



TEXAS LANE

ANDIE FENICHEL

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TEXAS
LANE

A LANE FAMILY NOVELLA

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TEXAS LANE

A Lane Family Novella

SAMANTHA

So what if I said yes to a date with the hot bartender? The other university professors gave me hell, but I don't care. There's something intriguing about Hunter Lane. One date can't hurt. I spend my days immersed in Shakespeare and Chaucer, so I deserve a little fun with a guy who isn't boring and stuffy like the men I've dated recently. I'm tired of highbrow, and one night of a good time can't amount to anything anyway.

LOGAN

I never expected the buttoned-up professor to say yes. My heart literally leaped for joy when she did. The only problem is she's not a one-night-stand kind of girl, and I'm not a keeper. If I *was* the kind of guy looking for forever, Samantha Day would top my list. Better just count myself lucky to get one date. Opposites might attract, but I own a bar, and she's a professor of literature. That's a chasm too big to cross. Still, when I look at her, I see our future. Who am I to buck destiny?

CHAPTER ONE



SAMANTHA

Jill, Deon, and I always go to The Bent Frame for drinks after our last class on Friday. It's a local bar with a good mix of locals, students, university faculty, and a few tourists. They have live music from Thursday through Saturday and a great chef in the back serving up barbecue and southern favorites.

Even when my friends try to pick a different spot, I always talk them into coming back here. I tell them they can't break from tradition, but it's a lie. I come to The Bent Frame because the owner/bartender is the sexiest man I've ever seen, and I can't pass up a chance to look. I know his name is Logan Lane because he always introduces the bands when they come on. I rarely stay long enough to hear the band, but sometimes I can't resist sneaking back in after my friends go home, and watching Logan a little longer.

It's pathetic.

I tug on the frilly collar of my white blouse and loosen the little ribbon bow so the edges lay flat and show half an inch of my throat. I'm not exactly wet-dream material. I'm an uptight literature professor sitting with two uptight history professors.

To prove the point, Jill and Deon are currently arguing over the military strategies of Napoleon and how he might have won the war without the hassle of the Russian winter.

I finish the last of my cosmo and turn to catch a glimpse of Logan behind the bar, but he's not there.

"What do you think, Sam?" Deon asks.

"I think Napoleon lost the war, and there is little chance of changing that outcome. I further think if the outcome had been different, we might not be sitting here tonight, since my family came over from England about twenty years after the Napoleonic Wars. Jill's family might not have emigrated from Scotland, and who knows how the balance of power would have affected the state of your family in Antigua."

Deon flashes his bright-white teeth and toasts me with his still half-full cosmo. “And here I thought you weren’t listening.”

“She’s always listening and watching,” Jill says. “I’m always impressed by how much Sam hears when she appears to be distracted by a hot bartender.”

“I’m not distracted,” I protest. “It’s not as if either of you would dispute the fact that he’s nice to look at.”

Deon swigs his drink. “Amen. He’s hot. But, he’s also a bartender. What on earth would the two of you talk about?”

It’s hard to argue with that even though I want to. There’s no point. I love my work friends, but they’re so highbrow sometimes. I have to bite my tongue.

“Can I get anyone another drink?” Logan’s deep voice does naughty things to me. He takes my empty glass and Deon’s.

Deon’s smile is so wide he looks like a cougar about to devour his prey. “I’d love one more and some of those mac-and-cheese bites.”

“You got it,” Logan says. “What about you, Professor Day? Another cosmo or some food?”

How does he know my name? I search my memory for a time I might have told him, but I’ve never spoken to him about anything but food and drink, and maybe a comment about a band or two. Did he ask someone? Why would he do that?

“I’ll have one more too.”

He nods. “Professor Montrose, do you need another?”

Jill’s martini glass is still more than half full of lovely pink liquid. She shakes her head. “No thanks.”

Heart dropping to my stomach, I can’t help being disappointed that he just knows everyone’s name, and I’m not special. Indulging myself, I turn to watch him walk away, but he’s still standing near my chair at the high-top.

His bright blue eyes stare into mine. “You should stay for the band, professor. It’s a good one tonight.”

“Maybe.” It’s hard to breathe with him so close and giving me his full attention. Has he ever looked at me this long? No. I would remember. My collar is loose, but I feel as if I’m being strangled.

His smile is crooked. “I’ll get that order in and bring those drinks back in a minute.”

“There was some sizzle there.” Deon stretches out the last word far longer than necessary.

Twisting her lips, Jill says. “You can’t actually be considering him, Sam.”

I’m doing far more than considering. In my mind, I’ve already undressed and done all the naughty things with Logan Lane. I draw a shaky breath. “I don’t know what you two are talking about. He’s just doing his job. He flirts with all the women. It gets tips.”

As if I hadn’t spoken, she continues, “That is not the kind of man who has any serious interest in a literature professor, Sam. Keep that in mind. He may want to get in your pants, but what else could the two of you have in common?” She sips her drink, and I swear it’s just for show because the liquid doesn’t go down at all.

“I’m all for a sexy one-night stand with the hot bartender,” Deon says. “It’s too bad he’s straight, or I’d jump all over that.”

“We can go to another bar next week and find you a fling, Deon.” I chuckle.

“I’d be disappointed if you went somewhere else on Friday night. You professors class up the place.” Logan carefully places my drink in front of me and then places Deon’s.

Putting on my haughtiest highbrow accent, I look him in the eye. “I doubt you’d even notice, Mr. Lane. You get a pretty good crowd without us.” I mean to be flippant, but my voice catches at the end.

Logan steps so close I feel the heat rolling off him. “Samantha, I would notice if you weren’t here. I would be disappointed and wonder if I’d done something to chase you away because it’s the last thing I want to do.”

I’m mesmerized and can’t look away. “Why?”

“Why don’t you go out with me and I’ll tell you why?” he asks with only a hint of a smile.

Is he kidding? “You want to go out with me?”

Jill scoffs, but Deon slaps her shoulder, and they both get quiet.

Logan seems not to notice either of them. He’s fully focused on me. “I would be thrilled to take you on a date, Samantha.”

“It’s just Sam. Where would we go?”

“Is that a yes?” A crease forms between his eyes.

My heart pounds, and I’m hyperaware of my friends watching. Still, I long to have some fun with someone who won’t discuss Napoleon or Niche. I spent my entire twenties, well most of them, studying and teaching so I could climb the ranks and get tenured. “When?”

Taking half a step back, he studies me. “Right now, if you’re saying yes.”

“You’d just leave the bar and take me out on a date.” My voice drips with sarcasm because now I know he’s not serious.

“Are you saying yes?” He crosses his thickly muscled arms and stares at me.

Turning my chair so I’m fully facing him makes my skirt climb up my thighs, exposing more than I’m usually comfortable with. I study him. “I’ll go out with you if you promise not to make a fool of me. If this is some kind of prank, I’ll be—” I have to swallow down the fear that that’s exactly what this is. “I’ll be angry.”

Taking my elbow, he gently caresses to my shoulder. “I don’t know what kind of man you think I am, but I would

never do that.” His rough jeans rub against my bare leg. “Should I go make arrangements in the back, Sam?”

My pulse is so fast I can’t form words. I nod.

There’s a hint of upturn at the corners of his lips, but it’s his eyes that smile back at me. “Give me five minutes.”

Once he’s gone, I close my eyes and gather my wits. I just said yes to a date with Logan Lane, and it’s happening in five minutes.

When I open my eyes, Deon’s mouth is hanging open and Jill is frowning.

Jill breaks first. “Have you lost your mind?”

I take a long sip of my drink and blow out a breath. “Maybe.”

Deon bursts into laughter. “Girl, go get you some rough-around-the-edges man and have a good time.”

I gather myself and sit up straight before I look at them. “You both need to pull yourselves together and be polite when he comes back. I said yes, and you’re not going to embarrass me or yourselves with bad behavior.”

“How you can be telling us how to behave when you just agreed to a date with a bartender, I have no idea.” Jill pretends to sip her drink with one arm over her chest.

“He’s a successful businessman and always very polite. Stop being a snob, Jill.”

Jill is about to say more, but Logan returns and places the mac-and-cheese bites in front of Deon. “Your tab is paid, professors. Enjoy the night.” He offers me his hand.

I hesitate an instant, then take it. Warm and rough, it envelops my small, soft hand. As he leads me in a serpentine path through the crowd and out the front door, I have no time to think.

On Rainey Street, he looks at my shoes and their three-inch black heels. “Can you walk in those?”

“How far?” I can’t even believe I said yes to this date, or that we’re discussing my shoes.

“Six blocks if you like Italian food.”

“That’s fine.” I walk in heels every day. I can manage a few blocks more today.

Smiling, he keeps my hand in his. “I like this look.”

“What look?” I have to run to keep up with his long legs. “Can you slow down? I’m not running track.”

“Sorry.” He slows. “I guess I’m excited you said yes, and that made me rush.”

“That’s nice.”

“I like how buttoned-up you always look. It makes a man wonder.” He turns down a side street and continues to a small restaurant with white tablecloths and candles. The sign says Donna’s.

The hostess rounds the desk as soon as she sees Logan. “You didn’t call.” She kisses both his cheeks.

“Sorry, Donna. It was last minute. Do you have room for us?” His smile is wide and genuine.

“For you, always, Logan.” Tucking her dark hair behind her ear, she studies the restaurant map. After a moment, she tells a waitress to take us to seven, and we follow to a small table at the back of the dining room. It’s next to windows that open to a lovely garden between buildings.

We order wine and I ask, “What does it make you wonder?”

Confusion flits across his handsome face before he smiles. “It makes me wonder what you’re hiding under all the bows, buttons, and lace, professor.”

My pussy clenches with need. I’m saved from answering by the arrival of wine.

CHAPTER TWO



LOGAN

I can't believe she said yes. Literally, my asking was impulsive, and I thought she'd laugh at me. What would a brilliant professor want with a bar owner? I sip my wine and stare, wondering if this is some kind of dream, and if she's going to disappear in a moment.

She finally looks up from her menu and asks, "Do you recommend something?"

Taking her home and ravaging her is my first recommendation, but I hold back. "The pasta is excellent, but everything is really good."

She frowns at the menu.

Damn it, she's adorable. "Is there something particular you'd like?"

"I don't see it." She sighs.

Donna is finishing saying hello to a group at the next table. She must have overheard Sam. "What are you looking for, hon?"

"I don't want to be a bother." Sam's cheeks turn bright red, and she stares at the table.

Shaking her head, Donna laughs. "I'm never bothered. If I can't do something, I'll tell you."

With a smile that looks as if she's struggling to keep it in place, Sam says, "I'd love some spaghetti with tomato and olive oil. I know it's simple. Your menu is beautiful. I'm..."

Donna takes the menus away. "It's one of my favorites too." She looks at me and winks. "Pasta al forno for you?"

I nod and thank Donna. Once Sam and I are alone again, I lean forward. "Are you always uncomfortable asking for what you want?"

A deep crease forms between her eyes. “I’m just shy.” She’s defending herself, but her voice is so soft I have to strain to hear her.

“It must be difficult to give lectures daily if you’re shy.” I want to know more about her. I’ve watched her come into my bar for over a year. She watches and listens, but never dances or gets wild.

A drop of wine lingers on her upper lip, and she pokes her tongue out to clear the droplet. “I have learned to push past it, and I love to talk about books, so that helps.”

I’m dying to lick that wine. My cock is in favor of all manner of kissing and touching. “Why did you say yes, Sam?”

Confusion passes over her gaze. “To the date?”

“I know your friends don’t approve. I can’t imagine I’m the kind of guy you normally date.” Idiotically, I’m jealous of fictional professor types that she’s possibly dating.

As if a sharp move might shatter the glass, she places it carefully in front of her and lifts her gaze to mine. “I don’t care what my friends think about whom I date, and you are pretty judgmental about my type. Are you always narrow-minded, Logan?”

“Narrow-minded? I wouldn’t say that. I consider myself a student of human nature, and a pretty good one. You come to The Bent Frame once a week and sit with your friends. You never come in with a date. You watch everything and debate the meaning behind Hamlet or some nugget about the French Revolution. You leave after two drinks. Occasionally, you return twenty minutes later, alone, and watch the band from a shadowy corner where you sip a third drink and then switch to water. You never bring a date or hook up. Some students talk about how hard your classes are, but also how much they love them. You have a reputation in town for being a straight-and-narrow lady. I don’t see how I fit into that mold.” I didn’t mean to give a monologue or show her how much I’ve noticed about her all at once, but I couldn’t stop myself. She’s been an obsession, and now she’s across a romantic table. It’s almost too much.

Wide-eyed, she stares. “You noticed me?”

Placing my hand softly over hers on the table, I caress her fingers before taking them in mine. “I’d have to be dead to *not* notice you.”

“Why didn’t you talk to me before?” She turns her hand palm up so we’re holding hands properly.

“I’m not exactly in your league, gorgeous.” Holding hands has never felt this intimate, and I want to wrap myself around this woman and never let go.

Her gaze drops to our hands. “I don’t have a league.”

Unable to stop myself, I laugh. “You definitely do. You’re a literature professor with all kinds of degrees, teaching at a top university, and on your way to being dean one day. I’m a kid from New Jersey who bought a bar after college and never went home.”

She stiffens. “How do you know that I might be in line to be dean one day?” She’s even cuter when she’s angry.

I’m a goner. “Everyone comes into my place, and everyone talks, Samantha. I’ll admit that when I hear them talking about you, my ears perk up, and I listen more carefully.” My heart is pounding. I never thought she’d agree to a date, and now that she has, I don’t want this to be a one-and-done.

“I’m not a snob.” She pulls her hand back and takes her wine to sip.

Donna delivers the food and beams at Sam’s childlike grin.

We eat for a few minutes in silence. Sam doesn’t look up from her plate while she carefully coils spaghetti on her fork for small bites that won’t allow a drop of tomato to mar her frilly white blouse.

It’s hard to concentrate on my own food since I can’t take my eyes off her. “I never thought you were a snob. I think you’re a very polite woman who wouldn’t have any interest in a guy who owns a bar.”

Her head lifts slowly, and those hazel eyes are full of the same kind of passion I’ve seen in them when she talks about

books with her friends. “Clearly, you were wrong, Logan.”

Between emotion boiling under the surface of her words and the simmering look she’s giving me, my shaft might pound against the underside of the table at any moment. “I’m not sure what to say to that, so I’m going to count myself lucky and leave it at that. Thank you for saying yes, Samantha.”

Pasta half eaten, she puts her fork down and takes a long drink of water. “I don’t usually like my full name, but I like the way you say it.”

Is she flirting? Do professors flirt? “It’s a beautiful name.” It also suits her better than Sam, but I keep that to myself.

When the waitress asks if we want dessert, Samantha shakes her head, then I pay the check. After thanking Donna, we step onto the street.

Taking Sam’s hand, I don’t want the evening to end. “What do you want to do next? I’d offer a walk in the park, but your feet have to be screaming by now.”

She laughs. “You’re very concerned about my feet.”

Stopping our progress toward The Bent Frame, I gently tug her close. “It’s only that I don’t want you to be uncomfortable. I never want to do anything that hurts you.”

With a cock of her head, she steps until we’re an inch apart. “That might be the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me. You’re not what I expected.”

Throat clogged, I ask, “What did you expect?”

“You to try to get in my panties.” Her cheeks flame.

I run my knuckles along her warm jaw, then thread my fingers through her waves of brown hair. “Is that what you wanted when you said yes to a date?”

She shrugs and steps back. “I’ve enjoyed the night so far. Maybe I am a snob.”

Closing the gap she made, I brush my lips over hers. “Samantha, if you want me to take you to bed, I’m happy,

actually overjoyed, to comply. As a gentleman, it would have been rude to presume.”

“Are you a gentleman?” Her breath catches as I make another pass across her lips.

I nod. “My mother would skin me alive if I wasn’t.”

Lips twitching, she takes a firm step back and looks around the busy street. “I can’t be caught in a compromising situation in public. If you want to take me home, that would be better.”

Nothing about this woman is what I expect, and I have to close my eyes to get a grip on myself. Tightening my grip on her hand, we walk to the bar and then down the alley that leads to the back where I’ve parked my pickup. I open the passenger door, and once she’s inside, I have to lean on the vehicle for a moment. I can’t believe this night has turned out this way. Once I get myself together, I round the front and get in. “This is not my typical Friday night and I’m a little stunned you want to go home with me.”

“You never take women home from the bar?” She buckles her seatbelt and watches me.

“Not since I bought the place, no. It’s not like I can avoid them if they get angry and want to make my life miserable. It always seemed smarter not to date patrons.” Once I’ve said it, I realize she’s a patron.

She folds her hands in her lap. “Are you compromising your ethics for me, or do you often bend your own rules?”

“You’re different.”

“How?”

I put the truck in gear and pull out of the parking lot. My condo is on the edge of town, but there’s always traffic in Austin, so it will take twenty minutes to get there. “I don’t want to sound like a creep.” I glance across the truck.

Her eyes are wide.

“I remember the minute you first walked into my bar. You were wearing a red lace blouse with some kind of silky thing

underneath and a white skirt. I thought my cock would explode.”

She gasps and fidgets. “Oh.”

“Sorry. Too vulgar?” Why didn’t I say something nice?

“No. I’m just—never mind. When was that?” Her chest is rising and falling quickly.

“The first time was almost two years ago. Then I didn’t see you for a long time. I heard you had moved to England to teach. When you came back last term, it was a great day.” I sound like a total loser, and maybe a little stalkerish.

We fall into a comfortable silence as I navigate through the city.

Just when I think the silence will last all the way home, she says, “I did an exchange program, but that time you remember as the first wasn’t the first time I was in. I used to go to The Bent Frame all the time as a student. I stopped when I became a postgrad. I had some silly notion I shouldn’t have fun anymore.” Regret rings in her voice. “I remember seeing you on the night you’re talking about though.”

“No, you don’t.” The words are out before I can stop them.

“Of course, I do. Why do you think I always come back? You look so perfectly untouchable behind your bar. Not a care in the world. No worries bogging you down. I never hear you lament about politics or religion. You never rail at the state of the world or debate what Napoleon should have done.” She lets out a long loud sigh.

I laugh and pull to a stop at the light. “Waited for spring before he went to Russia.”

Her head snaps toward me, and her mouth is open.

Pressing my finger under her chin, I help her close her mouth. “I may own a bar, but I’m not an idiot, Samantha.”

“No. I know. I’m sorry. Of course, you have opinions. I just always liked how full of fun and joy you seem.” She’s blushing again.

As the light turns green, I take her hand from her lap and thread my fingers through hers. “I like that you were watching, and now you know I was watching you too. I feel less like a creep.”

Her warm giggle shoots directly to my cock as we pull into my parking lot.

CHAPTER THREE



SAMANTHA

I must have lost my mind. How did I get up the nerve to ask him to take me home? Now that we're outside his condo, I'm so nervous it's hard to keep my hands from shaking.

He unlocks his door, but instead of walking in, he slides his hand around my waist, and with his other hand, he brushes my hair away from my face. "Samantha, if you've changed your mind, I'll drive you back to your car or take you for ice cream. You can come inside, and we can drink coffee here and talk all night."

I'm such a dork that he's no longer attracted to me. "You don't want to make love?"

Groaning, he presses his head to my shoulder. "When you say things like that or ask me to take you home, you can't know what you do to me."

I grip his upper arm so my knees don't give out. I tip my head to one side and am rewarded with a path of his kisses along my neck that shoot pleasure directly to my aching clit. "If you don't want to take me to bed, I understand."

"My god, you're adorable." He backs me through his front door and closes it. "I want to take you to bed and make love to you all night. I want to hear you come a dozen times and wake up with you in my arms in the morning."

"Men don't like to have women stay all night." It blurts out, and I wish I can put it back.

Pressing my back to the wall, he kisses me. His tongue slides between my lips with a low groan before he backs off and gently sucks my bottom lip between his, and then the top.

Every inch of my body is on fire for more Logan Lane. I cling to his back and shoulders and open for him when he invites my tongue to swirl with his. If not for the wall and his hands skimming the backs of my thighs to my ass, I wouldn't

be able to hold myself up. “Logan.” It doesn’t even sound like my voice.

His strong hand slips under the hem of my skirt and traces the bare skin higher and higher. “I will never lie to you, Samantha. I wouldn’t have left your car in town if I didn’t want you to stay. However, if you want to leave at any time, I’ll take you back. If you’re uncomfortable, this is over for the night.”

Without even touching an erogenous zone, he’s got my panties soaking wet. “I don’t want to leave. I want you.”

The way he growls is more animal than man, and even that shoots desire through me. He drops to his knees and helps me out of one shoe, then the other. He neatly places them near the door.

I glimpse a couch, chair, coffee table, and an archway leading to a dining room in the light filtering in from the parking lot. There’s a hallway to the right that must lead to a bedroom.

Still on his knees in front of me, he stares up at my body. “I want to make you come right here, Samantha. Can I do that?”

I probably look like an owl gaping down at him. “I don’t know, can you?”

Nuzzling my covered pussy, he chuckles, and the rumble forces my hips forward like a moth to the flame. Gazing up again, he says, “I should have said ‘may I’ because I’m sure that I can.”

The idea alone makes my clit pulse with need. “Yes.”

Slowly, he slides my pencil skirt up my thighs, kissing every inch of flesh as it’s exposed.

Looking for purchase, I clutch the wall but find nothing, and grip his dark hair to keep from collapsing. Tiny moans and sighs fall from my lips, and I yearn to be touched at the apex of my thighs. I ache with need far stronger than gazing across the bar ever produced. All the nights I’ve pleased myself at

home after watching him are a pale reflection of this, and he's not touched my pussy yet.

It's hard to catch my breath, and I let out a soft kean as he traces along the crease of my thigh with his tongue. "Logan. Oh...I need."

Strong hands grip my hips as he licks a path closer to where I need him. "I'm going to take good care of you, sweetheart. I promise."

He licks across my lace panties as if I'm the best flavor of ice cream. "Mmm." Pulling the lace to the side, he splits my sex with that wicked tongue.

"*Oh.*" Sensation shoots through me, and I pull back before thrusting my hips forward, longing for more.

"Hold on to me. I've got you." He licks again and again.

Every touch of his tongue is pure magic. I clutch his hair and shoulders and open my legs farther.

He devours me, sucking my clit, swirling his tongue around all the awakened nerves, then sucking again. He presses his thumb inside me, and I explode with pleasure. My knees buckle, and if not for Logan quickly gripping my legs, I would collapse.

Lowering me so my legs are around his waist and I'm sitting on his knees, he kisses me. The taste of my sex on his lips is pure erotic. "You're amazing."

I've never wanted more sex after an orgasm, but I'm pulsating with the need for more. "That was almost too much." I love the way his arms wrap around me. It feels like more than a one-night stand. He feels like more.

Lifting me as if I weigh nothing, he stands and carries me down the hall, through a doorway, and lowers me to a king-size bed. "If you want to sleep, I'll get you a T-shirt to wear."

Oh shit, I've said something wrong. He wants me to go, and now he's stuck with me. "I can call a taxi and go to my car." I pull my skirt down and scramble off the bed.

I feel as if I've been caught cheating on an exam. Not that I ever did, but I used to have nightmares about it all the time when I was in school. This is like my worst nightmare, to be half dressed and in a man's house when he rejects me. Where did I drop my purse? It must be near the door with my shoes.

I start toward the bedroom door when he wraps a hand around my arm. "You want to leave?" Is that hurt in his voice? No. That's not possible.

"I don't want to impose. You don't need to drive me." Why won't he let go? "Why are you holding me?" A tear squeezes out and falls down my cheek. My heart is imploding.

His grip loosens, but he doesn't let go. "Samantha, if you want to go, I'll drive you. If you're upset because you think I want you to leave, you're mistaken. If this is something else, let's talk about it. The last thing I want is to make you unhappy. If I did something wrong or the foreplay at the door was out of line, I'm sorry." He lowers his head and kisses my cheek. "Please don't go," he whispers.

When I gather enough courage to meet his eyes, he looks worried. "You said you wanted to go to sleep. I thought..." I'm looking for words that won't make me seem like such a geek. "I don't know what I thought. That you really wanted me to go but are too much of a gentleman to tell me."

"I don't want you to go, only to know that you're not obligated to anything. If what we did at the door was enough for you, that's okay. I'd be honored to hold you and sleep with you." His voice is full of worry and maybe longing.

It's the first time in my life that a lover has been this vested in my response, and Logan barely knows me. "I don't know why you're so nice."

Stepping closer, he kisses my bottom lip, then makes love to my mouth. "Don't you?"

My body is sizzling like an electrical cable about to overload. How does he do this to me with just a kiss and a touch? "Can we talk later?" I drag him close. When I wrap my legs around him, the slit in my skirt tears. "I need..."

“I’ve got you, sweetheart.” He slides the zipper down the back of my skirt. I lower my legs, and let it fall to the rug. He backs up a few steps to work the tiny buttons at the front of my blouse. His fingers are big but agile, and in seconds I’m in only a lace bra and panties.

I reach behind, unsnap my bra and toss it aside, then shimmy out of my panties. Part of me wants to cover up, but his gaze is so full of desire, I stand and let him look his fill. “Maybe you could take something off now.”

His mouth tips up on one side. Tugging his polo over his head, he exposes tight abs and bulging biceps. He steps out of his boots before removing his belt and letting his jeans and underwear fall to the floor. Nothing about him is small. His cock stands long and thick at perfect attention.

If I wasn’t such a wimp, I’d reach out and touch him, but all I can do is stare at his beautiful body. I step closer and swallow my fear of rejection. “May I touch you?”

“I hope you will.” He grazes his fingers up my arm to my shoulder, then along my collarbone.

Even though he hasn’t touched my breasts, my nipples tighten in anticipation. I’m rolling into the end of my twenties, and this is by far the most erotic night of my life. My hand trembles as I reach forward and brush my fingers along his shaft.

He doesn’t move, but it jerks.

Taking him in my hand produces a moan that shoots straight to my pussy. I work my hand up and down his smooth skin and step closer, so our bodies are nearly touching. “I’m not good at sex.” *Shut up, Sam. Just shut up.*

Wrapping his hand around mine at the base of his cock, he stops my movements. After he takes two deep breaths, his blue eyes spark with passion, and he smiles. “Not true, professor. Everything about you screams sensuality and makes me so hard I could have come before you even touched me.”

“Is that true?” No one has ever said anything like that to me. “I’m not exactly sexy.” I point to the frilly high-collar

blouse on the floor.

He lifts my hand from his cock and kisses the inside of my wrist before placing it on his shoulder. He closes the gap with his shaft trapped between us.

I suddenly wish I was taller or that I still had my shoes on so I can get some relief. I need him lower.

He brushes my hair away from my face. “Just because you don’t wear revealing clothes or show off this body for the world to see, it doesn’t mean you’re not sexy. In fact, just the opposite. You make a man wonder what you’re hiding under all the ribbons and buttons.”

It’s hard to catch my breath with his fingers sliding along my jaw and over my ass. Everywhere he touches is on fire and fuels my need. “And now that you’ve seen what’s under my clothes?”

Pressing a kiss to my cheek and then below my ear, he whispers. “Samantha, I’ve never wanted anyone more.”

CHAPTER FOUR



LOGAN

This woman is everything. How is it possible she doesn't know how perfect she is? I feel like it's my duty to show her.

"Do you talk to all your dates like this?" With tentative fingers, she traces a path along my shoulder and down my back. It's like being touched by an angel's wings, both light and alluring.

I kiss her pulse point, and her moan makes my cock jerk between us. "I don't talk to anyone like this. Do you always think this much?"

She steps back, and I wish I could take the words back. Her eyes fill, but she blinks away the emotion. "I'm sorry. I don't know why I came here. This is my fault. I led you on, and now I'm having doubts." Crouching, she grabs her clothes.

I kneel beside her. "Samantha, I'm not criticizing you. I just want to know you."

Pausing in her panic, she looks into my eyes. I could drown in those soul-searching depths. She sits with her back against the bed. "I've made a mess of this. Do you want to know me? I'm an uptight, repressed literature professor who can't even get out of her own way to have one night of passion."

I lift her from the floor and put her on the bed. I crawl in next to her, pull the covers over us, and drag her into my arms. "I don't see any of that. Do you want to know what I see, what I've seen for years when I watched you?"

Curled against me, she nods.

"I see a woman who's kind and thoughtful. She gives good tips because she worries that the waitress might not make her rent. She wears clothes that make her look uptight, so no one will question her intelligence."

Her head snaps up, and she stares at me.

“I see a beautiful woman who must have been told to hide those qualities if she wants to get ahead. I see passion and brilliance.”

“You see all that, and we’ve barely spoken until tonight.” She lowers her gaze to my mouth.

“Samantha, I have fantasized about a night like this with you for years, but I don’t want you to feel obligated or ashamed.” I can’t believe I’m about to say this, and my cock is fully protesting. “Why don’t we just talk until you’re sure? It would kill me if you regretted anything about tonight.”

“I really thought I could just have casual sex. I’m sorry.” A tear rolls down her cheek.

How do I tell the woman I’ve pined for that there’s nothing casual about this on our first date? “You have nothing to apologize for. Do you have things to do tomorrow?”

“Why?” Her nose scrunches up, as if she’s thinking over some laundry list.

Unable to help myself, I kiss her pursed lips.

She sighs against my mouth.

Ending the kiss is torture. “If you’re not busy tomorrow, I’d love for you to stay the night with me. We can talk, you can tell me all about your childhood. I’ll tell you about New Jersey and my enormous family. Then I’ll make you breakfast, and if you have the time, we can spend the day together.”

“No sex?”

I can’t tell if she’s relieved or disappointed. Pulling her tight, I hold her and kiss her hair. “Samantha, that’s entirely up to you. I’m not rejecting you. I’m giving you space to decide what you want and need. If you want to make love, that’s what we’ll do. Believe me, I long to make you scream my name until the neighbors call the police. I want all of you, but not at any cost. Right now, you feel undecided.”

“I’m just not this kind of girl.” She hides her face in my chest. “I don’t go back to men’s apartments and get naked on a

first date.”

“It’s an honor that you trusted me enough to come home with me.”

Pressing her hands to my chest, she meets my gaze. “What kind of bartender are you? Why aren’t you upset or angry? Why are you deep and thoughtful?”

I’m laughing before she’s gotten all her questions out. “You, of all people, should know better than to judge a book by its cover, professor.”

The way her smile spreads across those tempting lips and lights up her eyes is worth all the aching in my groin. Edging off me, she lies facing me with the covers pulled up to her chin.

I assume the same position facing her. I’m still rock hard, but I’m also thrilled she didn’t walk out. “Do you have a big family?”

“I have two sisters; they’re twins, and they’re a lot younger than me. They’re both in college. Paulie is at MIT and Jo is at NYU. They’re both brilliant.” She beams talking about her sisters.

“How old are they?” I can’t get enough of her joy, and I want to prolong it.

She smiles. “They’ll be twenty in a few weeks. I was seven when they were born, and they’re the best thing that ever happened to me.”

Her passion for literature can’t compare to the pure love I see in her eyes. “Did you grow up here?”

She nods. “Outside of town, but this is where I always wanted to be. I love Austin and all its weirdness. My mom still lives in the house we grew up in. Dad left when I was twelve. The twins barely remember him. Mom worked as a waitress and then cleaned offices at the university at night. We’re lucky all three of us got scholarships for school. I’ve offered to buy mom a new place, but she’s happy where she is, and I’m happy to pay her bills so she doesn’t have to work anymore.”

This woman is too good to be true. I knew it going in, but every word that comes out of her mouth confirms it. “What are your sisters studying?” My voice is tight with emotion. I want to claim her and keep her, but it’s too soon. I may have lost my mind.

She shakes her head. “Your turn. You said you have a big family. How big?”

Taking a deep breath, I hope I’m not about to terrify her. Best to just tear the bandage off. “I’m the fifth of eight kids, and I have more than thirty first cousins.”

“What?” She presses up to her elbow, which reveals one lovely breast.

It’s impossible to keep my hands to myself, but rather than be too aggressive, I caress her hip. “I know. It’s insane, but the last generation of Lanes had a lot of kids. I even have twin brothers. They’re the babies, though they’re twenty-six now.”

Relaxing back on the mattress, she inches slightly closer. “I can’t imagine that many people sharing a past.”

“Most of them still live in Roseville, New Jersey. It’s a quiet little town in the mountains on the north end of the state. It’s very close to New York. I love it there, but I fell deeper in love with Austin, and now I have the bar.” My love for New Jersey will never fade, but my life is in Texas, which surprised me when I realized it years ago.

“Do they visit?” Her eyes darken.

Is she worried that I’m alone? I run my hand along her thigh and back to her hip, and she inches closer. “Mom and dad come at least once a year, usually when they visit my sister Grace in California. They make a long trip of it. I go back as much as I can. My siblings have been getting married left and right lately, so I’ve been back for weddings three times in the last two years. I heard my brother Dawson brought a woman home for New Year. He’s never done that before. I’m guessing he’s the next to get married.”

“What about you? Have you been married?” Her cheeks pinken.

Why that blush does it for me, I have no idea. “Almost once. We met in college and got engaged. She received an offer for an internship in Italy that was too good to turn down. I figured after six months she’d be back, and we’d be fine.”

“That’s not what happened?”

The old ache is softer somehow with Samantha in my bed. “No. She met someone in Italy and never came home. She called me a few weeks before she was scheduled to return and broke it off.”

Staring at the sheets, she says, “I’m sorry.”

I lift her chin so she’s looking at me. “It was a long time ago, Samantha. I’m fine. Or do you look sad because this reminds you of some hurt? Have you been married?” Why should I care, as long as she’s not attached now? Maybe I just don’t like the idea of anyone hurting my girl. *Don’t be an ass, Lane. She’s not your girl. Not yet.*

“I’ve never been married, and the one time I was asked, I said no.” Her eyes cloud with some old memory.

“You didn’t love him?” In my head, I’m screaming to shut up, but I have to know.

Her gaze snaps to mine. “I did. He just wasn’t the right guy for me.” There’s more, but she’s pressed her lips tight, as if she’s holding in the rest of the information.

“You don’t want to tell me?” I should let it go. I know it, but I can’t.

Studying me for a moment, she shrugs. “His father owned a restaurant in town. He was a good man but had little ambition and a lot of big dreams. I didn’t want to end up like my mother with a house full of babies and no one to raise them with me.”

“I imagine you would be a wonderful mother.” It pops out of my mouth before I can stop it. I see her holding babies with hazel or blue eyes and smiling. I have to shake off the image before I get ahead of myself.

Another inch closer, and her breasts press lightly against my chest. My cock is grazing her thigh. “I think, if you’re still interested, I’d like to make love now.” Her cheeks are fire-engine red.

Slipping my hand around to cup her ass, I pull her tight to my aching shaft. “I’ve never actually wanted anything more.”

A shy smile spreads across her face as I press my lips to hers. She wiggles against me, and a little growl rumbles in her throat.

I press my tongue to the crease of her lips, and she opens for me. Her mouth is warm and sweet. My need to claim her as mine is primal and overwhelming. I’m not a Neanderthal, but lord, this woman could bring out the beast in anyone. Breathing hard, I break the kiss and press my forehead to hers. “I want you so much, but I don’t want to do anything that might scare you off, Samantha.”

Wrapping her leg over mine, she adjusts so my cock lines up with her wetness. “I thought I might have talked you out of it. I’m sorry if I’ve made you uncomfortable.”

Rubbing against her, I can’t stop the groan as pleasure rockets through me. “It’s the best kind of uncomfortable.”

She bends her knee, allowing me to nearly breach her.

Every instinct tells me to drive deep inside her and make her mine. I have to close my eyes to gather my wits. “Condom.” It comes out with a grunt.

With wide-eyed surprise, she freezes. “What was I thinking?”

I kiss her nose. “You weren’t, and I love that.” I kiss her neck and down her shoulder to the curve of her collarbone. She’s so gorgeous. Pulling one plump nipple into my mouth, I tease it with my teeth then run my tongue over the sensitive flesh.

Fisting my hair, she lets out a tiny cry and arches her back, pressing those stunning tits toward me.

I give the other the same treatment and slide my knee between her thighs.

“That’s so...” She rides my leg and utters unintelligible words.

With no idea what she might be saying, I still adore every utterance. “You’re so beautiful, Samantha.”

“I’m awkward,” she says with a gasp as I lick a circle around one perfect nipple.

Rolling so she’s straddling my hips, I hold her waist and smooth my hands over her hips. “I see you, and I don’t see that.”

She rides the ridge of my cock, sliding it between her wet folds and throws her head back. “I need. Oh. God.” She grinds faster.

I press my thumb against her clit and roll it under the pad. “So wet and so hot.”

On a low cry, she grinds harder, faster, and comes in a torrent of juices. I’ve never seen anything more beautiful than her skin flushing red and rapture easing all the worry from her face. I want to see that every day for the rest of my life.

CHAPTER FIVE



SAMANTHA

Logan must be some kind of god or demigod or devil. I've had two of the best orgasms of my life, and he still hasn't taken his pleasure.

Collapsing on his chest, I can't believe my body still craves more of him. "I want you inside me."

His lips press to the side of my head. "Let me get a condom from the nightstand, and I'm more than happy to be buried deep inside your beautiful pussy and feel your pulse around me when you come again."

Heaven help me, but my body thinks another orgasm sounds like a good idea. I'm not this person. I don't have multiple orgasms or sex with men on the first date. Why don't I feel the least bit guilty about Logan?

Easing to one side, I give him the space to reach the nightstand drawer. I'm about to roll to my back, but he holds me with slight pressure on my thigh. "I like you up there, sweetheart. Don't move yet."

The girl I usually am wants to blush and protest, but I'm so turned on by the idea of controlling the sex, I do as I'm told. The irony of that isn't lost on me, and I let out a little laugh. "Oh sorry."

Watching me, he rolls the condom over his cock. "What are you sorry for, laughing?"

"Men don't like it when women laugh during sex." Heat creeps up my chest and neck. I wish I were sophisticated and aloof.

"That depends on what they're laughing about. Lovemaking should be fun, don't you think?"

"It's ironic that you had to order me to take charge." My mouth will not be silent. He's going to get up and toss me from his condo.

He strokes his cock. “It wasn’t a command, but I see the irony. Would another position be more appealing to you?”

Everything about him is so fucking hot. I must have lost my mind because I rise on my knees, so he’s perched at my opening. I ease down an inch, moaning as he stretches me. Another inch. It’s so good, but I’m wondering if I can take all of him inside me.

He grips my hips and lifts me, coating himself in my slick juices. “Take all the time you need, but I can’t promise I’m not going to come. You feel so fucking good, Samantha.”

The way he says my name is an aphrodisiac. I love it. I take more of him, rise, and fill myself with all of Logan. “Oh.” I have to catch my breath and let my body adjust to how big he is. I lift and lower, and the base of his cock rubs my clit with each fall. “That’s—”

Pressing my palms to his chest, I ride him until my body is on fire. It’s hard to breathe, hard to keep pace as pleasure fills me.

Logan grips my hips and pumps into me from below, fast and hard.

I erupt with a long cry as his cock pulses within me. His growl mixes with the crazy noises I’m making, and I collapse on his chest as shivers rack my body.

Wrapping his arms around me, he holds me and kisses my hair. “You’re magnificent.” He eases me to the mattress. “Don’t move. I just need to take care of the condom.”

This may be the most satisfied I’ve ever felt. I should get up, get dressed, and call a cab back to my car. That’s what a smart person would do. My body is languid and comfortable as my eyes close.

The mattress dips, and strong arms wrap around me. “Thank you for the best date of my life, Samantha.”

I want to dispute the possibility. I know I’m awkward and geeky, but he doesn’t seem to mind, and I’m too tired to argue the point. It seems like I should return his thanks. After all, I

did have three spectacular orgasms. I don't think the words actually get out of my mouth before I fall asleep.



Blinking awake, I take a second to realize I'm not home in my bed, and the crazy good sex I had last night was not a dream. More than that, the entire night was wonderful. The warm hard body curled up next to me is proof it really did happen.

Clearly, I have lost my mind, but I don't feel crazy. In fact, I feel better than I have in years. Jo and Paulie will never believe this. My sisters think I'm completely repressed. They're not entirely wrong. Maybe I just never met someone I wanted to be wild with until now.

Snuggled behind me, he's the most beautiful man I've ever seen. His sharp features are softened in sleep. His dark hair is sticking out in every direction. All those months spent watching him, how could I never notice he was watching me too? Maybe that was just a line to get me in bed. Well, if it was, it worked. It didn't seem like a line or a lie. Everything about Logan Lane feels real and true.

I ease out from under the covers, grab my clothes from the floor, and pad into the bathroom. There's a stack of clean towels on the long vanity with a new toothbrush and toothpaste sitting on top.

My heart tightens over how thoughtful he is. At some point in the night, he got up and put this here in case I needed them.

I brush my teeth and dress in my clothes. I'll have to do the walk of shame when I get to my apartment, but there's no helping that.

My shoes are by the front door with my purse. I can call a cab once I'm outside. Easing open the bathroom door, I'm about to sprint, but Logan is sitting with his back against the headboard. A trickle of sunlight beams across him making him glow like a god. His eyes are bright and happy, and his bare chest has a smattering of hair that's lighter than the hair on his head.

“Hi.”

“Hi yourself. You look like a thief about to run off.” He cocks his head and grins.

Pulling my shoulders back, I meet his stare. “I was going to get out of your way and take a cab back to my car.”

“I can drive you or...” His jaw ticks.

“Or what?” I step toward him and put one knee on the edge of the bed.

He sits next to me, totally unashamed of how naked he is. Not that he has anything to be awkward about. He’s gorgeous. “Or we can take a hot bath, I’ll lend you some of my sisters’ clothes they’ve left behind, and you can spend the day with me.”

“You want me to stay?” Honestly, I thought that was a line to get me to have sex with him too.

“I like you, Samantha.” He takes my hand and toys with my fingers one at a time. “I know we don’t know each other well. I know you don’t think I’m good enough for you, and you’re right.”

“I never said that. I don’t think that,” I say in a rush of words that flow together.

His grin is sad. “I know what it looks like from the outside, a tenured professor and a bar owner. If you’re not interested in more than one night, I get it. It’s only...” He draws a long breath and lets it out while staring down at my hand in his.

“Only what?” My heart is about to pound out of my chest.

Shoulders hunched and head down, he arches his neck to look at me. “Only, I don’t want to let this go. Last night was the best night of my life. I want to hear all about Jo and Paulie and what they’re studying. I want to hear about your childhood and what it’s been like to get to your position at the university. I want more Samantha Day. Am I asking too much?”

Is he? My friends would have a field day telling me what an idiot I am and how I should find an academic to fall for. Do I care what they think? I like Logan. I practically stalked him

for over a year. “No. It’s not too much. Last night was wonderful.” There’s so much more I should say. I should tell him how I like him more than I’ve ever liked anyone. Maybe more than like, but that’s crazy, and I’m not ready to send him running for the hills just yet. I’m not sure I ever will be ready for that.

He smiles. “Do you want to get into my enormous bathtub with me and let me make love to you again, or should I cook you some breakfast while you shower?”

As decisions go, those two choices are pretty fantastic. “You sure do make it hard for a girl to choose.”

Standing, he pulls me into a hug. “I want to make you happy.”

There’s no way he doesn’t feel my heart pounding against my chest. Has anyone ever said that to me before, or even thought it? Even my mother was just doing her best to keep us fed and clothed. Happiness was an afterthought. *Don’t read too much into it, Sam. He’s just being nice.* I shrug. “The tub sounds nice.”

Cupping my cheek, he tips my face and devours my lips. Once I’m panting from the kiss, he continues to press chaste kisses to my cheeks, forehead, and nose. “Will you spend the day with me?”

“If you want me to.” Maybe it’s my nature to always give people a way out, but I can’t seem to help it.

Scooping me up into his arms, he carries me to the bathroom and plops me down on the vanity while he turns on the water in the deep freestanding tub. While the tub fills, he stalks toward me. “I want to spend time with you. I have to go to the bar at four, but we have until then. Is that okay?”

I jump to my feet. “And if it’s not?”

“Then I’ll have to ask a different question.” A note of sorrow crosses his eyes, but his expression is neutral and focused on me.

It’s hard to concentrate with him so naked. “Let’s start with the bath.”

With a grin that makes me happy to have caused, he returns to the tub, turns off the water, and steps in.

Good lord but every inch of him is mouthwatering. Studying his chest and how his face relaxes when he closes his eyes, I'm mesmerized.

"I don't mind you watching me, but I'd much rather you join me." Those clever lips turn up in a half smile.

One by one, I slip the buttons down the front of my blouse, remove it, and place it on the vanity. When I turn in just my skirt and lace bra, his bright blue eyes are focused on me. His obvious passion bolsters my courage and I unhook my bra, unzip my skirt, and place them with my blouse. Heart in my throat, I pad toward him.

It's like he knows all of my insecurities as he holds out his hand to invite me in.

Carefully, with his help, I step into the warm water and sink down between his legs. A soft sigh escapes as I let the water soothe all the sore muscles from a night of sex after a long time without.

"This feels perfect." He kisses me behind my ear and wraps his arms around me. One strong hand snugs under my breasts while the other cups my abdomen. "You feel perfect."

"I'm not." I let my head fall back and lean so he has better access. As he kisses along my neck, my body tightens with need.

He tweaks my nipple, then caresses and pinches.

My pussy pulses with desire, and I push back to feel his cock rock hard and tucked between my ass cheeks.

That growl I've come to crave rumbles in his chest, and he slides his hand between my legs, pressing two fingers between my folds. "Even in the water, I feel how wet you are. You drive me insane, Samantha."

My hips take on a mind of their own, grinding back against his cock and forward against his fingers. It's so good I'm crying his name, and water sloshes over the side of the tub.

“Logan.” There’s more to say, but his name is all I can manage.

Sucking my earlobe into his mouth, he rubs faster against my clit and then presses those fingers inside me. “I could watch you come every day for the rest of my life, sweetheart.”

Like the words hold a direct line to my pleasure, I erupt, crying out to deities and Logan with equal fervor. Pleasure rolls over me, and Logan holds me close, whispering loving words into my ear about how beautiful and perfect I am.

CHAPTER SIX



LOGAN

I may have scared her off with all my soft promises, but I can't help telling her every word going through my head. I need more Samantha. I need all of her.

Soaping the washcloth, I hold my tongue while washing her gently, reverently. Once I'm clean too, I wrap a towel around myself and help her from the tub. Then I dry her.

"You know, I can do all these things for myself." Smiling, she makes no move to take over the drying process.

"I know." I finish gently between her legs, drop to my knees, and lick a line along her slit.

Gasping, she widens her stance.

"But I like taking care of you when you'll let me." I lick again. "I need more than standing, Samantha. Can I take you to bed?"

"God yes."

My cock is so hard it aches, but I need to taste more of her. I lift her, and she wraps those shapely legs around me. In my bedroom, I lower her to the bed and press her thighs wide with my shoulders. I could live happily on just Samantha. I suck, lick, and nibble until she's writhing on the mattress.

Hand in my hair, she grips harder as her pleasure mounts.

I slip two fingers deep inside her and revel in her orgasm pulsing and the long cry spilling from that beautiful mouth.

"I. You. Jeez." She shakes with the last of her pleasure.

I pull a condom from the nightstand and quickly roll it on. On my elbows, I wait at the entrance to heaven for her to open her eyes. "Samantha?"

Bright hazel eyes look up at me. She smiles and wraps her legs around mine, pulling me inside her.

I fill her in one slow press. My body has been in a constant state of arousal all night and morning. Between the feel of her ass cheeks in the tub and the sweet taste of her, it's not going to take long. Moving in and out of her, I love all the little noises she makes. Nothing and no one could ever feel this perfect.

The familiar tingle starts at the base of my spine far too soon. "Sweetheart, you feel so good, I'm going to come."

She reaches between us and rubs her clit, crying out as her body tightens and pulses around me.

If her touching herself wasn't erotic enough, her pussy sucks the last of my control, and my orgasm crashes through me.

On gasping breaths, she says, "That was really good."

Understatement of the year. I press kisses to her lips and cheeks. "You're spectacular."

Her eyes cloud. "I never was before."



Once I lend her some sweats and a T-shirt that my sister Grace left the last time she visited, I take her to her car then follow her home. She changes, and we go for a walk in the park. It's the greatest day, and I wish I could get out of work, but it's my bar, and I need to be there.

I wait all night for her to show up or call but she doesn't.

On Sunday, I'm kicking myself for not getting her number. I gave her mine, but I didn't want to seem too pushy, and she didn't offer hers.

By the end of the week, I'm losing my mind. Still, she always comes with her friends on Friday, and I'm excited to see her.

When happy hour comes and goes without any sign of Samantha, I'm heartbroken and it's ridiculous. She doesn't owe me anything. It was one date. Maybe last weekend didn't

mean anything to her. It's possible I'm alone in how I feel. I can't blame her for that.

The Bent Frame is closed on Mondays, and after barely sleeping last night, I put on jeans and a button-down, drop my truck at work, and walk over to the university. My first stop is the English department's offices. I pass a trio of girls who giggle and whisper as they skirt around me. Every door looks the same, but I read the nameplates and find *Professor Samantha Day*.

I knock, but there's no answer.

Not sure where to go next, I think about which side of campus a literature class might be on.

"She's in class for another hour." Jill Montrose says from about twenty feet away. She's standing with one foot in an open doorway and her hand on her hip. There's no mistaking the disapproval in her narrowed eyes and pursed lips.

"Thank you. Can you tell me where she's lecturing now?"

"Patton Hall. How did you get in here?" She's wearing clunky heels that sound loudly on the linoleum floor.

I shrug. "I'm an alumnus."

"And you majored in beer and snacks?" She stops a few feet away.

I get it. It's not that Jill doesn't like me. She's protecting her friend from a rough-around-the-edges bar owner. I also get that Jill is a snob, and I don't like it. "Business and economics actually, but I did minor in beer. Unofficially, of course."

Her expression softens. "Sam is a nice woman."

"I know."

"You're not good enough for her." Fists on her hips, she cocks her head, ready for a fight.

"Probably not, but I like her enough to have waited all week for her to call, and then all Friday night for the three of you to show up. When that didn't happen, I'm making a fool of myself by chasing her down at her work." There's no reason

to make my case to Professor Montrose, but maybe I'm trying to convince myself as well.

"She's in auditorium one," she says with a sigh.

"Thank you." I turn to head back the way I came.

"Don't break her heart," Jill calls after me.

I look back. "It's more likely she'll break mine."

That earns me a smile from the serious professor of European history.

Stepping into the lecture hall is like going back in time. I slip through the door at the top of the stadium-like room and sit in the back row.

The class is remarkably full, but most of the students are seated closer to the lectern where Samantha reads from a book I'm not familiar with.

It sounds like a letter about unrequited love, but what do I know of such things?

If seeing her wasn't enough to soothe my soul, her words send a riot to my heart. I've become a fool.

She reads, *"I offer myself to you again with a heart even more your own than when you almost broke it, eight years and a half ago. You do believe that there is true attachment and constancy among men. Believe it to be most fervent, most undeviating, in F. W.*

"I must go, uncertain of my fate; but I shall return hither, or follow your party, as soon as possible. A word, a look, will be enough to decide whether I enter your father's house this evening or never."

Closing the book, she looks directly at me, as if she knew I was there. An instant later, she scans the students sitting in rapt silence. "So, what do you think of Jane Austen's Captain Wentworth? Is he the kind of man who should be trusted? Has he proved himself with this declaration?"

The class erupts in a passionate discussion on the subject of love in literature and how it differs from reality and love in

nineteenth-century England and love in modern-day Texas.

Samantha lets them chatter, reels them in, lets them debate, then reels them in again.

Half an hour later, she gives out an assignment to break down the letter and end of *Persuasion* before dismissing the class.

Once we're alone, she gathers her papers and books. "What did you think?"

I walk slowly down the steps toward her. "That you're a very good teacher."

"Why?" Her eyes are full of passion when she meets my stare.

I press my hands to the table where she's fussing to put all her things in a briefcase. "You had this entire class fully focused on a book written two hundred years ago and then passionately debating the content. I'd say that's pretty impressive."

She shrugs. "What are you doing here?"

"You didn't call or come to The Bent Frame. Did I do something wrong, Samantha?" When she rounds the table, I step in front of her and take her briefcase. It weighs about thirty pounds. "I guess literature is heavy."

Her smile makes me feel like coming here was a good idea. "Very heavy. Why didn't you take my not calling as a sign that I didn't want to see you again?"

And all my hopes are dashed just as quickly. "Is that the case, or are you just a little shy?"

Stepping around me, she makes no attempt to take her briefcase back. She heads up the steps to the door.

I follow like a sherpa and walk alongside her across campus.

Students call out to her and wave.

She seems to know them all and asks them about assignments or how a sick parent is doing. We reach her car,

and she unlocks it. Taking the briefcase from me, she looks me in the eyes. “I am shy. What I do as a professor is my way of combating that part of me. But...”

“But I’m not a student in a lecture hall,” I finish for her.

“No. You’re not.” She puts the bag in the backseat and leans on the closed car door.

Keeping some space between us is more difficult than you’d think. I want to drag her into my arms and kiss her worries away. “Can I take you out tonight?”

“Why are you so determined, Logan? Why not let you and me be a one-night stand and leave it at that?” Her cheeks heat, and she looks at her shoes.

“If you tell me that’s what you want, I will.” My gut clenches with the fear that’s exactly what she wants.

“Jill thinks you were a crazy fling and a huge mistake. Deon thinks I should ride this craziness out for a few months before I regain my senses.” She kicks a pebble with her black pumps.

I reach forward and take her hand. “It was Jill who told me where to find you. But, what do you think, Samantha? Do you think you’re out of your senses to date me?”

“Date, no—” She stops as if there was more to say.

“What? If you tell me I’m just some dumb bar owner who has no business coveting a professor of literature and I should know my place, I’ll back off.” This is by far the hardest I’ve ever worked for a second date.

“I don’t think that.” She grips my hand tighter and looks me in the eyes. “I don’t think that.”

“Why didn’t you call or come by on Friday night?” I’m holding my breath.

“I like you, and I’m kind of terrified by how much.” Again, her gaze falls to her feet.

It would be totally inappropriate to jump for joy, but that’s how I feel. “And?”

“And it’s safer to avoid you than to risk my heart.” Her voice is tight, as if it’s torture to express these thoughts.

I step closer but keep a few inches of daylight between us since we’re still on campus. “I’m happy to hear that it’s not my heart alone at risk here.”

CHAPTER SEVEN



SAMANTHA

“Your heart?” Did I hear him wrong?

He brushes my hair behind my ear. “I know it seems crazy, but I’ve never been so attracted to anyone. When I think of not seeing you again, I’m devastated.”

“Devastated?” Despite all my degrees and spectacular command of English, all I can seem to do is repeat what he says.

“Do you have another class today?” He runs his knuckles along my cheek.

Automatically, I lean in to the touch. “That was my last class.”

His smile is my kryptonite. “How about if I make you some mac-and-cheese bites and whatever else you want over at The Bent Frame?”

“It’s not open on Mondays.”

“I know the owner.” His smile fades, and he threads his fingers through my hair. “Unless you really don’t want to see if whatever is happening between us is real. You have to tell me, Samantha. I’m all in, so if you have too many doubts, tell me now, and I’ll back off.”

All my life I’ve heard people talk about deeply emotional moments where they said their heart was about to explode or the top of their head blew off. I’ve always thought it was stupid, but now I know what they mean. My head and my heart are so full of fear and hope, I feel as if I’m tied to two trains going in opposite directions.

“I have doubts, Logan. Even knowing that all men don’t leave, I can’t get the image of my father walking out the door out of my head.” I hold up my hand to stop whatever he’s about to say. If I don’t get this out now, I’ll never say it. “I’ve never felt this way. Before a year ago, I’d never wanted to be

near someone the way I did with you. The only reason we came to your bar every Friday and never sampled other spots is that I'd waited all week to catch a glimpse of you, and there was no way I was giving that up. I'm not sure relationships can last, but if I'm going to get my heart broken, I'd rather it be by you than anyone else."

That might be the most I've ever said in one breath without a group of students in front of me. I have to draw a long one to recover.

Logan's deep-blue eyes are bright and smiling. "That was the best speech I've ever heard. If you're going to hang around until I break your heart, then you may as well marry me now, Samantha Day. I'm never going to hurt you. My parents have been married for thirty-six years. They're still silly in love. I'll bring you to New Jersey so you can see what that looks like."

"You want me to meet your parents?" I'm dying to kiss him, but it can't be here in the university parking lot.

"Them and my siblings and cousins and friends. They're going to love you as much as I do." He freezes.

"You love me?" He didn't mean it, right? It was a slip of the tongue. It sure did sound good, though.

He presses his forehead to mine. "I wasn't going to tell you today for fear it would scare you away."

"It doesn't scare you?" My heart may beat right out of my chest.

"Terrifies me." He presses a light kiss to my nose. "Can we go somewhere else and discuss this?"

Nodding, I disengage myself from between him and my car. I open my door and get in, then wait for him to round the front and sit beside me. Once we're moving, I say. "Why do something that terrifies you?" I wind through Austin to the back lot behind The Bent Frame.

Staring from across the car, he smiles, and it's a little sad. "Because not doing it or risking it, means living without you, and I don't think I can do that if there's the slightest possibility you might love me back."

“My sisters would tell me to go for it. My mother would say to watch my back. My heart says jump in with both feet, while my head says to run as far and as fast as I can.” That may have been a bit too much honesty.

“I’ll wait for you, Samantha. Tell me there’s hope, but you need space, and I’ll wait as long as you need me to.” The joy is gone from his handsome face, but he’s earnest.

“Why would you do that?” I get out of the car and walk a few feet away. There’s nothing much to see but the back of another business, but I need some space. Rubbing my arms, I feel like all the blood has drained out of me. “You can’t wait forever.”

“I love you. I’ll wait if that’s what you need,” he says softly from somewhere near the car.

I shake my head and think of all the arguments I should give him for why he shouldn’t want me. It’s too many things to sort out. I’m not a good choice for a love interest. No one is going to put me in a movie because I’m too terrified of love. Still, when he says it, it sounds wonderful.

His big warm hands run from my elbows to my shoulders in a gentle caress. “I’m not saying waiting is my first choice, mind you. I’d like to date, make love, and find out everything about you, and I’d like for all of that to start now.”

“Okay.” One word, but it feels as if fifty pounds lifts from my back. “Let’s do all those things, Logan.”

Gripping my arms tighter, he turns me to face him. “Are you serious?”

I nod because my throat is so clogged with emotions.

Threading his fingers through my hair, he tips my head and lowers his mouth to mine. It’s a whisper of a kiss, but it sears me from head to toe. His growl is deep and low inside him. “This is the happiest I’ve ever been in my life.” It sounds like he’s talking to himself.

“Is it?” I rest my hands on his broad shoulders. “This is the most terrified I’ve ever been, but I’m pretty sure there’s happiness wrapped in there too.” I giggle.

“I’m going to show you that you have nothing to fear, sweetheart. Give me time, and if you can love me, then give me a lifetime.” He kisses my forehead and holds me tight, as if I might vanish into thin air.

“I already love you. You’re the kindest, most beautiful man I’ve ever known. How could I not love you?” My breath comes out shaky, but the words are solid.

Before I can say anything more, his mouth covers mine. I open for him and our tongues swirl together. His cock is thick and hard between us, and even through all our clothes, desire pulses through me.

Breaking the kiss far too soon, he dots tiny kisses along my cheek, chin, nose, and eyelids. “Samantha, I’m trying really hard not to drag you inside and make love to you on the bar. Can I take you home?”

“Whose home?” I lick a line up the side of his neck and nip his earlobe. My body throbs with a need that borders on painful.

“Are there condoms at your place?” He cups my breast through my blouse and bra, pinching my nipple and sending a rocket of desire between my legs.

I shake my head.

“Then my place. I’d love to make babies with you, but maybe not today.” Holding my hand, he draws me back to my car and opens the driver’s door.

Getting in, I process his wanting to make babies. I never expected to find anyone I wanted to stay with long enough to have children. Now the idea sounds wonderful. Many women want children, but until this moment, I never considered it an option for me. Once he’s in the car, we drive in comfortable silence to his condo.

As soon as we step inside, I say, “I think we’d make very pretty babies.” Where the hell did that come from?

There’s that growl again. Lifting me over his shoulder, he storms up the steps. “You can’t say things like that and expect a man not to go Neanderthal.”

I squeal and laugh. “Maybe I like cavemen.”

As soon as we’re in his bedroom, he lowers me to my feet. My black blouse has a zipper down the back, so I turn for his help.

Slowly, he lowers the zipper then finds the one at the back of my skirt, and unhooks my bra. His rough fingers trace a line inside my clothes, and my skin vibrates with need. “You’re so beautiful.”

When he says it, it sounds true. I step out of my pumps and push all the clothes down my shoulders and hips until they’re in a heap at my feet. I leave them behind, and in just a tiny pair of white lace underwear, face him. “I think you’re beautiful.”

He’s out of his jeans and golf shirt in a few seconds. “You know, if this is too fast, I’ll wait. I’ll go in the bathroom and jerk off, but I’ll wait for you.”

That’s one of the nicest things anyone’s ever offered to do for me. My pussy pulses with need, and my panties are soaked. I take his hand and press it between my legs so he can feel how much I want him. “I don’t want to wait. The idea of you jerking off is very hot, but I think I’d rather help you with that.” I take him in my hand and work up and down his cock while he rubs me through the lace. My knees buckle.

Logan scoops me up and lays me on the bed. “I need to taste you.”

Sitting up, I scoot to the edge of the mattress and grip his shaft. “Me first.” Before he can protest, I lower my mouth over him and suck him deep. The bead of precum is salty and speaks of pleasure to come. I love his size and the taste of him. I let him hit the back of my throat before I release him and suck him in again.

“Samantha. That’s so fucking good.” He fists my hair but lets me move freely.

I love the power of being in control as much as I liked him taking me last time. I suck hard, then soft, and a moan rumbles up from inside me. Cupping his balls, I pull him all the way in

and open my throat to take a bit more, then grip the base of his cock and work him with my hand and my mouth.

Stepping back, he pops from my lips. “I want to come deep inside you, and that feels way too good to last.” He eases me to my back, kneels, and puts my thighs over his shoulders.

Teasing me with licks everywhere but where I need him most, he drives me wild.

“Logan.” I’m not sure I like the begging quality in my voice, but it does the trick.

He sucks my clit until I’m riding his face for more and more.

Clutching the bedding, I scream as my orgasm crashes faster than I expect. I’m so sensitive that when he licks up my juices, I have to use my feet to push against his shoulders and inch away. “Jeez.” I roll to my side, clenching my knees together.

The bed dips, and Logan wraps me in his arms from behind. “I love the taste of you.” He kisses my neck. “I love the scent of you.” He kisses my shoulder. “I love everything about you, professor.” He skims his hand along my waist to my hip.

That touch and his lips are enough to renew my arousal. I’d have thought myself satisfied, but I don’t think I’ll ever get enough Logan Lane. Still, it’s hard to believe that he could possibly love me. People don’t fall in love in a few days.

His big hand skims from my knee to my hip while he kisses the back of my neck.

A long sigh pushes from me when he traces a path to the apex of my thighs, and the sigh turns into a moan. Everywhere he touches me fuels unconstrained passion.

Reaching across, he opens the nightstand, and tosses a few condoms on the mattress. His shaft presses at the crack of my ass, and I push back, driving us both crazy. On one of those wonderful growls of his, he lifts my leg at the knee and places my foot behind his legs so I’m wide open. His cock slips along my wetness, and my body pulses with pleasure.

“So wet,” he says. “I love how wet and responsive you are.” His fingers slide over my clit in slow circles.

I gasp. “You make me that way.”

He rolls the condom on and presses his shaft inside me in one slow thrust.

Lifting and lowering my hips is the perfect move to take him deep again and again while he lightly teases my clit. On fire, I can't control my need for more, faster, harder.

Logan grips my hip and sets a pace again before returning his wicked fingers to my needy pussy and taking us both over the edge.

My entire body pulses with a shattering orgasm while he jerks wildly inside me.

Breathing hard, I collapse.

As if I might break, he eases my legs together and pushes off the bed.

Satisfied, I doze until I feel him climb back onto the mattress. He lifts me so he can put me under the covers, then wraps his arms around me and kisses the back of my ear. “I love you, Samantha.”

EPILOGUE



LOGAN

Spring break is one of my busiest times of the year at the bar, and for the first time in all the years I've owned The Bent Frame, I'm leaving my manager in charge for the week. I should be nervous, but as I pull up to the university's faculty parking, I've never felt better.

It might be because Samantha is striding toward her car in black heels, a cream skirt, and a black blouse. Every move is a kind of poetry, and I'm uncomfortably hard and wishing we had time before our flight to do something about that discomfort.

Next to her car, I step out, adjust my shaft, and grin as she wraps her arms around my neck. "How was your day?"

"Long." She laughs. "But only because I'm nervous about going to New Jersey."

I brush her hair back from her face and make her look into my eyes. "You have nothing to be nervous about. We're going to visit your sisters too, and I'm not nervous."

"That's because you've already talked to them on the phone, and they love you. I'm going into Roseville and the gigantic Lane clan blind. I'm just some girl you're bringing home. They barely know anything about me." She draws a long breath that presses her tits against my chest deliciously.

"Not true. My family knows all about you, and they're excited to meet you. Besides, you're not 'some girl.'" I was going to wait, but I can tell the time is right. Never wanting to see her so worried, I pull the ring box from my pocket but keep it covered.

She bites her bottom lip. "I know they're nice, and I know you don't bring women home much, but still."

"Samantha, I never bring women home. I'm bringing you to meet my family because I love you, and I want them to have

the opportunity to love you too.” I drop to a knee. “Will you marry me?”

Eyes as wide as saucers, she opens and closes her mouth several times. “I. What?”

On the curb twenty feet away, a small group of teachers and students have gathered to watch. Deon calls out, “Say yes, Sam, and ask questions later.”

A tear slides down her cheek. “I don’t know what to say.”

I open the ring box. “Say you’ll be my wife and spend a lifetime allowing me to make you happy. I love you, Samantha.”

“I love you too.” She stares at the round-cut diamond, then back at me. “I’ll marry you.”

As I slide the ring on her finger, a cheer goes up at the curb.

Standing, I wrap her in my arms and kiss her hard. “Thank you. I was going to wait until we were in New Jersey, but you need to know you’re not some girl. You’re the only girl, sweetheart.”

There’s no time to say more as we’re surrounded by her colleagues and students. The only thing that ends the congratulations is having a flight to catch.



SAMANTHA

Somehow, wearing Logan's ring while landing in New Jersey made all my nerves evaporate. I called my mother from the airport, and she demanded to speak to Logan. He said yes ma'am and no ma'am half a dozen times before thanking her, giving her a phone number, and handing the phone back to me.

Mom told me she knew I'd be happy with a man like him, and I burst into tears.

I can't wait to surprise the twins when we see them tomorrow. First, we have dinner with Logan's parents.

Beyond the rental car on the way to Roseville, the crowded urban area changes to trees and mountains. Roseville is a lovely old town with colonial-style homes and a large square at the heart of it. People are bundled up in the streets. As a Texas girl, I'm not a fan of the cold, but the coating of snow is pretty. I've only seen snow a few times in my life.

Logan takes my hand. "You okay?"

"Sure. I was thinking it's pretty here." I love that he always wants to touch me. I'm not used to it, but I can't get enough.

"I'm glad you think so. Are you warm enough?" There's concern in his deep voice.

The heat is on in the car, and the seats heat, but I'm actually still a bit chilled. "I'll be fine. Is it much farther?"

"Just a few blocks." He lets go of my hand to navigate the turns and pulls up to a large white colonial with black shutters. "Oh no."

"What?" It's a pretty house with old oaks and pines on the front lawn. Snow covers everything except the neatly shoveled driveway and walkway. There's no sign of people.

"My parents only have two cars, and they keep them both in the garage." He points to the several cars are parked along

the curb and the driveway filled with four cars.

“Are you telling me your siblings are here too?” My heart lodges in my throat.

He turns toward me and takes my hand. “A few of them at least. Just take a deep breath, Samantha. They are going to adore you. Your mom asked for my parents’ phone number, and she must have called them as soon as we hung up. Mom would have called the others, and some of them still live in Roseville.”

A shiver runs up my spine. “What if they don’t like me?”

“Impossible,” he says, then leans in and kisses me.

His lips pressed to mine calms my nerves enough to give him a nod. “Let’s go. If I think about this too long, I’m going to run for the hills.”

With a laugh, he gets out of the car and meets me on the sidewalk.

Before we make it halfway up the driveway, my teeth are chattering. Then, the front door opens, and a chorus of familiar screams splits the air as my sisters, Paulie and Jo, bundled in matching white down coats, run like madwomen toward me.

Logan takes a step back as they both grab me in a group hug, talking at the same time.

I only catch a word here or there.

“Engaged.”

“Happy.”

“Jumped on the train.”

“Lovely family.”

As soon as they’ve both seen my ring, they throw their arms around Logan, and the torrent of words continues.

My sisters are twins, but they’re not at all the same. Jo is voluptuous while Paulie is tall and thin. Both are full of joy and life.

Jo takes my hand. “You have to meet Logan’s parents. They are so nice. I met Paulie at the station, and then they picked us up. Momma thought you’d feel more comfortable if we were here to support you. She knows you get nervous. Did you know Logan has seven brothers and sisters?”

“I know.” I let her drag me up the drive to the open door where a couple in their sixties waits for us to arrive. They’re wearing big grins.

They hurry us out of the cold, and Mr. Lane takes my coat while Mrs. Lane tells me how thrilled she is to meet me. They insist I call them Dawson and Kate, but I don’t know if that’s possible for me. I’ll probably stick with sir and ma’am until I know them a lot better. Maybe someday they’ll be Mom and Dad.

My chest is tight with the love pouring out from the Lanes. His sisters Emma and Sally take me to the kitchen where we put cheese and meat on a platter with crackers. They’re both kind and thoughtful while telling me stories about Logan’s childhood. By the time the hors d’oeuvres are ready, I’m crying with laughter.

Logan walks in. “What are they telling you?”

“Nothing,” Emma lies.

“Everything.” Sally giggles.

Taking my hand, Logan pulls me close and kisses my cheek. “Stay away from these two. Grace is the only one of my sisters that can be trusted.”

“You’re only saying that because she’s in California and not here to tell all your secrets.” Sally laughs harder and carries a tray out of the kitchen.

Emma raises a brow as she follows with the other platter. “If you stay in here too long, Mom will come in pretending to check on her sausage and peppers,” she warns.

As soon as they’re gone, he wraps his arms around me and kisses me senseless.

I melt against him, and the laughter and chatter from the living room fade away. It's only Logan and me in the world. Warm contentment washes through me.

"I missed you," he says as he ends the kiss.

Tucking my head under his chin, I cuddle into his chest. "I've been right here."

"I'm used to having you to myself," he admits.

Having my sisters here and his family being as wonderful as he claimed makes all my anxiety wash away. "I love you, Logan."

"I love you too."

I sigh and hold him tighter.

"Emma is right. If we stay in here too long, Mom will come looking for us." He kisses the top of my head. "Besides, I can see that the timer on the oven has about thirty seconds left. Are you ready to face the world of Lanes?"

Looking into those bright eyes, I say, "I can face anything if I have you."

"You'll always have me, and we'll always face everything together, sweetheart." He takes my hand and kisses my fingers.

A lifetime of separation anxiety fades away. For the first time in my life, I'm excited about the future because my future will always be with Logan.



Thank you for reading Texas Lane. I hope you enjoyed Samantha and Logan's story as much as I did. If you love the

Lanes and all their big family madness, give [Mountain Lane](#) a try.



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[MOUNTAIN LANE](#)

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DAWSON

My Colorado mountain cabin is supposed to be off the rental market for the holidays. Thanks to a glitch, it's been booked for a girls' week. Only, one of the women made it here before a blizzard grounded their flights. My deadline to finish this book doesn't include time to deal with a rental mistake.

Though, I'll admit Mia is the most stunning mistake I've ever seen. I can't send her away in the middle of a storm. Christmas is coming, and my book is due, but if Mia is the only present under my tree, I want to unwrap her right now. When the snow stops, it'll all be over. That's what I want...isn't it?

MIA

My life is a dumpster fire. I lost everything these last two years, and my emotions are teetering at the edge of an abyss. I finally get a break from my job—which I hate—and a blizzard ruins my much-needed girls' trip. I'm alone in Colorado. Well, not exactly, the sexy and famous author who owns the rental cabin is here. If it wasn't snowing, I'd get lost in a hurry, but we're both stuck, and Mr. Sexy and Famous is looking like a very tasty distraction. All I have to do is open up to some fun. Oh, and not get attached to the best mistake ever to happen...

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Andie Fenichel (A.S. Fenichel) gave up a successful IT career in New York City to follow her husband to Texas and pursue her lifelong dream of being a professional writer. She's never looked back.

Andie adores writing stories filled with love, passion, desire, magic and maybe a little mayhem tossed in for good measure. Books have always been her perfect escape and she still relishes diving into one and staying up all night to finish a good story.

Originally from New York, she grew up in New Jersey, and now lives in Missouri with her real-life hero, her wonderful husband. When not reading or writing she enjoys cooking, travel, history, and puttering in her garden. On the side, she is a master cat wrangler and her fur babies keep her very busy.

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