

I lifted my foot and took hold of a sock. He reached for my wrist. I peered up at him. “You don't actually think I was talking about the socks?” he growled. “Never mind. I'll do it.” In one swift motion, he had both my wrists in one strong hand. He whipped my hands up above my head. The finger of his free hand hooked the thin rubber band on my panties. It snapped in two with one strong tug. The torn panties fell to the floor.

With my hands above my head, I had no way to cover or protect myself from his gaze or his hand. I should have been scared, or at least concerned about being so vulnerable. But I wasn't. I was trembling but it wasn't fear. It was anticipation. Moisture pooled between my thighs and all I could think about was Luke lowering his hard as steel body down between my legs.

He reached down and smoothed his callused fingertips over the skin of my Brazilian waxed pussy. “I like this shaved clean look.”

I felt my cheeks warm with a blush although it seemed like an entirely too late reaction. “In California, it's almost always bikini season. A girl has to be ready.”

That comment sparked a wicked grin on the man who was holding me naked and captive. With no way for me to stop him, he slid the same fingers between my legs. I sucked in a breath. His grin widened as he discovered the cream between the folds of my pussy.

“And this girl seems to be plenty ready.” He released my wrists and reached back to pull his shirt off. I'd seen his bare chest once in the pool but now, standing within the walls of the

bedroom, he looked that much bigger and formidable. “Christ, McKenna, what the hell have you done to me?” He lifted me up into his arms and in seconds, he carried me across the room and pressed me up against the wall. The plaster felt cold compared to the hot, hard body that slammed against me. His fingers tangled in my hair and he pulled my head back. My lips parted instinctively. His mouth came down over mine. His kiss was deep and punishing and yet I never wanted it to stop. My hands fumbled overlong with the fly on his jeans and with one frustrated motion I pushed his pants down off his hips. His mouth devoured mine as I reached down and wrapped my fingers around his cock. My gasp was muffled by his kiss. I pulled my lips from his and stared down at his erection. It was massive and imposing, like the man.

“Holy shit,” I whispered.

I lifted my eyes and met his satisfied grin. “That’s the reaction I was hoping for.” He lowered his face to my breast and took my nipple lightly between his teeth. I arched my back toward his mouth and my nipple hardened against the pressure of his tongue. His hands slid down my back and over my ass. He took my hand from his cock and lifted his mouth to mine. “Your sweet little fingers around my cock are going to end this too soon.” With that he turned me around to face the wall. He lifted my arms and pressed my hands against the cold, smooth plaster. I felt him kneel down behind me.

“Spread those pretty thighs for me, darlin’. I want to see everything.” His erotic commands made my pussy ache with need. All I could think about was his massive cock, slick and hard, impaling me again and again. I scooted my feet apart. He ran his tongue over the cheek of my ass as his hand reached up and around to my pussy. He pushed until my ass stuck out farther. I was completely exposed and delirious with the thought of him knelt behind me looking at me, wide open and wet with desire. His tongue flicked between my butt cheeks and as he dragged it down to my pussy, my fingers grasped for something to hold onto. My legs were weak from it all. As his tongue pressed into my pussy, his hand found my clit. It ached from wanting to be touched, and massaged. As if he knew exactly what I was thinking, his thumb teased and played with

the throbbing nub. The room seemed to spin as he pushed his tongue deeper inside of me. His free hand grasped my hip, holding me tight and steady against the delicious invasion. As he teased my clit and found every intimate sweet spot he could with his tongue, my body writhed against it all. I wanted more. I could barely keep myself upright but I wanted him to devour me and touch me all night long.

“Oh fuck, Luke, fuck yeah,” I mewled.

I was close to the edge, ready for the explosion that would soon consume me. He slid his hand down from my hip, but I kept my ass out not wanting to lose any of the attention my pussy was getting. Moisture dripped down my inner thigh and my mind was in a fog, filled with visions of his massive cock finishing this off. My pussy clenching around his impossibly thick erection was almost too much to think about without going right over the edge. I jutted my ass out in invitation, now wanting to give him more exposure to my pussy.

My legs wobbled from fatigue. “Luke, I can barely keep myself up. But don’t stop,” I begged. “Don’t fucking stop.”

His free hand smoothed over my ass and his finger pushed into my anus. I clenched against the invasion at first but he persisted. Seconds later I was jutting my ass out farther taking in his finger while his tongue worked it’s magic on my pussy. That final impaling, that final erotic intrusion. “God, Luke, oh fuck.” My pussy tightened, then shattered into a million glorious pieces as I came. The waves of ecstasy lasted so long my hands stuttered down the smooth wall. I was nearly on my hands and knees by the time he pulled his face from between my legs.

I was lightheaded and trembling as he swept me up into his strong arms. He carried me to the bed and placed me down in the center of the mattress. The blush on my skin hadn’t faded and the cool air of the room brushed over me as I laid back on my pillows.

I watched with some amusement as he struggled with his boots.

“You could leave them on,” I said with a smile.

He dropped the second boot to the floor with a triumphant flourish. He pushed down his pants and boxer briefs. "Can't get the jeans off over boots." He glanced pointedly at his erection. "Unless you want me to button them back up."

"Hell no," I said a little too abruptly. "Besides," I said as I sat up and reached for his enormous cock. My fingers curled around him and he groaned in appreciation. "I'd like to see you try and get this back into those jeans."

My hand stayed wrapped around him while he maneuvered his feet out of the pants.

Just as he'd wanted to touch me earlier in the day, I now had an intense need to touch him.

"It seems to me the score is two to zero." My thumb rubbed the moist tip, spreading the slippery liquid around the entire head of his massive erection. His fingers tangled in my mass of curls as I leaned forward and pressed my lips against his cock.

For just a brief moment, I allowed myself the pleasure of exploring him. Low guttural sounds rolled up from his chest as my hand cupped around his heavy sac. I parted my lips and took as much as I could into my mouth. He was thick and hard and impossibly long. I held the shaft with my free hand and my mouth teased the tip.

"No," he grunted almost angrily. And with a slight tug on my hair he pulled my mouth from him. At first I was embarrassed and hurt. I wondered if his mood had darkened again. Maybe he was rethinking this whole damn thing.

He seemed to have sensed my anguish. His fingers went beneath my chin and he lifted my face. His thumb ran across my bottom lip. "Your mouth is too fucking hot. It'll be over before we even start. And I'm not through with you yet, Slick. I won't be through until you are screaming out my name." He peered down at me through heavy lids and long, black lashes. He grabbed a condom package from the pocket of his jeans. I bit my lip in worry as he rolled it on. How on earth would I be able to accommodate him.



His talented mouth and fingers had just brought me to a mind blowing orgasm yet I was wet again. I was ready. I was thrilled and slightly terrified at the prospect of it all. I got up on my hands and knees and made a show of crawling back to the center of the bed.

“Fucking hell, woman, are you trying to make me come before I even get a chance to press between your thighs?”

I looked back over my shoulder, flashed a sweet smile and wiggled my naked ass ever so slightly. He was done being teased. His hand shot out and grabbed my ankle. I landed on my stomach on the bed. He straddled the back of my legs and leaned down over me, lowering his mouth to my ear. “Just a warning, Slick. I’ve never wanted anything this badly in my whole fucking life.”

I shuddered at his words. He lowered his mouth to my ear. “One word, darlin’ and I’ll climb off this bed and leave. It will probably kill me, but I won’t touch you if you don’t want me to.”

I laid there for a second. I had never expected this. I’d been convinced that the man despised me or at the very least found me an irritation. God, how much that had all changed tonight. In fact, everything had been turned upside down with no possible way for it to right itself anymore.

I twisted onto my back. His face was directly over mine. Everything about him thrilled me. I felt the same as him. I couldn’t remember ever wanting something this badly. I curled my hand up around his neck and gazed into his green eyes. “Don’t you dare leave me now, Luke Maverick.” I pulled his mouth down to mine and kissed him. His hands slid beneath my ass as I wrapped my legs around him. He shoved my pussy up higher.

He pushed up on his hands keeping his upper body off of mine. “I want to watch your beautiful, hot pussy swallow me. I want to watch my cock disappear inside of you.” The last words seemed to stick in his throat.

His face dropped, and he gazed down between my legs. As the tip of his cock penetrated me, I reached up and grasped his

forearms. With slow deliberate movements he filled me. Just when I was sure he'd gone as deep as possible, he pushed in farther. His face lifted to mine. His eyes looked glassy and unfocused, and his chest heaved with ragged breaths.

“Fuck, baby, it’s not just a beautiful pussy. It’s tight like a perfect fitting glove. I can feel every intimate part of you.”

His words only intensified the feeling. I could barely breathe. Never had I felt anything like it. He was enormous and hard and unyielding.

With his cock securely inside of me, he lowered himself over me. “Are you ready, Slick? Cuz I sure as fuck am.” His warm breath coasted across my kiss swollen lips.

“God yes, please. Before I go mad.”

He started with a gentle kiss and his hips curled against me, driving his massive cock in deeper still. It was slow and easy at first, and every thrust filled me to capacity. My pussy ached from it all, and yet, I lifted my hips to let him know I craved more. The speed increased. He was trying hard to make this last. His movements were controlled and planned.

“Fuck, baby, I need you to come again. Please come for me, McKenna. I need to feel your pussy tighten around me.” He reached down between us and found my throbbing clit. It was slick with moisture and seconds after he started stroking it, I felt myself roll toward the mind bending edge of no return.

“Yes, please,” I cried out. As my pussy writhed over his enormous erection, my body shuddered with pleasure almost uncontrollably. “Oh my god, Luke,” I screamed.

“That’s it, darlin’. That’s what I want. That’s what I need to hear. God, you’re still so tight. I’m sorry, baby, I’ve got to finish this now, or I will go out of my fucking mind.”

Tears streamed down the side of my face as I came around him. I’d never felt anything so intense, so incredible. It was as if the man knew my body better than me. As the orgasm subsided, he withdrew his hand and braced himself over me. His movements grew in speed and intensity. The bed rocked against the wall with each thrust. His heavy ball sac tapped my

ass as I lifted myself higher to him. His eyes drifted shut and he impaled me at a frenzied pace, each time filling me completely.

My entire body ached with luxurious gratification as he rocked against me, nearly splitting my pussy in two with his huge cock. His thrusts came faster and harder. I held my breath as he filled me. His fingers dug into the flesh of my ass as he held my pussy steady against his exquisite assault. His head leaned back and a deep, long groan rolled up from his chest as he exploded inside of me.

Luke's breaths came in short spurts as he relaxed his hold on me. He gazed down at me, just now noticing the few tears that had rolled down the side of my face. His brow creased in concern. He reached up and wiped away a tear with his thumb. "I didn't hurt you, Slick, did I?"

I smiled and shook my head against the pillow. "On the contrary. I was overwhelmed with it all."

He rolled down next to me. "Overwhelmed? That's a good thing, right?" Hearing that unsure tone coming from a man who oozed self-confidence made me smile again. I turned toward him. He wrapped his big arms around me as I pressed my face against his chest.

"Right."

He kissed my forehead. "I know you've been hurt before, McKenna."

I didn't respond. I knew he'd seen my bruises. He'd even suggested that they had to do with me liking it rough. I'd been terribly hurt by the callous comment at the time. But I felt so safe in Luke's arms, it washed away all our previous conversations.

"That's all right. You don't have to talk about him. Just know that he'll never hurt you again."

I shook my head. My tears flowed again. Not from pain or from being overwhelmed but from the notion that maybe I wasn't as completely alone as I thought. Maybe I had someone

here on the planet who cared about me. One thing was certain, Luke and I were no longer stepsiblings.

# CHAPTER 14

## LUKE

It had probably been a mistake bringing McKenna to the crowded saloon. But she'd looked bored, and when Drake suggested it, her eyes had lit up with the prospect of going out. She'd dashed upstairs to change. When she'd come back down in a short, sexy sundress, I'd regretted our decision to go. And for two damn good reasons. The first being that if we'd stayed home, I would have had the pleasure of taking that sweet little dress off of her, that is, once I'd fucked her good and hard with it pushed up around her waist. The second reason stemmed from the sudden realization that I wasn't going to take kindly to anyone else gawking at McKenna in her flirty little dress. Even Drake's unplanned, open-mouthed reaction as she came down the stairs had been enough to make me curl my fingers into fists. And he was my brother.

The crush of people standing outside Stan's Saloon assured us that inside was packed tight as sardines. Most of that was due to Bobby's Hell Cats, a popular band, that only played at Stan's once a month. The place itself was pretty much a dive, and the drinks were always watered down but people came to hear the music.

Drake was good friends with the bouncer so we walked right in.

"Wow, this place is crowded," McKenna said. She had her hand on my arm, and I couldn't believe how fucking happy that made me.

"People come to hear this band play," I had to almost yell over the din of the crowd and music. There was a dance floor

in front of the stage bordered by a half circle of tables. We made our way through the maze of people to the bar. Drake ordered us beers, and we elbowed our way back through the press of bodies to the bar height counters where we would have to stand. We set the beers on the counter and watched the band.

The wood paneling on the walls and the weird chandeliers fashioned from deer antlers and tiny yellow lights kept the place pretty gloomy, but the conversations and music counteracted the dreary decor. The place was definitely buzzing with life tonight.

McKenna looked around with her usual enthusiasm for anything new. It was one of the things I loved about her. She leaned her face close to mine to avoid yelling. “This place is crazy. But people don’t seem to mind that there is no place to put your feet without stepping on someone else’s toes.”

Having her lips so close to my face made me steal a kiss. “I guess you’ll have to stay pressed against me all night. That way you won’t get swept away in the crowd.”

She tightened her hold on my arm and squeezed closer. “You’re right. It’s not safe in here.”

Drake peered sideways at me. My brother knew what was going on between McKenna and me, but my dad had no idea. And, for now, I planned to keep it that way. I didn’t need one of his fatherly lectures on doing the right thing. To him this would definitely not fall into the *right thing* category. Dad was old-fashioned and a puritan when it came to relationships with women. He’d had five wives, but he always felt the need to lecture me on being with too many women. I usually shut down his hypocritical sermon by walking out of the room to let him know I wasn’t interested in hearing it. The fact that Dad adored McKenna wasn’t going to help my case either. I knew I could count on Drake to keep his mouth shut, at least for now.

“Luke,” a voice called from the tables.

I glanced through the sea of bodies and saw a long, thin hand with pink fingernails waving at me. “Shit.”

My one word reaction had caught McKenna's attention. She looked in the direction of the waving hand. "Isn't that the woman from the cemetery? The one with the expensive heels and jewelry?"

Drake who stood on the other side of McKenna shot me a wry smile. "Yes, Luke, isn't that Chloe? And look, she's waving you over to her table."

I cast an annoyed scowl Drake's way. Chloe called my name across the room and got plenty of attention as she did it. Most everyone in Stan's Saloon knew everyone else. They knew Chloe had latched onto a rich old man and that she spent a lot more time out with other men than she did at home with her husband. Most people also knew that I was usually her main focus.

"I'll be right back," I said. I gave Drake a look that I hoped he understood as 'keep an eye on her'.

Chloe was sitting with a few friends. A drunk grin broke out on her face as she spotted me coming through the crowd. She said something to the woman next to her, and the woman moved over a chair. "Come sit here with me, Luke," Chloe called.

I got to the table and nodded hello to her friends, all people who I didn't know well and didn't care to know either. "I can't stay," I told Chloe. "I'm with Drake and McKenna."

Chloe squinted through the crush of bodies. "Ah, yes, I see your little *sister* standing there next to Drake."

Her friend, whose boob job I remembered but not her name, looked wide eyed at me. "Luke Maverick has a sister? I didn't know."

"You didn't know because I don't have a sister. Chloe is confused."

Chloe blinked at me over the rim of her wine glass as she took a sip. She swallowed and waved her fingers in the direction of Drake and McKenna. "She's the daughter of the woman who was married to your father. So that makes her your stepsister. Odd little thing with that ridiculous mass of



blonde curls. California native, right?” She smirked. That earned an *oh, no wonder* head nod from her friends. “You know how those west coast chicks like to think they’re extra special.” When Chloe was pissed her claws came out.

“Well, this has been a grand conversation,” I said. “I will see you all later.”

“How does your father feel about this?” Chloe shot the bitchy question at my back. I spun around. There was a venomous glint in her eyes. We now had the undivided attention of her friends. They all held a collective breath as they waited for my response.

“I don’t know, Chloe. How does your husband feel about me tying you up to your headboard and fucking your brains out?” A lot of feigned shock made its way around the table. As if her friends and half the town didn’t know about Chloe and me. The rage in Chloe’s eyes was overshadowed by the red blush in her cheeks.

Something behind me caught her attention. Her mouth curled up in a wicked grin. “Looks like Cody is moving in on your sister.”

I swung back around. Cody was leading McKenna out to the dance floor. It shouldn’t have bothered me. Cody was an old friend, and he was basically a goober when it came to women. I was still pissed. I was definitely done talking to Chloe. I headed back to where Drake was standing.

He was talking to a couple of women. He glanced over his shoulder at me. It took him a second to notice my expression.

“Good conversation with Chloe?” he asked.

“Huh? Oh yeah, always. Hey, why the fuck did you let Cody take her to the dance floor?”

“I’ll join you two at your table right after I talk to my brother,” he told the women. They picked up their drinks and walked away. Drake turned back to me with a raised eyebrow. “You’re fucking kidding, right?”

“Fucking kidding about what?”

He waved his big hand toward the dance floor. “It’s Cody. A bigger fool does not exist. She’s dancing with fucking Cody.”

“Yeah, I know.” I gulped down some beer. Still, I couldn’t keep my attention off the dance floor. The soft fabric of McKenna’s dress swished around her silky thighs as she danced. She was laughing and having a good time, dancing with our childhood buddy who still thought it was cool to smash empty beer cans on his skull. And I was standing here like a fucking cuckold, like a jealous husband, ready to throw my fist at anyone who crossed paths with me. Drake, who knew me better than anyone, sensed my tension.

“Fucking hell, little brother, she’s really gotten to you.” He laughed. “Never thought I’d see the day when Luke Maverick was panting after a girl like a lovesick sap.”

“Fuck off, Drake. Don’t you have some women waiting for you?”

He clapped me hard on the shoulder. With the mood I was in, I nearly swung around and hit him. “I’m off then,” he said. “Have fun. Oh, and try not to start any brawls.”

“Yeah, no fucking promises on that account.”

I downed the rest of the beer. As the song ended, I headed in the direction of the dance floor. Before I was ten feet from McKenna, another guy, Brick, a bull rider who I’d competed against, swooped in and asked her to dance. The little flirt had obviously accepted. Brick placed his hand on her back and led her to the floor. I pushed my way through the other dancers, earning a few pissed-off looks on the way.

McKenna looked past Brick’s shoulder. Her smile faded fast.

Brick looked back at me. His smile didn’t last long either. “Maverick, what the hell are you doing? I’m just about to dance—”

“No, you’re not. Find someone else to dance with.”

He stared hard at me. “You’re telling me I can’t dance?”

“You can’t. I’ve seen you. But you go practice your fancy moves with someone else. This is my dance partner.”

Feeling like a fucking rooster with his chest puffed, I watched Brick walk away. When I turned back to my *hen* she looked ready to peck my eyes.

“What?” I asked, as if I didn’t know that I was playing the supreme asshole. I couldn’t help myself.

“It was just a dance.”

“I don’t trust Brick.” The music had started, but my partner didn’t look too inclined to dance.

“What you mean is you don’t trust me.” She stormed off the dance floor. My rooster chest had deflated, and I was following her like an abandoned puppy.

“McKenna,” I called, but she ignored me. Every fucking man’s head turned as she fled through the crowd and my jaw clenched. Christ, this was all her damn fault. She was the one turning me into a completely jealous prick.

I pushed rudely between two guys who had turned to watch McKenna as she walked by. I reached her and grabbed hold of her hand. She swung around to look at me. Her bottom lip jutted out with anger. Damn, if she didn’t look even hotter when she was mad. We’d gotten the attention of everyone standing around us. I heard my name being muttered by some of our nosy audience.

“Just let go of me,” she said.

A big guy who I’d seen at the bull riding competitions stepped out of the shadows. “Is this man bothering you, miss?” he asked.

I slid between him and McKenna. “Why don’t you just mind your own business.” I stood toe to toe with him.

“I’m just trying to see if this lady needs my help,” he said.

Drake came out of nowhere. “Luke, what the hell did I tell you about starting a damn fight?” He turned to the man. “It’s all right. She’s family.”

“That’s right,” I sneered up into his round face. “She’s family.” With that, I pulled McKenna along behind me, garnering curious glances from everyone we passed.

“Where are you taking me?” she asked.

“Someplace where we don’t have fucking spectators and self-appointed heroes.”

I led her down the small hallway that led to the storage room and utility closet. The storage room door was ajar. I pushed inside, pulled her in behind me and shut the door. A lone light bulb hung overhead casting a yellow light onto the metal storage shelves.

“What the heck has gotten into you? You’re acting like—” her voice wavered as the words fell off.

“Like who?”

She shook her head. “Like someone else. Jealous. Like you own me.”

A cold knot formed in my stomach. She was comparing me to the asshole who’d left bruises on her.

“McKenna, I would never hurt you. You know that, right? I would never lay an angry hand on you.”

She blinked back tears and nodded weakly.

I scrubbed my hair back with my fingers and paced around the room. “I’ve never acted like this before. I’m sorry.” I walked back over to her. “The thought of anyone else looking at you, dancing with you— I couldn’t take it.”

A slim smile creased the side of her mouth.

I pulled her to me, relieved that I’d made her smile. “This is your fault. If you weren’t so damn amazing, I wouldn’t be acting like an asshole.”

She picked at some invisible lint on my shirt. “You’re actually blaming me for your asshole behavior?”

“Yeah, pretty much.” My hands dropped down to her waist, and I half carried her to the one free wall. I had her trapped between my body and the hard wall. She bit her lip in

anticipation. She knew what I was thinking. It was that simple gesture of biting her lip that set off the fuse.

“I have to have you right now, McKenna.” I reached down and grabbed the hem of her dress and pushed it up to her waist. “Take off those panties.”

“But we’re in a storage closet.”

“If I take them off, I can’t promise they’ll be wearable afterwards.”

She pushed them down. I lifted the dress higher and stared at her smoothly shaved pussy. “Hell, Slick, you’ve got to stop doing this to me.” I unzipped my fly. After a week of almost nonstop fucking using condoms, McKenna had admitted that she was on the pill. We were both clean, so I’d dispensed with the condom altogether. Feeling her pussy without the latex barrier had made sex with McKenna that much more mind-blowing. Having her there, in my grasp, with her sexy dress hitched up above her naked pussy was bringing me to the edge, and I hadn’t even touched her yet.

I lowered my mouth to hers and drew my tongue along her bottom lip. “Tell me you want this, Slick. I need to hear it from those beautiful fucking lips.” I drew my thumb across her lips and pulled my cock free with the other hand. I pressed the wet tip against the bare skin of her belly. She drew in a sharp breath.

Her lashes fluttered as she looked at my face. “I want you right here. Right this damn second, Luke Maverick.” Her hands curled around my neck, and she pushed her mouth up to mine.

I lifted her and braced her back against the wall as her legs circled my waist. My cock found her sweet, wet pussy without me having to guide it. God, she was ready. She was so damn ready. She groaned against my mouth as I pushed inside of her, nearly having to coax her tight pussy to open wider for me. She clung to my neck as I pushed into her, wanting to go as deep and hard as I could.

My hands slid down to her ass to support her and hold her firmly against my cock's invasion. One long finger slid into her ass and she pushed against the pressure of my finger as it impaled her anus. I was already just a stroke or two from coming, but I wouldn't allow myself to finish until she came. There was nothing fucking better than having her pussy tighten around my cock as she reached climax. Having her call out my name in the middle of her delirium was the damn icing on top.

Her head lolled back. Her plump lips parted with a soft moan as I pummeled her, shoving my cock into her as far as I could go. There was nothing like this in the world. There was nothing like fucking McKenna. It was all I could think about anymore.

"I want you like this all the damn time, baby. Ready and willing," I growled. "I want you to walk around with wet panties and thinking about me fucking you like this all damn day."

"Oh, Luke." She pushed her face forward to muffle her scream.

"Don't, baby, I have to hear you. I want to hear you come. The music's loud." I shoved my cock into her again. She bucked and writhed against me as my finger impaled her ass.

"Fuck, Luke, yes, yes!" Her scream echoed off the walls. The sound of it made me come.

"God, baby, you're too much. I'm going out of my mind with needing you," I groaned. My body trembled, not from fatigue but from the overwhelming feeling of being inside her and bringing her to a shuddering orgasm. I wanted to do it again, right then.

I wrapped my arms around her as she lifted herself off of my cock and lowered her feet to the ground. I pressed my mouth against her forehead. "I can't get enough of you, McKenna. We could do it a hundred times in a day and I'd still want more."

Her face was on my shoulder. She giggled. “A hundred times? I’m not completely sure I could survive ten times a day, let alone a hundred.” She kissed my chin. “But it is a gallant offer.”

“I think we should try an experiment to see if it is possible. Say tomorrow?”

“You promised to take me on a ride around the ranch tomorrow.”

“I see, so Ranger has won your heart, and I’m only second fiddle now.” I leaned down, swept up her panties and handed them to her. “By the way, love this damn dress. Next time you should try it without the panties. They are just in the way.”

She blushed at the suggestion as she pulled on her panties.

“You don’t like that idea?”

She placed her palm on my face and kissed me lightly on the mouth. “You know something, right now, I think you could suggest anything, Luke Maverick, and I do it. I’m not sure how you did it, especially because you can be such an—”

“—Asshole?” I finished for her.

“I guess that’s as good a word as any.” She kissed me again with those lips that were keeping me up at night. The kiss was long enough that it made my cock begin to harden again. “Anyhow,” she continued, “not sure how, but you have,” she took my hand and placed it over her breast, “reached right in and taken hold of my heart.”

I smoothed my hand over her breast. “That’s good. Because I’m planning on keeping it.”

I leaned forward and kissed her once more, lighter this time. Otherwise, I’d be stripping her panties off again.

# CHAPTER 15



## MCKENNA

It was a perfect day for a ride. Heck, who was I kidding? I considered every day perfect to be near the horses. Today, however, the humidity was almost bearable and the sun seemed extra glittery as it reflected off the ranch.

After shoveling down an extremely delicious strawberry waffle, I headed out to the barn. Luke had gone out earlier to saddle the horses. We'd be riding around the perimeter of the ranch checking fences. Just like real cowboys, I thought with amusement. Luke had even bought me cowboy boots and a cowboy hat. I had the whole damn western thing going on, that was for damn sure.

My very real, very gorgeous cowboy was just walking the horses out of the barn. Ranger's ears pricked forward when he saw me. Even though he probably would have done the same for any approaching visitor, I decided that the horse was excited to see me. Luke, on the other hand, left no doubt that he was happy to see me.

A white smile sparkled from beneath his black hat. "Hey, Slick, thought I was going to have to carry you away from those strawberry waffles."

"Almost. Those were delicious." I took hold of the reins. Sometimes, all of it was too unreal. I'd found this incredible man, and he came with his own set of horses. And now, I was learning to ride. My lifelong dream was coming true, and an extremely hot, highly skilled man came with it all.

Luke had my head spinning so that I could hardly tell which way was up. He couldn't keep his hands off me, and I didn't want him to stop touching me. In fact, it would break my heart if he suddenly lost interest. I kept reminding myself to keep my feet on the ground, but it was hard with a man like Luke.

Just as the reminder to keep my feet grounded floated through my head, Luke gave me a hand up onto the saddle. My boots left the ground and I swung my leg over. "I'm excited as hell, but I'm also a little nervous about riding outside of the pen for the first time."

Luke pulled himself up onto his horse. "It's just like in the pen, only you can go straight longer."

"Thank you. Yes, I figured that already."

He smiled. "You'll do fine, Slick. You know how to make him go and stop and how to turn him. That's all you need. Oh, but one thing— don't turn Ranger toward home unless you're heading back with me. If he knows he can take advantage, which he does when you're on his back, he'll hightail it back to the barn. And even ole Ranger can run fast when he thinks there's hay at the end of it."

"Right. We'll just stay next to you. Did I mention that I'm really excited?"

"You did, and it was just as cute the first time. Let's ride, Slick."

The property was far bigger than I'd realized. After thirty minutes, it felt as if we'd trotted to another city, but we were still only on the south side of the ranch. The Mavericks were raising longhorn cattle. The majestic beasts with their impossibly big sets of horns all stood around in the fields looking like a country painting. Their big muzzles slid side to side as they chewed their grass and watched us ride past.

"Talk about imposing," I said. "What a burden it must be to carry around that massive pair of horns wherever you go."

"Would be a tad inconvenient," Luke said absently. He'd been busy inspecting the wire fences for breaks or areas in

need of repair. I'd ridden along next to him taking in the beautiful scenery and occasionally pinching myself to make sure it wasn't a crazy dream.

"Thank you for teaching me to ride," I said, thinking this was all just too much fun. "I'm having the time of my life."

He pulled his attention away from the fencing to smile at me. "You are welcome. And Slick, just so you know, I'm having the time of my life too. You up for a little loping? I've got to get some tools from that big metal shed over there."

I'd loped twice around the round pen the day before, and I'd hardly stopped smiling since. I shifted my butt in the saddle and made sure my feet were secure in the stirrups. "I was born ready. Let's do this."

He waved his arm for Ranger and me to follow. Luke had taught me to push one leg into the horse just behind the cinch to get Ranger to pick up the lope. But once Luke's horse took off, Ranger followed on his own. We were riding across the range like a couple in the old west, and I could barely contain my excitement. Luke looked nothing short of spectacular riding his big buckskin horse with his black hat and great smile.

We reached the giant metal shed and pulled the horses to a stop. Luke climbed off.

"We can tie them off here. That way, you can come into the shade of the shed for a few minutes while I find what I need."

I climbed off and found that my leg muscles were getting used to riding. The wobbly, sore legs that had followed my first few rides were gone. My legs were tired, but that could have been just as much Luke's fault as the riding lessons. We'd hardly spent one second of our time without each other. And when we were together and alone, we couldn't keep our hands to ourselves.

I followed Luke into the giant shed. Although, it was more of a building than a shed. Tractors lined one side and tools,

crates and barrels dotted the rest of the space. It was warm inside, but the break from the sun was nice.

Luke had his sleeves rolled up, exposing his hard, strong forearms. His shirt clung to the sweat on his back, and his black hat was pushed low over his face. A blush ran over my skin as I watched him take off his hat and comb his hair back with his fingers. He put the hat back on and glanced around for the tools he needed. I had plans of my own.

While he was occupied, I walked over to one of the giant tractors. I climbed up on it. The seat on top was big enough for three people and the smooth worn leather was surprisingly comfortable. I slid off the boots Luke had bought me. For a brief second, I'd convinced myself this was crazy. What if someone walked in? What if Luke was too busy or worried about fences to want this right now? Impossible. His appetite for me had been insatiable. He seemed to want me every waking minute of the day, and I wanted him too. Especially now. He was all man, all cowboy, and he always knew exactly what I needed.

I rolled off my jeans and panties. My naked bottom squeaked on the leather seat as I pulled off my hat and t-shirt. My bra was next. My preoccupied cowboy had no idea what was going on behind him. I pulled back on the boots and hat and propped one foot up on the seat. My pussy had grown wet with the thought of what I was doing.

I cleared my throat. A loud clang startled me, and the hat slipped off. I pushed it back on.

"Damn it," Luke muttered from behind a stack of barrels. "Drake never puts anything back where it's supposed to be."

"Maybe what you want is over here on the tractors," I called, feeling a bit exposed and well ... naked. All I needed was someone like John to walk in, and my entire dream would be shattered. Not to mention my pride.

"Nah, here it is," Luke called. He walked out from behind the barrels with a large pair of wire cutters. It took him a second to find me, but when he did, he dropped the wire

cutters, narrowly missing the toe of his boot. “Somebody fucking pinch me.”

I smiled. “Funny, I’ve been thinking that same thing all day.” I leaned back against the seat making sure to arch my back just enough for my taut nipples to point his direction. “Excuse me, hunky cowboy, do you think you could teach little ole me how to use this thing.” I placed my hand on the steering wheel.

He crossed the floor in three large steps. His hat and shirt flew off and fluttered to the floor. He climbed up onto the tractor seat. My hat fell off as he pulled me underneath him. He kissed me long and hard as his hands swept over my body. I fumbled for his fly and had his pants unbuttoned and his erection in my hand before he’d taken his first breath. With some effort, I pushed his pants down exposing his ass. He pulled me with him as he sat up on the seat.

“Climb on top you wanton, little cowgirl. You’re about to take the ride of your life.”

I giggled as I threw my leg over him. I wrapped my arms around his head and pulled his face against my breasts. My body slid down his sweat slicked chest as I lowered myself down over his cock. I gasped thinking about just how big he was and how deep his erection would go. This was one position we’d avoided, mostly because I feared impaling myself over him would be too much. It felt like I would never have all of him inside and as he filled me my head was dizzy with the thought of it. My naked ass rested against his thighs and I gazed down at his face with wide eyes.

“God, Luke, you are almost too much for me.”

“Funny, I’ve been thinking that same thing all day.” His hand slid beneath my ass and he began moving me over his cock, slowly at first. Then faster. My legs were fatigued from the long ride and the non-stop sex. They trembled as I lifted my pussy and then dropped down over him. I ground my clit against him all the while squeezing my pussy tight around him.

He stared up at me with his pale green eyes and watched me as I writhed in his strong hands to bring myself to orgasm. I was in charge, and he was my extremely fantastic sex toy. He held himself firm and hard beneath me as I moved erotically over him, making contact with every intimate part of me. Sliding my hot pussy up his shaft and then dropping back down again. “Luke,” my voice was lost in the cavernous shed. “Yes, Luke.” I wrapped my arms around his head and his face pressed against my breasts and I came. My entire body shook and explosions of light splintered behind my eyes as his cock filled me.

I could barely catch my breath or clear my head, when he took almost rough hold of my hips and rocked me hard over him. Again, I slid myself up and down his long erection. He met each one of my moves with a strong thrust of his own. The seat squeaked beneath us as our pace quickened.

He grunted in frustration. “I need control back,” he growled. He lifted me off of him and spun me around. My knees were on the seat.

“Grab onto something, darlin’. The ride isn’t over.”

I gripped the top of the seat.

He lowered his feet to the floor and stood behind me. “Fucking sweet ass you have, Slick. Looking at you on your hands and knees— shit, I’m ready to come just looking at you.”

I was naked in the middle of a tool shed, knelt on the seat of a tractor and I couldn’t have been more turned on. He took hold of my hips and shoved his cock hard inside of me. A gasp floated up from my lips and my fingers clutched the seat edge. He drove into me with such fierceness it was as frightening as it was thrilling. My whole body trembled with the knowledge of how badly he wanted me. He could never seem to get enough of me.

My pussy ached but I didn’t want him to stop. He reached down between my thighs and found my clit again, still pounding into me, he coaxed me into another orgasm with his skilled touch. “Shit, Luke, I’m coming again,” I cried.

His groan coupled with my cry and our bodies shuddered into one massive climax.

# CHAPTER 16



## LUKE

“You look tired, Slick,” I said as we reached the barn.

“I am.”

I climbed off my horse and walked over to help her off of hers. She held onto my arm as if she might collapse. She laughed. “I don’t know if it was the ride on the horse or the tractor, but I feel like I ran a marathon.”

“That tractor ride was a bonus, that’s for damn sure.” We walked the horses inside. I took off the tack and McKenna brushed coats. I leaned down and picked up Ranger’s leg to check his hoof.

“Hey, you never showed me that picture of me on my first ride,” she said.

I lowered Ranger’s foot to the ground and pulled my phone out of my pocket. “I’ve got it right here. I’ve looked at it many times.” I pulled up the picture, and she walked over to look at it.

“That smile was plastered on my face.” She took hold of the phone to get a better look. As she did, her thumb accidentally brushed the screen. The picture swept away and another picture popped open. It took me a second to see that it was the picture of Chloe tied to her headboard.

“Shit.” I reached for the phone but hadn’t needed to. McKenna threw it at me. “McKenna, I took that before—”

“Go to hell.” She ran from the barn before I could say another word.

# CHAPTER 17

## MCKENNA

I sat in the center of the bed. Tears burned my eyes, and my head hurt from crying.

I'd heard his boot heels clacking along the wood floor of the hallway. I was expecting his knock, but it still startled me. "McKenna," Luke's deep voice came through the door. "Just let me in so we can talk."

I didn't respond. I wrapped my arms around my legs and pulled my knees closer. I had nothing to say to him. After I'd seen the highly erotic picture of Chloe on Luke's phone, I'd been reminded that I'd stepped into his life too abruptly. None of this should have happened. Circumstances had brought us together, but I needed to face the fact that I didn't belong here. I'd come to stay only temporarily, just long enough to get my feet back under me. Then that would be the end of my connection with the Mavericks. After all, as Luke was always so fond of pointing out, I wasn't really family. Now, it seemed, I'd overstayed my welcome.

It had all been such a dream. Spending time with Luke had made me feel loved and not so terribly alone, but I'd taken it all too much for granted. I'd become complacent about my own situation. I knew so few people in Texas. It occurred to me that I would be better off going back to California. I'd been gone for a few weeks. Joshua would have moved on by now. Besides, I couldn't always live in fear of the man. I needed to get on with my life.

"Chloe and I had a thing," Luke continued from the hallway. "You knew that. You're being unreasonable. I just

want to talk.”

Unreasonable? The word rubbed me the wrong way. I climbed off the bed, stomped to the door and swung it open. Luke was standing in the hallway. His expression was a cross between anger and hurt.

I turned and walked back into the room. He followed and shut the door. “You knew I’d been seeing Chloe. That was before I met you. I haven’t seen her since you got here. At least not in that way.”

“Yes *that* way. I’m surprised you were able to stop seeing her. It looks as if you two had quite a thing going.”

He dismissed the comment. “It’s in the past.” He stepped closer. His eyes looked exceptionally green in his tanned face. Everything about the man reminded me of just how damn appealing he was, but I needed to end this. I needed to end it before my heart was shattered to pieces. “McKenna, I haven’t thought of anyone but you since that first day I met you.”

I wrapped my arms around myself to stop the ache in my chest. “This was wrong.” The words nearly stuck in my dry throat. “We let ourselves get wrapped up in something that should never have happened.”

His eyes flickered with emotion. “That’s it? You’ve decided now, after all this, that our relationship was a mistake. We’re not related, McKenna. In fact, now that your mother is gone, we have no real connection at all. Except that I’m fucking nuts about you and I can’t stop thinking about you. I thought you cared for me too.”

He moved to take hold of my arm, but I backed away. He reacted as if I’d socked him in the stomach. It was self-defense. I knew if he touched me, I’d break apart, and I refused to crumble.

“Of course I do, but that doesn’t smooth any of this out. I need to figure out what I’m going to do next. I can’t sponge off your father, someone, who, as you just pointed out, has no real connection to me.” Tears burned my eyes, but I held it together. I was alone in this world now, and I was going to

have to toughen up. “Let’s face it, you can’t even tell John what’s going on between us because, in your heart, you know this wasn’t supposed to happen.”

“I don’t give a damn what he thinks. I’ll tell him.”

“No. Don’t. I don’t want him to think badly of me.”

He laughed, and the sound of it made a knot form in my stomach. “So, all of a sudden propriety and society’s expectations are important. Darlin’, you just stripped naked for me on the top of a tractor. We’ve been fucking morning, noon and night, and now you’re worried—”

I stepped forward and my hand flew across his face. The slap stung my palm and left him with a red mark. He stopped talking and stared down at me. I should have seen rage in his expression, but instead, I saw despair. And resignation. He nodded and said nothing more as he walked out of the room. The door slammed shut behind him.

I’d held it together so well, but his harsh words and the slap had pulled out the supporting brick. I crumpled onto the bed in sobs.

# CHAPTER 18

## LUKE

The horse flew off all four feet, but hell if I was going to let him win. Our battle of wills was going to come to an end, but I wasn't going to be on the losing side. My ass slammed the saddle hard, forcing me to grunt in pain. The ranch, the barn and the house passed by in a jumpy blur. My hands and legs were tired, but I held on. Eventually, the horse decided bucking and kicking was taking too much effort. He snorted in short, fast spurts as he dropped into an easy lope around the pen.

Getting on an angry horse, when I was angry myself, had probably not been the best plan. But I needed to finish breaking the colt, and I needed to blow off some steam. I figured I could do both in the round pen. I'd been neglecting everything—working out, riding, practicing with the bulls and work I needed to do on the ranch because I'd been completely preoccupied with McKenna. It had been worth every damn minute. The time with her had been amazing. But, it seemed she was determined to give up on the whole thing as easily as someone might return a pair of ill-fitting boots.

Lionel, one of the ranch hands, had come out to watch, just in case I took a header or got stomped. Maybe I needed a little stomping. After the scene with McKenna, it already felt as if someone had pounded on my chest.

The horse kept up the lope without too much prodding. I sat back and pulled the reins. "Whoa." The animal wasn't stopping or turning on a dime yet, but he'd get there eventually. He was happy to slow down to a walk.

“What have you decided to name him?” Lionel asked.

“I think I’ll name him Stubborn.”

Lionel laughed. “Good idea.”

“Don’t know why it’s taken me so long to break this one. I guess I’ve had other things on my mind.”

“I guess so.” It was impossible to miss the sarcasm in his tone.

Along with Drake, Lionel had been the only other person on the ranch who knew that McKenna and I had been seeing each other. But I wasn’t in the mood to get into it with him. That was for damn sure.

“When I went up to the house before I came out here, I noticed your dad had a visitor,” Lionel said.

“Oh yeah? What visitor?”

Lionel stared up at me as I passed, shocked that I didn’t seem to know what he was talking about. “You mean you didn’t invite her?”

“You’re talking in circles, Lionel. Invite who?”

“Your tie-me-up and strip-me-down girl was in the office having a conversation with your dad. Just figured you would have known.”

“Chloe?”

“Who else would I be talking about?”

“Fuck.” I slid down off the horse. “Unsaddle him and give him a rinse. I’ve got to head inside.”

“You think she was here to cause trouble?” Lionel asked as he took the reins from my hand.

“When isn’t she causing trouble?” I lumbered across the barnyard and headed toward the house. I had no real way of knowing what the hell Chloe had come for, but I doubted it had to do with the fact that we’d been fucking for the last six months. Her husband was, after all, a friend of my dad’s. Maybe something was wrong with Mike. I kept that possible



thought alive as I strode across the yard. Chloe's Jaguar was nowhere in sight. At least I wouldn't have to see her too.

The second I stepped inside, Britty, the housekeeper, let me know that Dad wanted to see me in his study. I was definitely not in the mood for one of his fucking lectures. I knocked and pushed the door open. Dad looked up from his desk with that stern brow I had always feared as a kid. But these days, it just annoyed me.

“Luke, step in here and close the door.”

# CHAPTER 19

## MCKENNA

**M**y limbs felt like lead, and an achy feeling consumed my whole body. Heartbreak. I was feeling the horrible after effects of heartbreak. I'd warned myself not to fall for Luke. But the warnings had come from my head, and my heart had never been a great listener. But I'd pouted long enough.

The hunger pangs in my stomach prodded me up and out of the room. Earlier, I'd seen Luke walk out to the barn, so I was sure I could make it to the kitchen for a quick snack without running into him. After I'd finally stopped crying, I'd given some thought to all this. I needed to get back on my feet, sooner rather than later. If John didn't mind, I would stick it out here just until I found a place to stay. I'd decided to give Texas a try. The job prospects here were better than California. And sadly, I had no one waiting for me back home. Joshua had managed to offend and scare off the few friends I'd had. Hooking up with him had been such a mistake. I'd really screwed up with that relationship. It seemed I should have learned my lesson by now. But apparently not. Only this time, it was my heart that had been left in tatters by my bad decision. I couldn't even let my mind drift to thoughts about Luke. It twisted me up inside just thinking about him.

The hallway was quiet, which was a good sign. I would scurry downstairs, grab a banana or some crackers and then carry the food to my room to eat. My whole plan seemed comical as I pictured myself moving stealthily through the house with my stolen snack. But I couldn't possibly face Luke yet. I needed a day or two without crossing his path. I knew it

wasn't enough time to heal the rip in my heart, but it would be easier not to see him. It would make leaving simpler too.

I rounded the hallway that led to the kitchen. As I passed John's office door, I could hear loud, angry voices inside. The words were mostly muffled, but it was easy to hear that John and Luke were arguing.

I spun around, deciding the snack mission was too risky. As I hurried back down the hallway, one word came clear and sharp to my ear. Stepsister.

I froze and tiptoed back to the door. I knew eavesdropping was wrong, but I needed to know what they were arguing about. A sudden panic swept over me. Had Luke told him?

I pressed my ear closer. The thick paneling on the expensive door made it hard to hear inside.

"Excuse me, Luke, for thinking that you had an ounce of self-control. I invited her here because she needed a place to stay. I was married to her mother, for fucksake," John shouted. "I admit, I was a little worried when I saw how pretty McKenna was, especially knowing your extreme lack of willpower when a beautiful woman is involved. But I expected better of you, Luke. Christ, you are a disappointment. And you've both been disrespectful to her mother's memory."

The tears rolled again. I didn't wait to hear Luke's response. God, what a mess I'd made of things. And now, John's opinion of me had changed forever. I needed to right this. I needed to leave the ranch, so they could go back to normal. Soon, I'd just be a distant memory to the Maverick men.

I ran back to my room. I would use my credit card to get a room in town for the night. I'd be away from here and away from everyone. It would give me a chance to clear my head and decide what the heck I was going to do next.

# CHAPTER 20

## MCKENNA

The dreary little motel room with its tobacco stained walls, faded floral bedding and sour smelling carpet fit my mood perfectly. I'd managed to leave the ranch unnoticed, and now I was sitting alone in one of the dingiest motel rooms I'd ever seen.

One thing about living in a massive home, it was easy not to run into the other inhabitants. My bedroom at the ranch had a window that afforded me a view of the front drive. After the argument in his dad's office, Luke had stormed off in his jeep. I'd seen John leave as well. I'd used my phone to book a room in a nearby motel and had thrown my clothes and belongings into my suitcase. Only Britty, the housekeeper, had seen me leave, and that had been the fault of the taxi driver. I'd left specific directions for the cab to meet me on the street, but the silly man had come to the door.

With a heavy heart, I'd left the boots and hat that Luke had bought me in the bedroom. Along with the gifts, I'd left a short note telling him I was sorry and to thank his dad for the hospitality. But that was all. I didn't have the courage to write more. The three pregnant mares had watched from their pasture as I rolled past in the yellow car. A lump had formed in my throat as I watched the ranch disappear.

After all the questionable decisions I'd made lately, I knew this one, the one to leave the ranch, had been a good one. The ranch could get back to normal.

So many times during the past few days, I'd worried that all of it would come to an ugly end. It had all been such a

dream, such a wonderful dream. But that sinking feeling that it was too good to be true had plagued me through it all. And for good reason. It *had* been too good to be true. It seemed I was alone, after all.

The sun had set, and the only lamp in the room had one working bulb. The television had three channels and a dust coated monitor. Just after I'd arrived at the motel, I had walked to the corner liquor store to stock up on sugary crap to eat. I figured I deserved it.

I plucked a cookie from the box and leaned back against the rattling headboard. It wasn't quite like my gorgeous room at the ranch, and there would be no visit from the equally gorgeous cowboy tonight. Hell, I missed his touch already. I would never find that kind of physical connection with anyone else. Maybe that was for the best too. Connections like that only brought heartbreak.

The motel was situated just a few feet from a busy highway. Every time an eighteen wheeled truck rolled past, the entire room shook. There seemed to be a lot of cranky, horn-honking drivers and loud motorcycles on this stretch of road too. As exhausted as I was from the day, a day that had started so perfectly and ended so badly, I was sure I wouldn't sleep much.

The pillows smelled even worse than the rug as I lowered my head down. Just when I'd convinced myself that things couldn't get any worse, someone knocked on the door. My first instinct was to yank the comforter over my head. They would go away if I just stayed perfectly still. It was probably someone who couldn't remember their room number.

I peeked above the edge of the blanket. A tall shadow floated across the curtain on the front window, and footsteps plodded down the strip of cement running along the rooms. The person had left. I tried to relax, but my heart was still racing.

I sat up, more sure than ever that I wouldn't get any sleep. The moment of fear I'd just experienced made me miss Luke even more. I'd never felt as safe as I had in his arms. When he

held me, it seemed as if he'd truly wanted me. I had definitely wanted him.

As I reached to the nightstand for another cookie, a key clinked into the door lock. It had to be the manager. Who else would have a key? Maybe my credit card had been turned down. I jumped off the bed. The door swung open.

“Joshua.” A breath caught in my chest.

A lecherous smile crept up on his face as he swung the spare room key around on his finger. “Told them I was your husband and that I didn't want to wake you.” He swung the door shut. “Hello, sweetheart. I've been looking all over for you.”



# CHAPTER 21

## LUKE

I shoved my gloved fingers beneath the rope and signaled to Drake that I was ready. The chute sprung open and Tornado kicked out of the gate. My free hand waved in the air as I tried to catch the rhythm of the animal beneath me. Tornado was a veteran. He'd won Bucking Bull of the Year twice. His owner had tried to retire him and let the bull have pasture time, but Tornado had grown depressed. Between competitions, he was my practice bull. Most of the time, we were completely in unison. My body flowed with his kicks, spins and twists, giving me that eight second ride I needed to earn a score. But the events of the day had left me off balance. Five seconds in, instead of moving with the bull, my body was being jarred and launched. I had to bail out. My body thudded across the dirt ground. Drake helped the ranch hand distract Tornado while I climbed out of the pen.

I yanked off my gloves and ripped open the Velcro on my vest.

"What the hell was that?" Drake asked as he came up behind me.

"Just off today, that's all." Drake had had business in the city, and he hadn't been around most of the day. Right after the shitty fucking scene with Dad, he'd called to see if I was up for some practice at the training pens. I took him up on it. I still hadn't told him what'd happened.

He walked alongside me. "That was more than just an off day out there. You looked as if you'd never sat on a bull in your life."

I scrubbed my face with my hands. My skin was covered in sweat and grit. “Dad knows,” I said.

“Dad knows what?” he asked, and then it seemed to penetrate his thick head. “Oh shit. So was he pissed?”

“Yep. I had to endure one of his lectures about propriety and morality and all that other crap. He is such a damn hypocrite.”

I began taking off my chaps. I was done getting body slammed today. I’d already had my heart thumped and my face slapped and my judgment questioned. I didn’t need any more fucking abuse today.

“How did Dad find out?” Drake asked.

“Chloe. She came to the ranch personally to tell him.”

“I figured she was the kind of girl you don’t cross.”

I stripped off my vest. Sweat dripped down my shirt. “Yeah, that little affair has hurt me in more ways than one today.”

“What do you mean?” Drake carried my vest and chaps into the equipment room and walked back out.

“Let’s just say that Dad wasted one of his most obnoxious lectures today. McKenna was already through with me long before he started his rant.”

I grabbed a water bottle from the jeep and chugged it.

“Sorry about that, Bro. I know you really liked her. Don’t know when I’ve ever seen you become attached to a girl like that.”

“Yeah. Figures I’d pick the one girl that I’m not supposed to have.”

# CHAPTER 22

## LUKE

**B**y the time I'd pulled up the driveway to the ranch, I'd convinced myself that I needed to talk to McKenna. Having her mad at me was eating me up inside. Fuck my dad's protestations. I wasn't willing to give up on her that easily. She'd already invaded both my heart and my soul. I couldn't just let her go without a fight.

I'd gone straight in for a shower and shave, then I headed to McKenna's room. I wasn't completely sure what I was going to say, but this time I would let my heart lead. I would tell her what I felt and try hard to keep the asshole side of my personality silent for a change.

I knocked and wasn't surprised that there was no response. "McKenna, let's talk."

Silence.

I reached for the doorknob. It was unlocked. I pushed it open. The boots and hat I'd bought her were sitting on a chair with an apology note. She was gone.

I rushed downstairs and found Britty in the kitchen having tea. "Where's McKenna?"

She looked confused. "She left this afternoon. Right after you and your father drove off. I assumed you knew."

"Do you know where she went?"

"Taxi driver came to the door and said he was here to take her to the Driftwood Motel."

"Driftwood. Right." I turned to leave.

“Seems everyone is looking for that girl today,” Britty commented.

I swung around. “Everyone? Who else was looking for her?”

She put some cream in her tea and stirred it. “Just after the taxi picked her up, her brother came to the door. I told him that she was at the motel.”

“Her brother?”

Britty lifted the tea cup to her mouth but stopped halfway when she saw my expression. “Have I done something wrong?”

I shook my head. “Not your fault, Britty. But I need to get to that motel. McKenna doesn’t have a brother.”

# CHAPTER 23

## MCKENNA

“Joshua,” I said, fear making my voice rough and small, “how did you get here?”

“Rode here on my motorcycle. It was pretty easy to find out where your mom’s husband lived. Then the housekeeper was kind enough to tell your *loving, concerned brother* that you’d gone to the motel. My lucky day, I guess, because here you are. All alone.”

“I told you we were through.” I remembered flattery always worked with the jerk. Big head, big ego and big temper. That was Joshua. “Let’s face it, having me around was only crimping your style.” I forced a light tone even though my pulse was pounding in my ears. “You always have so many girls texting you, wanting you. It wasn’t fair for me to keep you to myself.” A short, shaky laugh burst from my lips.

Joshua’s lids looked heavy as they fell and lifted over his dark eyes. He’d been drinking. It was liquor that always produced the nasty temper. Joshua was dangerous when he was drunk.

He took an unsteady step toward me. My gaze flitted around the room for a possible defense weapon. An open box of cookies, two cans of diet soda and the already cracked lamp were not a great arsenal. I was in trouble.

A sneer kicked up on his mouth. I could no longer remember what it was I’d found appealing in the man. He was handsome, but his harsh temper made him look monstrous.



Especially now. There was nothing to like and everything to hate.

“Damn right you were lucky to have me, bitch. But I’m the one who tells you when you can leave. I wasn’t through with you yet.”

I backed up and knew damn well that I was backing myself into a corner like a scared rabbit, but there was no way I could push past him. While Joshua had hit me and handled me roughly on too many occasions, he had never forced himself on me. But the sickening way he was looking at me through a half-drunken stare made my stomach knot with fear. He outweighed me by a good seventy pounds. I had no chance of fighting him off.

I tried the diplomatic route. “You know what, you’re right. I don’t like it here in Texas, anyhow. I’ll get my stuff and meet you at your bike. Let’s head back to California tonight.”

He laughed, and the cold sound of it felt like an ice pick in my chest. “What’s the hurry, babe? I say we stay the night. I’ve been craving that pussy of yours the whole road here.” He stepped close enough that I could smell the disgusting combination of sweat and beer.

I felt close to puking. The wall was right behind me. The room was so cramped, there was only a slim space to get past him. “Not tonight,” I blurted. “This bed smells, and it’s crawling with fleas. Let’s get out of here.”

“I don’t give a fuck about the bed. I’ll take you right here against the wall of this motel.” He lunged at me. I ducked and flailed my arms to get past him. My elbow struck him hard in the chin and his teeth snapped together.

“Ouch, you fucking bitch.” He might have been drunk, but he still had good reflexes and plenty of strength. His hand shot out. He grabbed my arm and wrenched it back painfully.

“Stop,” I cried. “You’re going to break it.” Tears clouded my eyes as a searing pain shot through my shoulder. With one strong tug, he yanked me back to the space between him and the unforgiving wall. My leg shot forward, and I struck his

knee hard enough to make him suck in an angry breath. But it didn't stop him from pursuing what he had his mind set on.

He shoved me hard against the wall. My head smacked the plaster, and the lamp fell onto the bed. I reached for it, but my fingers couldn't grasp it. His thick fingers grabbed the front of my shirt. He shredded the fabric in half. I threw my fist at the side of his head. He responded by throwing his fist at my face. An explosion of pain started in my cheek and radiated out across my entire face. My eyes drifted shut. My head was trying to pull me down into blackness, but I wouldn't allow myself to pass out. I had to stay awake and defend myself from this monster.

I didn't have muscles, but I did have something he didn't have. Fingernails. I clawed at his face, and I gagged as my nails sank into the flesh on his cheeks. He yelled out and ripped my hands from his face. He held both of my wrists in one hand. I was sure he would break the thin bones between his massive fingers. He reached for the lamp cord and, with one hard pull, he ripped it from the base of the lamp and the wall. The last thing I saw before the room was bathed in darkness were the thin rivers of blood streaming down his face.

He bound my hands so tightly, the lamp cord cut into my skin and my hands tingled. Self-defense was out. Screaming was my only chance. The second a scream left my mouth, Joshua pressed his hand against my mouth, nearly suffocating me in the process.

“Do you want me to shove my fist into your mouth? Because that is what's going to happen if you scream again. I will knock out all your pretty teeth with one punch.”

I nodded to assure him I didn't want to lose my teeth. I was thankful for the lack of light. It was harder to see his hideous face. He yanked the lamp cord and I stumbled forward. Like a dog on a leash, he dragged me over to the side of the bed. I jumped back before he could push me down on it.

He pulled even harder on the cord. Blood dripped from my wrists. He grabbed my hair and pulled me to him. His

disgusting mouth clamped down over mine as his hands reached for the hook on my bra. A knock on the door startled him from his attack.

He glanced at the door, then looked at me. “Who are you expecting?”

“Maybe someone heard my scream,” I said, hoping to deter him more.

There was another knock. “McKenna!” Luke’s voice came through the door.

“Luke!” I screamed.

Joshua’s hand wrapped around my throat, and he pushed me hard against the wall. I clutched frantically at his hand. I tried to take a breath, but he had my air supply choked off. In the haze of my terror, I heard a loud crash. The door flew open.

I was slowly losing consciousness. Suddenly, Joshua’s hand fell away. In the shadows of the room, I saw his body fly into the small table and chairs. I sank to the ground. The sound of wood breaking mingled with a long painful groan. Light from the street illuminated sections of the room and I saw Luke’s tall figure bent down over Joshua.

With oxygen rushing back into my lungs, I regained my bearings. With the support of the wall, I pushed to standing.

Luke dragged Joshua to his feet. “I’m going to fucking kill you,” Luke hissed. His fist flew into Joshua’s face and blood splattered from his nose.

Joshua was big, but he didn’t have a chance against Luke. His fist came at him again. I heard bone break and a sickening thudding sound. Red flashing lights lit up the room, and sirens shrieked through the night air.

Joshua looked like a rag doll. His limbs and head hung lifelessly in Luke’s grasp. Luke lifted his arm to hit him again.

“Luke!” I cried. “Stop. It’s enough. It’s over.” He looked at Joshua, seemingly still wanting to hit him, but then released him. Joshua’s limp body dropped to the floor.

A command came through a loudspeaker asking us to come out with our hands behind our heads. Luke untied the cord around my hands. Blood was smeared over my arms.

“I called the police in case I didn’t make it here in time.” There was a hitch in Luke’s voice.

“But you did make it,” I said. “You saved me.” I broke down into tears, and his arms went around me. I’d never felt as safe as I had right then in those arms.

# CHAPTER 24

## LUKE

I held McKenna tightly against me as I led her up to her bedroom. The trembling had stopped, and her tears had dried and now, exhaustion and shock were setting in. When I'd broken down the motel room door and saw that fucker with his hand on McKenna's throat, I had only one thought. Kill him. Beat him until blood was squirting from his ears and eyes. And I would have carried out my plan if McKenna hadn't pleaded with me to stop.

Once he'd regained consciousness, paramedics had administered first aid as the police read him his rights. McKenna had been glued to my side through it all. I knew then that there was no way I could let her leave me. Ever.

Dad followed us up with McKenna's suitcase. He and Drake had gotten to the motel just after the police had taken our statements. The angry lecture about right and wrong had faded away with the rest of the day's shitty events. Dad was just relieved we were both all right.

We got McKenna up to her room. An ugly black bruise stained her cheek, and there were red marks around her neck. Just looking at the marks made me want to go down to the police station and finish the job.

Dad placed a supportive hand on my shoulder. "I'll let you see to her. I'll be downstairs if you need me." He knew now that my affection for McKenna wasn't just some fast and furious sex thing. Although, it had been that too, but I was crazy about her. And he saw that tonight. In fact, I saw it too. I

hadn't realized how much I loved her until I knew she was in danger.

"Thanks, Dad."

"Uh huh," McKenna said sleepily. "Thanks, Dad."

Dad left the room with a smile.

McKenna swayed a bit on her feet as I took off her ripped shirt and bra. I pulled the long t-shirt that she usually wore to bed over her head. She grinned with starry blue eyes up at me as she pushed off her shoes and pants. "You're sexy," she said in a long, groggy drawl. Her eyes drifted closed for a second. "Of course, you already knew that. But now that you came and rescued me like one of those cool western cowboy heroes, you're even more sexy."

"Let me get you into bed."

"That's probably a good idea because the room is sort of turning circles around me at the moment."

I led her to the bed. She climbed under the covers. I kissed her forehead.

"Thank you, my hero."

"Anytime, my little damsel."

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I walked the colt into the barn. He was getting close, but he still needed some work. Eventually, he'd make a great cutting horse. I walked back outside. McKenna was half-skipping toward me. It had been a week since the attack. McKenna had spent the first few days in bed recuperating from the shock of it. I'd kept busy with work on the ranch and riding practice. I'd hardly seen her, and seeing her, with the bruise half-faded and a white smile on her face, made me realize just how badly I'd missed her.

We hadn't talked about our fight or our relationship at all. She'd gone through a horrible ordeal, and I was sure it was the last thing she wanted to discuss. Even now, I knew that smile

plastered across her pretty face was for the horses and not for me.

“Ranger’s been asking for you,” I called.

Her smile widened. “Really?”

“Well, maybe not asking, but he does poke his head out expectantly every time I walk into the barn.”

“See, I knew he loved me.” She walked past me to the barn, and all I could think was that suddenly, I was jealous of a damn horse. I followed her inside.

She walked right over to Ranger’s stall and reached up to stroke the horse’s neck. For days after she’d arrived in Texas, I’d stood back and watched her, falling more and more in love with her each day. At the same time, my insides had been knotting up as I reminded myself I couldn’t have her. It had been torture. A torture I had not been able to endure. I’d ended my suffering by confessing to her that I wanted her. It seemed those days of denying myself had returned. She’d returned to the ranch, and we were talking again. But nothing had been resolved. One thing was for damn sure, my feelings for her had only grown stronger.

I walked over and took Ranger’s halter from the hook. McKenna was just inches from me. I breathed in her sweet, citrusy scent. It took me a second to remember why I’d walked over there. “You can get him out and brush him. Ranger loves a good grooming.”

“Great.”

I led the horse out, and McKenna picked up a brush. “I missed the horses.” She rubbed the brush along Ranger’s coat.

“I could sense that when you were skipping like a little girl in this direction.”

“Was I?” she laughed. “God, I’m such a dork.”

I gazed at her over the horse’s back. “And damn if that dorkiness doesn’t make you that much hotter.”

She blushed and drew her gaze away. It was almost as if we were starting from scratch again. The flirting, the innocent



smiles, we were back to square one. And somehow, I was fine with that. As long as it meant that we'd eventually get back to that awesome fucking square we'd been on when she'd climbed on the tractor and stripped naked for me. I longed for that square again.

"Luke, I'm sorry for what happened," she said suddenly.

"What do you mean?"

"I feel like I brought my dirty laundry, my seedy little past with me to Texas. I put you in danger." Her voice cracked.

I walked around to the side she was on. Her shoulder shook with a sob.

"Hey." I reached for her and pulled her against my chest. I tightened my arms around her. Everything about holding McKenna felt right to me. This was where she was supposed to be. "I wasn't in danger, Slick. That weasel didn't have a chance against me. I'm just glad I got there in time."

She nodded and lifted her face. "I'm scared. What if he comes after me again? I knew he was dangerous, but I had no idea he'd follow me to Texas."

"You don't have to worry about him again. You are staying here with us, and none of us will let anything happen to you."

"But when I leave here?"

Her question caught me off guard. "So stay."

She didn't respond to my offer. I had no idea how to interpret her silence. Maybe she didn't want to stay. It was entirely possible that she had plans to leave soon. That thought darkened my mood completely. How had I managed to lose myself to this woman so fast?

Then McKenna rose up on her toes and kissed me lightly on the mouth. That was how. She was fucking unforgettable.

# CHAPTER 25

## MCKENNA

“Come on, McKenna, you can do this,” I told myself as I pulled my bathrobe on over my completely naked body. After all, I’d stripped down to a hat and cowboy boots in the middle of a tool shed for the man. I could certainly make it across to his side of the house wrapped in a fluffy bathrobe. If anyone saw me, I’d just tell them I’d gotten lost on the way to the kitchen. That excuse sounded lame even in my head. Still, I was determined to go through with my tawdry little plan.

The house was quiet and dark, which I had been counting on. Only now, I had to make sure to not lose my way in the giant house. I’d only walked over to Luke’s side of the estate twice and never in the cloak of night.

My heart pounded but not in fear. It pounded at the prospect of what I was about to do. Luke and I had been flirting and teasing each other for a week. I sensed that he was worried he’d scare me off by trying anything more than that. I also sensed that he going crazy with the meaningless teasing. I was too. I needed him. I needed Luke to touch me like he had those weeks when we’d thrown common sense out the window.

I reached his bedroom door. His television wasn’t on. I could have knocked or whispered through the door, but I decided to be bold. Just as he had that first night when he’d come to my room.

I pushed open the door. Luke had just gotten out of the shower. He had a towel around his waist. The bedroom light reflected off his green eyes. “McKenna?”

I slammed the door shut behind me. “Oh good, you’re already naked.” I pushed the robe from my shoulders. He met me halfway and swept me into his arms. My feet lifted off the ground, and he swirled me around once. Then, with slow precision, making sure to pass my naked body slowly along his, he lowered my feet to the floor.

“You’re right. That sainthood shit is completely overrated.” I pushed his towel off.

His mouth came down hard over mine, and his erection pushed against my belly as he held me against him.

“Shit,” he growled as he pulled his mouth from mine. “I’ve got to slow down. I’ve been thinking about this for days.” He kissed me again. His mouth trailed kisses down my neck and along my shoulders. He knelt down in front of me and took my breast in his mouth, drawing slow circles around my taut nipples. His hands circled around my ass and he lowered his face to my pussy. “God I’ve missed this,” he muttered as he pressed his lips against me. His hands slid down my bottom and between my legs from behind. He gazed up at me from his knees. The look of pleading, of raw need in his eyes, made me draw in a sharp breath.

“Spread your thighs for me, baby. Let me taste you.”

I pushed my feet wider. The fresh air in the room cooled the moisture surging between the folds of my pussy. I wrapped my fingers in his hair as his tongue stroked and teased my clit. His skilled touch, a touch that seemed to know exactly what I needed, made me sway on my feet.

Without warning, he stood and lifted me into his arms. He carried me to the bed, laid me down and then pressed himself down between my thighs. His face was once again between my legs. I hooked my knees over his broad shoulders.

“That’s it, darlin’. I want to see all of you.” He spread the folds of my pussy apart and pushed his tongue inside of me. I gasped and squirmed at first, but he held his mouth hard against me, coaxing more cream and managing to find every glorious, intimate spot.

“How do you know exactly where to touch me, Luke?” My words floated from my mouth.

He pressed his mouth against my thigh and his breath warmed my skin as he spoke. “Because you were meant for me, and I was meant for you, Slick. We were made for each other.”

He returned his mouth to my pussy. His thick fingers pushed inside of me as his mouth hungrily stroked my aching clit. I moved my hips and bucked against him, wanting more and wanting it harder. He complied by pushing his fingers deeper. I reached down and tangled my fingers in his hair, holding his mouth securely against me. “Oh, god yes, Luke, yes!” I cried out as my pussy pulsed around his hand and tongue. My nipples hardened, and a warm blush covered my skin as he continued gently stroking me with his tongue until the waves of pleasure subsided. There was only one thing that could make the last few seconds better. “Fuck me, now, Luke. Please.”

I hadn’t needed to plead or ask twice. He shot up over me and slammed into me with his massive erection. I’d almost forgotten how enormous it was until he was buried deep inside of me. I lifted my hips to meet his thrusts and each time felt more delicious than the last.

“Fuck, I forgot what it was like to be inside of you, baby. Like fucking heaven.” He slid his hand beneath me and lifted me so that my pussy absorbed the full impact of every blow.

My pussy creamed with more moisture. Like always, he sensed that I needed more. “You ready to come again, baby?” he asked. “I fucking want you to. Please.” He reached down between our bodies and shoved his thumb against my clit. I mewled softly, letting him know that he’d found the right spot.

A hoarse chuckle came from his mouth. “You like that, Slick, don’t you? I know just what you fucking need, baby. I’m going to make you come all damn night.”

I moaned as his perfectly timed strokes brought me again to climax. My fingers dug into his arms as my pussy tightened around him. Through it all, his cock filled me, making every

part of me shudder with pleasure. Seconds later, a low groan rolled up from his chest as he came inside of me. Steam rolled off our bodies as our heartbeats slowed.

Luke lowered himself down next to me on the bed and circled his arms around me. I was where I was supposed to be, wrapped in his arms.

# CHAPTER 26

## LUKE

It was the middle of the night, and for a second, I wondered if I was really holding McKenna in my arms or if it had been a dream. Then she stretched, and her perfectly round bottom rubbed against me. My cock hardened instantly. I pulled her back against my chest. She wriggled in my arms to get closer.

“Hmm,” she said softly, “you’re warm.”

“Trust me, darlin’. I passed warm seconds ago.” My hands smoothed over her perfect breasts. As she pushed her nipples against the pressure of my hand, she pressed her ass against me. My cock pushed against the soft, smooth flesh of her ass.

“You’re right,” she said. “Warm was the wrong word.” My hands drifted down to her pussy and a soft, seductive mewl curled from her lips.

“Sorry to wake you, Slick. But I have to have you again.”

She sighed. “If you must, then it is my duty to comply.”

My hands slid into the slippery moisture already pooling between her legs. “I’m glad you see it my way.” I pulled her ass toward me, and with no more warning than a low growl from my throat, I pushed inside of her.

Her gasp was lost in the darkness of the room. I pushed my fingers against her clit, holding her steady against me as I drove into her. She met my almost punishing thrusts by jutting her ass out harder. “By the way, Slick,” I growled and pushed into her again. She gripped the sheets for support. “Since you’re being compliant, I’ll hear no more talk about you



leaving me.” I impaled her again, wanting to invade her completely, wanting never to pull my cock from her. “You’re mine, McKenna. Say it, baby.” My cock throbbed inside of her and her sweet sheath closed tight around me. “Tell me what I want to hear.”

She cried out. “Yes!” She met my thrusts with her own. We were in perfect rhythm. Two people meant to be together. “Yes, Luke, I’m yours. Forever!” Her soft scream floated to my ears, and I spilled my hot seed inside of her.

My arm dropped around her, but I stayed inside of her wanting to feel her pussy for a moment longer. “Just as long as we’ve got that cleared up,” I said.

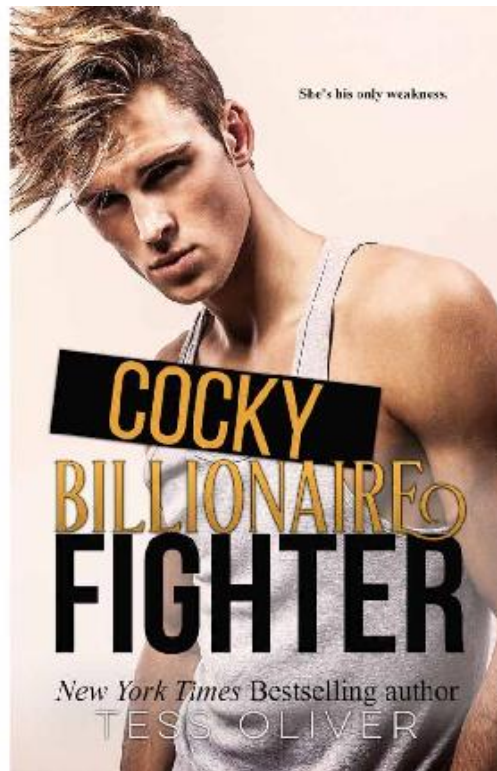
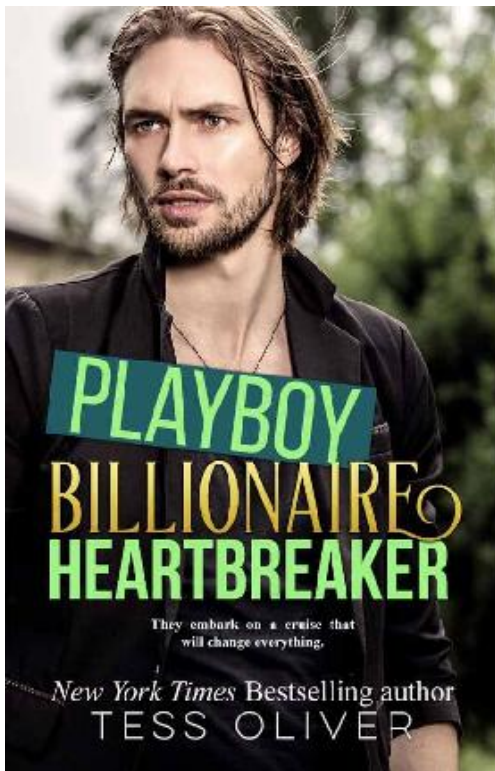
Once our breathing had slowed, and the heat of our skin had cooled, she spun around in my arms. She placed her hand on my face and kissed me. Then a sweet smile curled her amazing lips.

“Just to be clear,” she said, “this whole compliance thing comes with the horses, right?”

I laughed and kissed her. “I think we can include them in on the deal. After all, I am your stepbrother, cowboy.”

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