

A muscular man with a beard and a mountain landscape background. The man is shirtless, showing his well-defined muscles. He has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the left. The background features a mountain range under a sunset sky with shades of orange, pink, and purple. The overall tone is dramatic and romantic.

COURAGE COUNTY
Curves.

Claimed BY THE
MOUNTAIN MAN

MIA BRODY

CLAIMED BY THE MOUNTAIN
MAN

COURAGE COUNTY CURVES

MIA BRODY

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Copyright © 2023 by Mia Brody

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without written permission of the author except for the use of quotations in a book review.

CONTENTS

1. [Hale](#)
 2. [Hale](#)
 3. [Hale](#)
 4. [Ivy](#)
 5. [Hale](#)
 6. [Ivy](#)
 7. [Ivy](#)
 8. [Ivy](#)
 9. [Hale](#)
 10. [Ivy](#)
 11. [Ivy](#)
 12. [Ivy](#)
- [Epilogue](#)

[Read Next: Stalked by the Mountain Man](#)

[Courage County Series](#)

[Get a Free Cowboy Romance](#)

[Like This Story?](#)

[About the Author](#)

HALE

SOMETHING IS WRONG. I'VE BEEN WORKING IN MY OFFICE FOR HOURS WHEN the atmosphere shifts.

I own the only gym in Courage County. It's typically filled with the sound of loud, boisterous laughter and friendly competition. But right now, no basketballs are bouncing on the floors. There are no grunts as my regulars trade punches in the ring.

Instead, there's a new sound. It's a slow, sensual beat. After a moment, I recognize it as a pop song from the radio. It's not exactly the type of music that's played here.

Frowning, I get up from my seat and move across the room to the big window. I flip a switch and watch as the blinds for the tinted window slowly rise. What I see next nearly makes me swallow my tongue.

For the first time in the gym's history, there's a steel pole in the middle of the floor and a woman dancing around it. She's scantily clad and gyrating to the beat. As she works her body, she calls out instructions to her audience which consists of half a dozen other women. Most of them are also scantily clad, but one in particular catches my eye.

Ivy Jones.

She works at a shop in town called Sinful Desserts. It's aptly named given the fact that every time I go in there, my thoughts are filthy images of the things I want to do to her curvy body.

Today, Ivy is wearing a sheer beach cover-up. It does nothing to hide the sea-green swimsuit that clings to her large breasts and keeps her pink pussy from my curious gaze.

Someone in the crowd hoots at the instructor's dance, and I realize that

other men can see her. Other men can see my beautiful virgin. My fingers curl into a fist and my heart pounds as the edges of my vision turn red. They're seeing what's mine.

Sure, Ivy doesn't know she's mine yet, but I can't stand here knowing these fuckers are staring at my treasure. My sweet girl doesn't even notice the way the men in the room are drooling over those delectable curves.

It takes every ounce of my self-control not to run over there and throw her over my shoulder. I'd storm back into my office and bend her over my desk. I'd spank her cute round cheeks until they're pink, and she's squirming for relief. Then I'd slide nine deep into her perfect wet channel. I'd make it so damn good for her.

Since doing that would probably alarm my girl, I settle on pressing the button on my desk and demanding Susie come to me immediately.

Susie is the community manager here at the gym. I found her sleeping in the women's locker room this past winter. I gave her a job and got her set up with an apartment in town.

"What can I do?" Susie asks the moment she's in my office. She's always eager to please.

Normally, I like that about her. But today, I'm barely holding myself together. If Michael looks at Ivy one more time, his balls will end up on his wallet chain.

"Why the hell does it look like my gym has become a fucking strip joint?" I've never been one of those polished CEOs with the perfect words for every occasion.

Susie hesitates. "I mentioned last month that a citizen wanted to use the gym's facilities for a class. This was the class."

That sounds vaguely familiar. Still, it didn't have to be held during lunch hour when every horny, single male in town is in attendance.

"Send them away," I grit out the words as one man nudges Michael and the two of them exchange a hissed conversation and gesture toward Ivy's tits. Those are just for me. No one else should get to appreciate them.

"It's a pole dancing class. They promised they'll keep their clothes on," Susie protests.

"Not them. Get the men out of here. Right now." Before I go and murder all of them for breathing the same air as my girl.

Ivy

I WATCH MACKENZIE TRYING TO DO SOME TYPE OF MOVE IN HER CUTE LITTLE stilettos, but she doesn't execute it properly. Instead, my friend Ginger grabs her upper arm. Somehow, the two of them manage to stay upright, giggling the entire time.

I never thought I'd be taking a pole dancing class, but when Ginger wanted to create one, I showed up to support her. Both Mackenzie and I are here for her. The other women are here to get some exercise in or to impress their husbands.

"It's your turn," Mackenzie says to me. I'm the only one who hasn't tried out these moves. It's not that I'm afraid to. After all, the gym is now filled with only women.

Except for him.

Hale Evans.

He's the owner of this gym. He kicked out all the other men not long after the class started.

But he's still here.

Oh sure, most of the girls don't realize it. That's because the window for his office is tinted.

With anyone else, it would feel creepy. Not with Hale. Maybe because I know without even glancing at the window, that it's me his eyes are on.

He comes into the dessert shop where I work. He always orders a vanilla ice cream cone and tips me an extra twenty. But the look he gives me when he's in the shop makes me feel like there should be scorch marks on the ground. It heats my skin to a thousand degrees and leaves me with damp panties. It's the same way I feel right now.

"I'm good to watch," I say with my face flaming. Hopefully, the girls just think I'm embarrassed and shy.

Only Gabby knows about my crush on Hale. I've never shared it with anyone else because it would be too pathetic to admit out loud.

Hale is this cool entrepreneur who has been featured in all of these business magazines. He's been known as the man with the Midas touch. When he invests, Wall Street sits up and takes notice. When he speaks, the world pauses to listen.

And me, I'm the girl who serves ice cream and has a million craft projects in her apartment.

“You should at least try,” Mackenzie says giving me a subtle gesture that indicates she wants to make Ginger happy.

The reminder is enough to snap me out of my funk. This isn’t about me protecting my pride in front of the hottest guy I know. This is about showing up to support my friend.

“It’s a lot of fun,” Laura adds quietly enough that the rest of the group can’t hear her.

Her husband is blind, but that won’t stop her from showing him her new moves. That’s what she told us earlier with a saucy wink.

Not for the first time, I wish I had someone to come home to. I wish I had someone to steal my blankets at night and leave his things scattered on the nightstand. I wish I had someone to wrap me in his arms when the thunderstorms are loud at night and whisper that I’m safe. As soon as I think these thoughts, another image of Hale comes to my mind. I’ve never been on a date or had a boyfriend. But if I did, I’d want him to be my first.

I glare at Ginger. “If I break my neck, you’re paying my hospital bills.”

Ginger beams at me. “Deal!”

I pull off my beach cover-up and wonder if Hale has binoculars in his office. A naughty part of me hopes that he does. My nipples pebble at the idea. If he’s going to watch, I’ll give him a show.

I run through Ginger’s routine, slowly relaxing to the rhythm of the song. Every move makes me feel empowered as I celebrate my body. I’ve never done something so erotic, and it turns me on to know that Hale is watching every sensual glide of my hips. I put my hands on my thick thighs and flip my long, blonde hair over my shoulder. Dancing for my crush is the hottest thing I’ve ever done, and I hope he’s enjoying the show.

HALE

WITH A GROAN, I LIFT MY HEAD FROM MY DESK AND RUB THE BACK OF MY neck. The gym has been closed for the last two days thanks to the inclement weather and storms.

I could have gone home to my cabin for the week, but my place is deep in the forest. I can't stand the idea of being so far from my beautiful Ivy. It's not that she's likely to call me in an emergency, but I want to be close to her all the same.

I stand from my chair, stretching slowly, and cross the room to my coffee machine. While it brews a cup, I check the emails on my phone. There's one in particular I'm looking for, and as soon as I see it, I grin.

The jeweler has finished my project.

The custom engagement ring I had him designing since the day I met Ivy is now complete. It's the last thing I need to fall into place, so I can begin romancing my girl.

I want to pull out all the stops for my woman. I get the sense that Ivy hasn't been looked after in her life. I can't change that. But I have taken steps to make sure she's always protected and cared for. That's why I bought her apartment building from Old Man Teller.

Everyone in town believes he's still running the place, but it's mine now. I even lowered the rent rates in the building. It was a calculated move, another way of helping out my woman so she doesn't have to work so hard.

Pretty soon, she'll live with me in my cabin if all goes according to plan. But if she's determined to live in town, I've already accounted for that too.

I purchased two prime pieces of real estate right in the heart of town. Both are in residential zoning areas, and they'd be perfect for a home. It

doesn't matter to me where we live as long as I can bring a smile to my woman's face every day.

My phone rings with an incoming call. My heart starts pounding as soon as I see my sister's name. She struggled with a drug addiction in the past.

When she got pregnant over a year ago, I brought her to stay with me in my cabin. I helped her stay clean during her pregnancy. But shortly after she gave birth, she took my nephew and left.

I've tried to reach out a few times, but she never responds. I know she's safe because I have a private investigator check on her once a month.

I answer the call, and I'm instantly greeted by a wailing sound.

"Please," Katie gasps. "Come here, Hale."

We haven't talked in months, and Katie is a grown adult more than capable of dealing with her problems. Still, I shove my feet into my shoes. I promise her I'm on the way. It's what a big brother does. He comes to the rescue when the shit hits the fan.

I push for an answer about what's going on, but she never tells me, eventually hanging up halfway through our conversation.

Twice, I try to call her back. When I can't get through, I start calling my friends on the mountain. Grizz and Ace will watch over the gym for me until I can figure out what's going on. Roman agrees to drive me to the airport in Asheville, so I can catch a flight to Colorado.

I have a valid driver's license. But after my seizure last week, I'm not legally allowed to operate a vehicle for a year. If this weren't an emergency, I wouldn't care about that. At least, I have friends willing to drop everything and come to my aid. I just hope I get to Katie in time.

HOURS LATER, MY PLANE TOUCHES DOWN IN COLORADO. HENRY, AN OLD friend and the family lawyer, greets me with a grim set of his mouth. I don't think the old man has ever smiled once in his life. Not that Katie has given him a reason to. She's caused plenty of drama and heartache for my family. So much so that most of them won't even talk to her.

I know she's made bad choices, and she's manipulative. But some part of me keeps hoping that she's capable of change. I don't look at her and see the grown woman who parties hard. I see the six-year-old girl I gave piggyback

rides to. I see the kid whose ballet recitals I attended because our parents were too busy to show up.

When we get to the location my sister texted me, my jaw clenches. It's a deserted mansion with a bonfire in the front yard. Music blasts from the house, and people are spilling out on the brown lawn. Most of them look high, and the whole place reeks of stale beer and piss.

Henry follows me as I thread through the crowd, searching for my sister.

She's inside, near the speaker system sipping a beer and laughing a little too loudly with the guy next to her. Her hair and makeup are done. She's wearing her designer jeans and a halter top that's about two sizes too small. There's no panic or pain on her face.

As soon as she sees me, she gives a triumphant smile before she quickly hides it. But her reaction is a kick in the stomach. It's a reminder that no matter how much I care, Katie is only in it for one person.

I glance down at the car seat at her feet where my nephew is sleeping. It registers that it's too loud in here for a baby to be sleeping, but the thought quickly flits away. I cross my arms over my chest and glare at my sister. "What is this about?"

A blonde guy nearby, who is swaying on his feet, tells me to be cool.

I ignore him, wondering why I rushed here.

Katie's eyes are clear and not glassy. Although she's lost some of the baby weight, she's still at a healthy size. My gaze goes lower, noting the track marks on her arms. They're old. That doesn't mean anything though. She could be shooting up in a different place.

She scowls at me when she sees me looking for the track marks, trying to discern if she's sober.

"What did you want?" I grind out. She knows better than to call me. We never partied together. I've never been that type of person.

"I've learned something about myself," my sister declares. She's shouting to be heard over the music.

Ollie should have cried or stirred by now, but he doesn't. He's too still, his breathing too shallow.

My heart aches when I see him, the way it always does. For the first few weeks of his life, I was his constant companion. My sister may have given birth to him, but I was the one who looked after him.

I was the one there for the late-night feedings and diaper changes. At the time, I assumed she was dealing with the baby blues. I figured she would

bond with him eventually. But as if she's reading my thoughts, my sister says, "I've realized that I'm not mom material."

"It's a little late for that." My temperature rises, and it has nothing to do with the swell of bodies around me. My nephew deserves better than her.

I've texted her a million times, telling her that I'll hire a nanny to look after the boy. She always waves away the offer. But now, Katie blows out a frustrated breath. "This is your fault. You're the one who convinced me to have him. You said he was a little miracle."

Fuck, fuck. I hope that babies can't understand what's being said around them. I hope that he can't sense his mom's animosity at this moment. The thought that he could feel unwanted cuts deep in my chest.

She continues, oblivious to the way she's carving out my heart, "So I've decided he's yours now."

She nudges the car seat toward me with the toe of her boot.

"What the fuck? You can't give a baby away!" I glance at Henry to back me up, but as usual, his face is impassive. He's paid far too much money to have an opinion on anything that my family does.

She shrugs. "I don't care what you do with him. He's your problem now."

There's no blood in my veins anymore. It's all lava, hot and sticky, threatening to erupt. Despite all the crazy shit she's pulled while she's on drugs, I've always been able to convince myself that it wasn't Katie acting this way. It was a chemical reaction to the medication she'd been putting in her body.

But this is different. She's stone-cold sober, and she's rejecting her son. She turns to walk away, and I grab her arm. I'm desperate to get through to her, to stop her from rejecting him. "This means you're signing over your parental rights to me."

I think the words are going to get through to her. I think they'll make a difference. But the same dead look is in her eyes when she nods. "Let me know when you have the paperwork together."

With those words, she melts into the crowd.

I stare after her for a long moment before I finally realize there's nothing I can do. I can't make her want my nephew. With a deep breath and a silent prayer that I can be what he needs, I unbuckle the car seat. My hands are shaking so I have to try it twice. Then I'm pulling little Ollie into my arms. "Hey, buddy. It looks like it's you and me again."

HALE

“SO, YOU’VE SEEN MY OFFICE AND THE GYM. NOW, THIS IS THE LIBRARY,” I tell Ollie as we stand outside. He spent a month here after he was born, and we were constantly together. But I took that month off and stayed in the cabin.

The entire time she was here, Katie never ventured into town. She crashed at my home and let me wait on her hand and foot. Any time I tried to encourage her to go out and make friends or find a hobby to fill her time, she’d insist that she didn’t feel well and claim the stress wasn’t good for the baby.

Despite Katie’s behavior, the month that Ollie was born was the happiest one of my life. I’ve always loved this little boy. It amazes me that I have him back in my life. I wish the circumstances were different. I wish Katie could be a mom to him, but since she won’t be, he has me. I’ll always be the one in his corner.

Now, I wander through the stacks of books, talking to Ollie quietly before we come to the children’s section. I’ve never been to this part of the library before. The wooden train in the corner looks sturdy and has a bench seat designed so that parents and kids can read together. I settle there with Ollie in my arms.

I spent a week in Colorado, with Henry, working out the details of my new parental rights. When you have access to millions, it’s easy to send things through the system and get a judge to sign off on them. Ollie officially became mine yesterday.

I talked several times with Katie over the past week. I begged for her to accept her son. But in the end, she insisted she was done with him.

Somewhere during our conversations, she let it slip that she's been keeping Ollie on antihistamines. She claims it's because he has terrible allergies. I think she was keeping him asleep so that she could party whenever she wanted.

I've weaned him off the meds, but the poor guy is having a tough time of it. His nose constantly runs, and he doesn't sleep for very long. Every time I look at him, he frowns at me. I'm pretty sure he blames me for how miserable he's feeling.

The only time he seems to relax is when I'm walking around and talking to him, so I spent the day hiking my mountain. Eventually, I walked around town and showed him the sights. He'll grow up here with me, so he should know what his home looks like.

Ollie starts to fuss because I've gone quiet.

"The thing about it is when the world stops making sense, you go back to the last place it did. For me, that place has always been the library." I put my hand on his back. "But you won't have to worry about that. You won't have to hide in the library from the bullies like I did."

No, my little Ollie will never be some boarding school kid who's teased because he has seizures. He will be safe and protected. He'll have a father in his corner that he can count on.

Ollie starts to whine again, and I rock forward. I'm learning that motion soothes his little body, and I'll do anything to keep him happy. "I don't want you to take this the wrong way because I'm glad you're here. I think...you've always been meant to be mine. But you definitely weren't in the plan. I'm not sure what to make of the plan anymore."

Up until this past week, I planned to ask out Ivy and make her fall madly in love with me. Then I'd put a ring on her finger and give her all the babies she could ever want. I'm not so sure how she'll feel about me now. Ollie and I are a package deal. I'm not like my sister. I won't ever turn my back on the boy.

As I'm thinking about Ivy, I hear a squeal, and a little blonde girl in the children's section rushes toward Ivy. My breath catches in my throat when I see my woman. It's been a week, but it feels like it's been six months since I've seen her dazzling smile.

Ace and Grizz met up with me today when I showed Ollie around the gym. Grizz told me that Ivy was fired from her job at the dessert shop. She's now unemployed, which is another problem I need to solve. I'm not sure how

to do that. If I had my way, I'd marry Ivy on the spot and take care of her for the rest of our lives. I'm not sure that my stubborn, independent woman would go for that.

Ivy drops to her knees to talk with a little girl and doesn't even mind it when a boy shoves a dinosaur book at her. She's patient and kind with both of them. I know that she reads to the kids every week at the library, but I didn't know what day.

From our place on the little wooden train, Ivy can't see me or Ollie. It gives me the chance to observe her, and I relish the opportunity. I've never seen her in action with one of the story hours.

She settles with the children on a collection of beanbag chairs and flips open a book about a fire-breathing dragon. The little boy sits in her lap, and she smiles at him, ruffling his hair. Several more kids crowd around her, drawn to her soothing voice.

She takes her time with the story, making it come alive. She acts out the parts, giving voices to all of the characters and inviting the children to ask questions and participate. It's less of a story hour and more like a theater production. By the time she's done, I know one thing for certain: there's no one sweeter in all of Courage County. No one that I would trust with Ollie the way I trust her. An idea forms in my head and the more I think about it, the more I know it's the perfect solution.

Ivy

READING BOOKS TO THE KIDS AT THE LIBRARY IS THE HIGHLIGHT OF MY WEEK. After the week I've had, it was exactly what I needed. Being around kids reminds me that there's still good in the world.

There are still a million reasons to smile even if I did get fired. Mr. Wilson and his wife want to move away to spend more time with their grandkids. They're closing Sinful Desserts though they did give me two weeks' severance pay.

The problem is it's been hard to find a job given the time of year. Most folks are focused on their ranches and harvesting the crops right now.

I have a little bit in savings. I can make it for a month, but not for much

longer than that. I don't know where I'll go if I have to leave this little town. I've never had a permanent home, other than the hospitals are frequented during treatment when I was a kid. It's hard to get adopted when you're considered medically fragile.

Now that I'm in remission. There's no reason to suspect that I won't live a long life, but I'm still alone. The thought makes my heart ache. I rub my chest absently as I walk into my apartment and flop down on my couch.

Morton, my chubby cat who always looks like he's frowning, hops onto the couch next to me. He meows pitifully, and I scratch under his chin. "Keep your head up. This is a temporary bump in the road."

Once Morton is contentedly purring, I pick up my latest knitting project. If there's one thing I've learned in life, it's to stay in motion when it feels like everything is falling apart. It feels like everything's falling apart these days.

I give my kitty a bright smile when he bats at my yarn. "Don't worry about us. I'll find a job. It'll be a good one too. We'll celebrate with new catnip toys. And tuna. Extra tuna for both of us."

There's a knock at my door, and I rush to open it. Gabby should be home from her honeymoon soon, and I can't wait to catch up with her. But it's not Gabby standing on the other side of my door.

It's Hale.

With a baby.

IVY

I THOUGHT THE GRUMPY MOUNTAIN MAN WAS ATTRACTIVE BEFORE, BUT IT'S nothing compared to how my ovaries respond when I see him clutching a small, wriggling bundle. Babies and kids are my favorite thing. I've known since I was sixteen that I want to be a mom one day. It's why I started working in childcare after I turned eighteen.

"I need a minute," Hale grunts.

I think those are the most words he's ever said to me at once. I don't know what to do with all his words or why he's here. Sure, I have a crush on the giant, scowling gym owner. But after my dance last week, he didn't seek me out. I accepted that maybe this infatuation with Hale is one-sided. After all, we've never even seen each other outside the dessert shop or that one class.

I open the door wider and gesture for him to come in. The moment he's inside, I regret it. My apartment is in a continual state of chaos thanks to all of my craft projects. There's a half-finished felt monkey started on the scratched-up coffee table and the sweater I'm knitting is casually thrown on the back of the garage sale armchair. The ball of yarn I'm using is half dismantled thanks to Morton. He might be a senior cat, but he's a playful kitten at heart.

"I'm kind of in the middle of..." I let my voice trail off as I gather some laundry from the chair and plop it onto the floor. I pat the armchair, indicating where he should sit. It's the one piece of furniture in my apartment that doesn't have springs that will gouge out his spleen.

I put my hands on my hips, suddenly wondering why I'm making excuses for the state of my apartment. That's pretty much the least important thing

right now. “Why are you here? And since when do you have a kid?”

“Since this week. He’s my nephew,” Hale says as if that explains everything.

“So, you’re babysitting,” I clarify, the tightness in my chest easing. Some of the jealousy that’s been eating me alive since I first saw him with the baby eases. He doesn’t have another woman. He hasn’t touched and kissed and made love to someone else.

“I’m his guardian now,” he blurts out.

It takes a moment for his words to register. When they do, sorrow rushes over me. I don’t apologize to him though. Out of all the people in the world, I understand people saying sorry doesn’t fix anything.

“His mom didn’t want him.” His voice cracks, and he clears his throat. “Doesn’t matter. He has me now.”

There’s steel in his voice, and I don’t doubt that Hale will be an amazing father. If he applies even a tenth of the determination that’s allowed him to build a successful business, then his nephew is in great hands.

He pulls the baby from the carrier on his chest and turns him toward me.

The boy gives me an adorable frown. He has the thickest eyebrows I’ve ever seen on a child, and I smile at him.

“This is Ollie,” Hale introduces.

Ollie reaches for me instantly, and my heart squeezes in my chest. Because of the treatments, I may never have children of my own. It’s one of those situations where I won’t know until I know. There’s a chance I could get pregnant but a chance I may never. Sometimes, I feel lucky to have made it through. Other times, I can’t help but feel like I got cheated by life.

I glance at Hale who gives me the slightest nod, so I pick up Ollie and pull him against my chest. He has the sweet smell only a baby does. “Hey there, Ollie. I’m Ivy, and you’re a handsome little man.”

He opens his mouth. His scowl seems to grow even more pronounced. He really is related to Hale.

“I want you to be his nanny.” Hale’s words startle me. I never expected him to show up on my doorstep today, much less to declare that he wants me as his nephew’s nanny. Before I can answer, Hale adds, “It pays well, and you’ll get full benefits plus free lodging with me.”

Hale must know about my previous experience in childcare. That would explain why he’s showed up here to offer me a job. Still, I haven’t done this before and I want to be honest with him about that. “I’ve never been a

nanny.”

“You have plenty of experience with kids,” he points out. “I can’t run my gym and keep up with the little tyke. There are too many hazards at my work.”

What he’s saying makes sense. A gym isn’t exactly a great place for a baby to be, and it’s not like I don’t need the job.

Ollie reaches for a handful of my hair and wraps it around his pudgy fist. He gives a sharp tug.

I make a funny face at him to distract him as I carefully remove his hand from my hair. I baby-talk to him until he’s giggling, relieved when I see his smile. He’s not nearly as grumpy as he pretends to be. Maybe Hale is the same way.

I glance up to find he’s watching both of us, and his eyes have gone darker than usual. Did they go that dark when he was watching me on the pole? Did he leave the gym that day with his body thrumming with sexual awareness the same way I did?

He shifts in his chair, the old furniture creaking under the weight of his big frame. “Say you’ll do it.”

“I’m keeping my apartment. I don’t want to be a live-in nanny,” I tell him, mainly because I’m not so sure about the idea of staying under Hale’s roof. I’m not sure it’ll be good for my self-control.

He scowls at me. “That part is non-negotiable.”

I start to pass Ollie back to him. “Well, good luck then.”

Ollie’s expression falls at the same time that Hale’s frown deepens. “I have medical problems. It would be in Ollie’s best interest if I had another adult present who could care for him.”

I want to ask about what type of health issues, but I can tell it took a lot for him to admit that. Given my past, I understand how people look at you differently once they know of your medical struggles. That’s why I work to keep my voice neutral. “Are you dying?”

His lip twitches but he doesn’t smile. “I said medical conditions, not terminal illness. You’d be doing me a favor on such short notice. There’s no one I would trust more.”

Some part of me is delighted that he trusts me with his little nephew. I blow out a breath and sigh. “Only for a little while then we’ll figure something else out.”

Hale nods, but something in his gaze tells me that he’s not going to let me

go that easily. He stands. “What needs to go?”

I blink at his question, unsure of what he means. “Go?”

“With us, back to my place.” He’s scanning the room with his hands on his hips. I can only imagine what it looks like to him. He’s so orderly and organized. He never has a hair out of place and his beard is always impeccably trimmed.

“You want me to move in right now? You can’t be serious.” This man is making me crazy. Up until today, he’s never had more than a word to grunt to me. Now we’re about to be living together.

Ollie snuffles like he might start crying, and I bounce him in my arms.

“He’s probably hungry again. Do you have a place where I can heat his bottle?”

I point to the kitchen, and Hale takes the diaper bag in there. He fumbles with it, pausing to read the formula can. It’s obvious he doesn’t know what he’s doing, and part of me feels for him. He isn’t like other dads. He hasn’t had months to prepare for this. He was suddenly thrust into the role of single dad without warning.

“Here.” I pass Ollie back to him and reach for the supplies. Within a minute, I have a warm bottle ready for the baby. I take him back in my arms and settle him with it, smiling down at his little face. Those chubby cheeks and bright blue eyes completely melt my heart.

“I need time to pack up,” I tell Hale. I can’t believe I’m giving in so easily. But there’s something about Ollie. I feel a fierce and overwhelming urge to protect him, to care for him.

Hale blows out a breath. “I get it. It’s just...” He takes a seat in the armchair and scrubs a hand through his hair. “I’ve never had a baby, and I don’t know what to do.”

I cross the room to put a hand on his shoulder. He sounds so defeated, and I can’t begin to imagine how overwhelming this must all be for him. “I know. It’s OK. Let me pack up.”

HALE

IT'S NOT MY PROUDEST MOMENT, PRETENDING TO BE COMPLETELY incompetent when it comes to caring for Ollie. After all, I spent the first four weeks of his life being his primary caregiver. But if acting like a clueless, overwhelmed father is what it takes to get my new nanny to agree to move in with me, then I'll play the part.

It takes less than two hours to pack up Ivy's entire apartment. It hurts my heart to see she has so few things, and it also makes me more certain that I'm doing the right thing by taking her to my cabin. When she lives with me, I can surround her with beautiful things. I can give her the best of the world and provide for her every need. She and Ollie are my reason for living, and I'll spend my days spoiling both of them.

Ivy is quiet as she drives up the mountain to my place. I put my car seat carrier in the back. When she offered to let me drive, I declined without giving her a reason. She didn't press me and for that, I'm grateful. I'm not embarrassed by my seizures. I'm no longer the lanky kid who got made fun of for his weird expressions and strange movements. Still, I'm not ready to explain it to Ivy.

I gesture to the dirt road in front of us. "Turn here."

She follows the winding path up the mountain to my cabin. When she parks in the driveway, she sighs at the sight of my front porch. Wicker furniture with blue floral cushions isn't my thing. Nor are the throw pillows in pale pink and the matching rug. Planters of various sizes with flowers in them are set up on the coffee table. If the guys saw my porch these days, they'd laugh. But I don't care about what they think. There's only one person that I'm interested in impressing.

“I’ve never seen anything like it. This feels like something you could’ve plucked straight from my head.” As soon as she says the words, she blushes. The thing about it is that I did pluck it from her head.

I’ve been involved in the tech industry since I was young. As the geeky outsider at a prestigious boarding school, I spent my time locked away in the library where I learned computer programming.

Those skills paid off as I learned how to program apps. I was in the right place at the right time because apps were just being launched on mobile devices. By the time I graduated college, I was a self-made millionaire.

My siblings live off their trust funds and constantly kiss up to my parents to get what they want while I’ve built myself a good life here in a small town where I’m treated like a normal person. It’s why I chose to quietly retire and start a gym. Except I’ve been experimenting with artificial intelligence.

I fed my program all of the data I could find about Ivy. It helped me design her ideal engagement ring and showed me exactly how to create the home of her dreams. It’s the project I’ve spent months working on and now, I’m suddenly nervous about her seeing it. “Come on. I’ll show you inside.”

She follows me up the path past blooming mums in oranges and reds. I trained the algorithm to accurately guess her favorite colors and flowers.

I did it by having the bots review her social media posts including every single post she’d liked or commented on for the last five years. All of it was publicly available information. It’s not like I dug through her garbage to figure this stuff out, although I would have if I needed to. There’s nothing I want more than to please my woman.

I show her around the cabin, holding my breath the entire time. The only place I don’t show her is my bedroom. If she saw it, she would know I’m obsessed with her, and I can’t risk that quite yet. I have to make sure she’s completely in love with me.

“If there’s something you don’t like, you can change it,” I tell her once she’s seen the guestroom and the rest of my house. I had my algorithm decide what colors and decorating style would appeal most to her.

Her decorating style is considered French country. She likes soft blues and pinks. Ivy is soft and delicate, floating through rooms when she walks. Her long, blonde hair is in a braid that flows down her back, stopping above her ass.

Everything in me longs to lean over and pull the tie free. I want to see all of her hair and run my fingers through the silky strands. I want to feel it

against my chest as she kisses her way down my body before she wraps her puffy lips around my thick cock.

“Your cabin is beautiful.” She keeps eyeing the bed and running her hands reverently over the pink blankets. She’s always cold, so I searched for the thickest, warmest ones I could find. “Where is Ollie’s bedroom?”

I show her the nursery. It’s filled with boxes of baby furniture that I haven’t even opened yet. I’ve only had Ollie in Courage County for twenty-four hours. I haven’t exactly had time to set up the nursery.

Her gaze softens when she sees the disarray. I can work with that. I hang my head and explain, “There are all these decisions with a new baby. Sometimes, it’s hard to know where to start.”

She puts a hand on my arm, the simple touch sending electricity through me.

I look up at her, and she gives me a bright smile. It nearly blinds me, and I long more than anything to press my lips to hers, to know how soft and pillowy hers are. My cock surges at the thought, and I silently will myself to hold it together. I’m already one step closer to making Ivy mine forever. I have to be patient now.

“I can help you set up the nursery.”

“You have no idea what a lifesaver you are,” I say at the exact moment Ollie snorts in my arms. I glance at the little boy and will him to play along for a little bit longer. If I get my way, he won’t grow up calling Ivy his nanny. He’ll call her his mom.

Ivy

HALE GETS HOTTER WITH EVERY PASSING SECOND. THERE’S SOMETHING ABOUT watching him strip off his plaid button-down to reveal the white T-shirt and tattoos wrapping around his arms. The sight has me mesmerized, and it’s all I can do not to drool like Ollie is doing.

I shake the rattle in front of him and look at the hardwood floors. I note that we’ll need to put down a big area rug, so he has space for tummy time every day.

Ollie is behind on a couple of milestones. Hale explained that to me on

the car ride up the mountain. He's anxious to see Ollie hit them. I reassured him that his nephew would most likely catch up and that most babies grow at their own pace.

Hale's cabin is beautiful, and it's perfectly decorated. A lot of it looks like my dream home that I have saved to my online boards. But as I walked through the home, I quickly noticed that it hadn't been baby-proofed yet. That's something we'll have to work on because Ollie will be crawling eventually.

"I guess we should start with the crib first." Hale rubs the back of his neck, surveying the room filled with boxes of furniture. His raised arm causes his T-shirt to ride up and reveal a brief glimpse of his taut abdomen. His warm, golden skin has me wondering what it would be like to lick my way down his body.

"That sounds good," I squeak out the words from a throat that's too dry. "It looks like you bought him a lot of toys."

The toybox in the corner is overflowing. Most of the toys are still in the packaging. Even if they weren't, I doubt that Ollie could play with everything. It's obvious that Hale is going to be one of those over-the-top dads, and something about the idea makes me want to smile.

Hale shrugs. "I don't have a profile on him yet."

"A profile?" I repeat.

He waves a hand as he produces a pocket knife from his blue jeans. He uses it to open the crib box, explaining as he works, "You know how it is. You keep a profile on the people that are important to you. What they like, what they dislike, what they need. It's all data."

I don't quite know what to say to that. Sometimes when Hale opens his mouth, he completely surprises me. "Do you keep databases on everyone you know?"

"Just the people that are important to me."

He removes the instructions and puts on a pair of black, square glasses that are giving me serious Clark Kent vibes. If only I weren't a sucker for the nerds.

After reading the instructions twice, he carefully removes the pieces from the box. But I can tell by the expression on his face, he's overwhelmed. I don't want to insult him or make him feel bad, so I say softly, "It looks like a two-person job."

We settle Ollie on a pile of blankets. Hale is funny, the way he makes a

little cot for his nephew. I love the way he looks at him, the adoration on his face softens his normally harsh features. Ollie's small body looks so safe and secure whenever he's in Hale's big hands.

"How did you end up moving to Courage County?" Hale asks as we work on the crib.

"I took a job working at a daycare in the next town over. I couldn't find any affordable housing there, so I ended up renting an apartment here in town. When the daycare eventually closed, I was able to find an opening at Sinful Desserts. Kids are my passion, and I want to go to school so I can become a pediatrician." My cheeks burn as I realize I admitted my deepest dream to Hale.

He's a smart entrepreneur who knows how to turn all of his ideas into actionable steps and make millions of dollars. I still struggle to make my car payment. I can't remember the last time that I wasn't eating prepackaged noodles to make it through the end of the month.

He pauses what he's doing and looks up at me. I love those dark glasses and the way they make his brown eyes even bigger. "You would be a great pediatrician."

Hale leans so close and I angle my head toward him. My heart skips a beat as blood rushes to my cheeks. This is the moment when the grumpy mountain man is going to kiss me. But instead, he reaches for the booklet. "Just need the instructions for the bracket."

I manage a shaky laugh, like I'm not humiliated. Yeah, like the hot mountain man was going to kiss me. Clearly, my attraction to Hale all this time has been one-sided.

IVY

“WHAT DO YOU THINK?” HALE ASKS AS HE PUSHES THE CHEST OF DRAWERS into the corner of the room. It’s the final piece of furniture, and we spent the day putting everything together ourselves.

I’ve learned a lot about Hale, and the type of person he is. He’s slow and methodical, someone who prefers to carefully research everything before he makes a move. He watched three instructional videos when he couldn’t find the guide for the changing table.

He’s also endlessly patient, taking plenty of time to stop and chat with Ollie as he works. Granted, it was baby babble on Ollie’s part, but it was still adorable to watch the two of them interact. Hale may not know it yet, but he’s a great father. I hope he’ll see that about himself in time.

“Any thoughts on the work we’ve done?” Hale prompts because I’ve been caught staring at his ass. Again. It’s embarrassing, the number of times he’s caught me checking him out since we started this project.

Hale is a mystery to me in some ways. He’s all tight, corded muscles and yet he seems completely unaware of his sex appeal. He has a brilliant, engineer’s mind and yet he’s humble and modest, acting as if I’m the essential part of the project.

“I think...” I scramble to come up with something that isn’t a sleazy come-on or complaint about my aching back. While I suspect that Hale works out regularly at his gym, I’m not very active. I’m more of a sit-on-the-couch-and-knit-a-stuffed-animal-for-the-children’s-hospital type of person. “The room could use some decor.”

He pulls off his glasses and sets them on the chest before glancing around the room. He frowns at it. “Like a theme?”

“I know we don’t have any data yet, but Ollie doesn’t strike me as a blue-walls kind of guy. I’m thinking something fun and exciting, maybe a circus theme.” I gesture to the walls as I talk, the idea taking shape in my mind.

He glances at Ollie who’s tucked in for the night. “I’ll order take out and grab my laptop. Are you good with burgers from Ernie’s?”

My stomach growls at the suggestion. “No pickles on mine. Is it OK if I wash up while we wait?”

He gives me a distracted nod and reaches for his phone.

I take a quick shower in the bathroom attached to my new bedroom and remind myself twenty times that it’s not a date. It’s dinner while we discuss Ollie’s nursery. But if it’s not a date, then why am I struggling with what to wear?

“He doesn’t think of you like this,” I chide as I finally slip into a pair of plaid shorts. I reach for a sleep tank with modest coverage then realize my port scar is visible. If it were anyone else, I wouldn’t care. My scar is proof that I survived. But it’s not a conversation I’m ready to have with Hale yet, so I opt for a black T-shirt instead.

I leave my blonde hair down and refuse to style it other than adding my favorite coconut hair product. I check my reflection in the mirror and consider makeup. “Stop obsessing.”

When I hear the doorbell chime, I take a deep breath and leave the room.

Hale has already paid for the food and settled on the couch. He pats the spot next to his without looking up.

I gulp. *Relax, he’s just your insanely hot boss that you have a crush on.*

For the life of me, I can’t remember why I thought this would be a good idea. I think my heart was running the show when I agreed to be his nanny. *Think of Ollie.*

Hale finally glances at me and looks away, the tips of his ears turning red. Is he embarrassed by me? Is what I’m wearing wrong? I look down again at my clothes, but they’re not inappropriate.

I take my seat and Hale gestures to the bag of food on the coffee table. “I didn’t know what kind of fries you liked.”

I open the bag and have to choke back a laugh. I’m pretty sure that Hale ordered every type of fry Ernie makes. But he didn’t stop at fries. Hale also ordered onion rings, mac and cheese, fried okra, and potato cakes. “You didn’t have data on this?” I tease.

Hale scowls. “Ernie doesn’t keep digital records.”

I pause, a fry halfway to my mouth. “You’re serious.”

His ears go red again. The guilt that flickers across his face reminds me of a schoolboy in trouble.

I narrow my eyes at him. The house is decorated to my liking, but I assumed that was a coincidence. My favorite foods are in the kitchen, including readymade chocolate chip muffins. Hale hates muffins. It’s one of the things I learned about him while I was working at the dessert shop. He calls them sad cupcakes. “Just how much do you know about me?”

He hesitates before admitting, “I may have curated some information regarding your habits and preferences based on your online patterns.”

I gasp and feign outrage even though I’m secretly delighted. “You mean digital stalking.”

“Stalking is an ugly word. It was more fact-finding.” He sets down his burger and looks ready to start his opening argument.

I think he expects me to be mad or blow this into something huge. But I don’t feel even a little bit upset. If anything, hope is blooming in my chest. Maybe I’m not the only one with a crush here. “For how long?”

“Since April eleventh,” he rattles the date off as quickly as he would his birthday.

“That was the day we met.” He likes me. Hale likes me. I’m ninety-nine percent sure of it now.

A delighted smile crosses his face. “Then I wasn’t the only one smitten.”

I can’t resist teasing him, relief making me feel giddy. “Who says I was smitten?”

He reaches for my side, tickling me lightly. I didn’t expect this playful side of Hale. I reach for a pillow and smack him with it gently, giggling the entire time. After the day of sexual tension and the exhaustion of the furniture assembly, it feels good to laugh with him.

He growls and pins me down, wedging his body over mine.

My breath catches in my throat as the air around us crackles. Suddenly, we’re two people caught in a lightning storm of our own making.

My breasts feel heavy, and my nipples are hard points beneath my T-shirt. I lick my bottom lip, wondering what it would feel like to be kissed by this mountain man. Would he be gentle, coaxing me to open for him? Or rough, demanding what he wants and plundering my mouth with his?

Hale watches me lick my lips and his eyes darken. I feel the bulge in his pants against my stomach.

“You could push me away,” he says. This right here is part of the reason that I like this man. He’s pinning me with his strength. He could easily hold me down, but he’s giving me a choice and letting me know he respects my desires.

I make a noise of frustration in the back of my throat. “You’d better kiss me, Hale Evans. I’ve been waiting five long months and—”

I can’t get the rest of my words out because Hale growls and drops his head, seaming our lips together. It’s everything I thought a kiss from Hale would be. It’s soft and exploratory at first before quickly turning rough and demanding.

I arch my body against him, trying desperately to get the friction in all the places I need.

Hale calls my name in a whisper when he lifts his head and trails kisses down the column of my throat. He grunts, “Knew you’d taste like this. Like sugar and sin.”

I thread my fingers through his hair and tug on the short strands. I don’t want him to hold back. I want to be completely consumed by this man. I want to spend hours exploring each other in filthy ways. “I want everything with you.”

It was the wrong thing to say because suddenly he’s rolling off my body and repositioning himself on the couch.

I feel cold without his weight over me, and he helps me sit up. He must sense my anxiety because he takes my hands in his. “I want everything too. I want a dozen babies and sitting on the porch swing every night. I want to watch you graduate from medical school then spend fifty years holding your hand while we celebrate the arrival of grandkids together.”

My breath catches in my throat. I wasn’t prepared for this kind of confession. What I thought was two people making out sounds like it’s so much more to Hale. I’ve never been wanted by anyone. The thought that Hale does is a little overwhelming. I clear my throat and squeak out, “Maybe we could start with a date.”

Something flickers in Hale’s expression, but it’s gone too quickly for me to identify it. “What are you doing tomorrow night?”

IVY

“WELL, DID HE SAY WHERE HE’S TAKING YOU ON THE DATE TOMORROW?”

“No,” I tell Gabby as I scratch behind Morton’s ears and stare up at the ceiling beams. I spent the last thirty minutes having a whispered phone conversation with my best friend. She’s finally back from her honeymoon with her own mountain man.

“Well, what about after you agreed to go on the date? What happened then?” She presses.

“We ordered some pieces for the nursery.” The entire time Hale and I were like a couple of high school kids with our first crush. Neither of us could stop looking at the other one and grinning. Now that I know Hale feels the same way about me, there are butterflies in my stomach.

“I thought he didn’t like me,” I admit to Gabby. It’s what kept me from asking him out when he used to come into the dessert shop. Now I suspect that maybe Hale isn’t grumpy so much as he’s shy and awkward.

“I knew you two were meant to be.” She giggles.

I shake my head even though she can’t see me. Miss Newlywed sounds like she’s already mentally planning my wedding. Before I can tell her not to hype the date, I hear noises coming from Ollie’s nursery. I tell her goodbye and quickly end the phone call.

When I get to the nursery, I find that Hale is already there. He’s pacing the floor and singing softly to Ollie under his breath. He grimaces when he sees me. “Sorry, did we wake you?”

I shake my head. “Do you want to trade off?”

Ollie chooses that moment to let out another loud wail, and I notice the circles under Hale’s eyes. On the couch tonight, he told me that he flew into

Colorado last week and picked up Ollie. He's probably spent the last week exhausted. Both of them have.

"He sleeps best when he's in motion," Hale explains. "Normally, walking around is enough."

"We could go for a drive," I suggest. When I worked at the daycare, some of the parents would mention how it soothed their restless babies.

Hale looks relieved at the idea. It only takes us a couple of minutes to get the diaper bag and shove supplies in it. Then the three of us are on the mountain road with only the moonlight. The darkness feels strange and intimate. But at least, it helps Ollie. He quiets within a few minutes and finally begins snoring softly.

Once his nephew is silent, Hale says softly, "I have epilepsy."

I glance from the road, but I can't see much in the darkness. I can barely make out his profile. "Does that mean you're going to be motion sick? Is that a form of motion sickness?"

"It's a seizure disorder. It means electrical signals in my brain sometimes go a little haywire. I tend to lose consciousness when that happens," he explains.

"So, it's kind of like going to sleep?" I'm trying to wrap my mind around this. I've never known anyone with seizures. What I do know about them comes from TV, and the thought that Hale could be going through something like that scares me.

"When you go to sleep and wake up, you know you've been asleep. I don't always know I've had a seizure. I'm suddenly confused and disoriented. I can't remember part of my day. For you, I imagine it would be like suddenly finding yourself in a different city in a strange hotel room. You're aware of who you are but you're a bit confused about where you are and how you got there."

I think about that for a moment, about how lost and scared I'd feel if it happened to me. "That would scare the hell out of me. I'd want to stay home under my blankets all day and never go outside."

He chuckles softly. "That's how I felt when I first started having seizures as a teenager. It can be disorienting. It's frustrating and yeah, even scary sometimes."

I wonder what this means for his life. I know he runs his own business, works out at the gym, and lives alone. "Can you do everything normal people can?"

He's quiet for a beat too long. "I am normal."

I cringe, realizing what I said and how it must have sounded. "Sorry. It's just..."

"You've never known someone like me and you don't have the language for it yet. I get that." His tone is filled with patience. "I've had half my life to learn about epilepsy and seizures, medication, and support groups. I don't expect you to know anything about the condition. I thought you should know I have it."

I'm quiet for a long time. "Do you have a lot of seizures?"

"I used to have them every day. I developed posttraumatic epilepsy following a head injury as a teenager. It took years to get my seizures under control. There are a lot of medications and finding the one that works best for your brain can be hard. Last week, I had my first one in three years."

"Will you have another one again?"

"I hope not. Every time I have a seizure, I have to give up driving for about a year."

That has to be so frustrating. Driving gives me a feeling of freedom and independence. I can't imagine having it stripped from me. "Any time Ollie needs nighttime drives, I'm here. Anything you need too. But you might have to tell me what to do."

He murmurs his thanks, and we fall into a comfortable silence. I'm still processing everything he's told me tonight when Hale asks, "What made you want to be a pediatrician?"

I hesitate. I haven't really told anyone my story other than Gabby. Sometimes people treat you differently once they know about your past. But Hale trusted me with his story, and I want to do the same. "I had cancer as a kid. Leukemia."

Hale swears under his breath and somehow, even in the darkened car, his hand finds mine. He threads our fingers together, offering me his comfort and warmth. He doesn't say anything or offer any words and this is what I like about Hale.

For some reason, his silence helps me tell more of my story than I've ever told before. "I was a foster kid. My parents died when I was too young to remember them. I bounced around from place to place. But after the diagnosis, I had trouble getting adopted. No one wants the sick kids."

I understand why. When most prospective parents imagine growing their family through adoption, they think of all the fun times they can have with

their new child. Family picnics, vacations, new school photos, and those cute kindergarten graduation ceremonies.

They don't envision spending hours in the hospitals, learning to navigate the medical system, and doing endless research on which treatments are right for their child. It's a lot even for a biological parent.

If my parents had been alive, would they have been there with me in the hospital? Would they have been by my side through all the treatments?

I'll never have the chance to know thanks to the explosion that took them from me. I was away on a playdate the night the gas leak happened.

"Are you...?" Now it's his turn to hesitate and it strikes me that we're a pair. Two people who are trying to learn to navigate each other's illnesses together.

"Terminally ill? No, I'm in remission. I have been for years. I mean, the treatments...they take a toll." I stop there, quiet for a moment. There are things he needs to know. "I mean, there's a possibility I could develop a secondary cancer. Survival rates for kids with cancer are getting higher with every passing year, so there's a lot of research to be done on what life after cancer looks like for us."

He swears again. The fact that lives can be saved through chemo and radiation is amazing, but it means potential health problems down the road. There are a lot of unanswered questions for survivors, and so many uncertainties.

I continue, answering his original question, "If I go to school and become a pediatrician, then maybe the system will let me take in a few of the sick ones. Maybe I can give them what I never had." My voice trembles on the words. "A home."

"I'll be your home," Hale says.

I swallow against the lump in my throat, and maybe it's the late night and the moonlight, but suddenly, I want that more than anything. I want Hale and Ollie to be mine forever. I want the three of us to make a little family together.

IVY

“SORRY ABOUT THIS,” HALE APOLOGIZES AGAIN FOR WHAT MUST BE THE thirteenth time since I’ve come to the back deck.

I shake my head and give him a small smile. “This is perfect, better than any restaurant.”

Ollie has been running a fever today. Other than a case of the sniffles, he’s fine. Hale insisted on rushing him to Doctor Cash, who reassured both of us that it was nothing more than a cold. He encouraged us to monitor his temperature and let his little body fight it off.

I could tell Hale wanted to argue with that. But I put a hand on his shoulder, and he instantly stilled. It was at that moment I realized how much my touch calms him. Just like his touch calms me. After never having anyone my whole life, it’s strange to meet someone who feels like the port in my storm.

Hale offered to reschedule the date tonight. But I told him that we’d waited long enough for our first date. So we decided to have dinner on his back deck, underneath the stars.

He lit candles and got food from a restaurant in Asheville. He’s even wearing a blue suit, that looks a size too small and he keeps reaching for the collar. I don’t think my mountain man likes dressing up.

The baby monitor on the table is quiet, but I still glance at it to see if Ollie is awake. He’s sleeping soundly, and the sight makes me relax.

“You look beautiful tonight,” Hale tells me. The appreciation in his gaze makes me glad that I took the time to dress up in the moss green dress with the full skirt. Gabby loaned it to me. She dropped it off earlier today while Ollie and I were napping.

I murmur my thanks, feeling my cheeks heat up.

He moves around the furniture to hold out my chair before he settles in the seat across from me. “This is from one of my favorite restaurants.”

I lift the cover on my food to reveal meatloaf and mashed potatoes. “My favorite comfort food. More data you harvested?”

Hale shrugs. “I started studying people and looking for patterns when I was a kid. My parents frequently divorced. They’ve both been married multiple times. I have thirteen siblings including Katie. Some of them half-siblings, some step-siblings.”

“Did it help you cope, to learn more about their patterns?” I ask softly.

“It still sucks when you’re constantly getting moved between homes, never knowing who mom or dad’s latest flame will be or if they have kids that you’ll get along with.” He gives me a wry smile. “Probably a good thing they finally sent my grumpy ass to boarding school and ignored me.”

“Sounds pretty miserable.” After spending so much time in foster care, I see now I have an idealized and romantic idea of family. In my mind, it’s a group of people that gets along all the time and loves each other. But for some people, that’s not the reality.

He takes a sip of his sweet tea before setting it back on the table. “Their dynamic was why I never had a relationship. I realized early on I’m the kind of person that’s in it for life.”

My heart pounds and my insides turn to goo. “So then, you haven’t even been on dates?”

Hale shakes his head. “In college, I was busy launching businesses and making my millions.” The tips of his ears turn red. “Never had a girlfriend either.”

“So then were each other’s firsts.” As soon as I say the words, something changes in the air. I stand from my seat at the same moment he does. Then we’re crashing into each other, arms and lips connecting.

“We don’t have to go fast,” Hale tells me between kisses.

“I’ve been aching since the day you first came into the dessert shop,” I gasp as his lips go lower, caressing the spot under my jaw. He smells like leather and heat and raw masculine power.

He growls and lifts me into his arms. “We’ve both waited long enough.”

We start toward the cabin, food forgotten. But as I’m pressing kisses to his neck, I pause to gasp out, “The baby monitor.”

He turns back and grabs the monitor while still carrying me. I suspect

he's going to take me to my bedroom, but instead, he carries me into his room.

Hale's room is decorated like the rest of the house—light and airy. But it's different in here. There are some darker touches like the wrought-iron bed and the navy-blue blankets. He stalks across the room, letting me slide down his body onto the plush bedding. I grind against his hardness, not wanting to separate our bodies.

“You have a picture of me on your nightstand,” I say softly. It's a recent one of me at the town's annual summer picnic. I'm wearing my favorite blue jeans and a T-shirt for an old band as I stand in front of the funnel cake stand. Gabby took that photo, and it was posted to the town's online group. He must have gotten it from there.

“I want you to be the first thing I see every morning and the last thing I see every night,” he explains.

I've never had anyone care that much about me, let alone feels the level of obsession that this man does. I grin up at him. “When I was dancing in the gym, I was thinking of you.”

His eyes darken even more. “Is that right?”

I nod. Maybe I should feel shy about this, but I don't because I'm as obsessed as he is. “I knew you were watching.”

“I want you to dance for me one night. Just me.” His eyes darken even more. “I thought I was going to have to kill those other motherfuckers in the gym.”

“No one else in that gym existed to me,” I reassure him. There may have been other people, but I wasn't paying attention. There's only one man whose eyes I want on me.

Hale's expression has changed from predatory to downright feral. “Got to get you naked.”

He reaches for my dress and helps me out of it until I'm in the red bra and panty set I bought specifically for this date. He runs his thumb across my port scar, frowning at it.

I explain to him, “It's a port scar. The port is placed so they can get the chemo in your body. After it's removed, some people choose to cover the scar with a tattoo. I wanted to leave my cancer scars visible.”

He leans down and gently presses his lips against it, whispering, “My beautiful warrior.”

I thread my fingers through his hair, tugging on the short strands. “Your

beautiful warrior is horny.”

He chuckles, and the sound rumbles through my chest. “I’ve been hard since the moment I met you. But seeing you now without a stitch of clothing on is a dream come true.”

My cheeks warm at his admission. He’s thought about me naked. “I had to go home after the class. I tried to use my showerhead, but it wasn’t enough. I need you.”

“Then that’s what you’ll get. Lean back.”

I do as he says, leaning back on my elbows to watch.

He kneels on the floor beside the bed and reaches for my feet. He presses kisses along the inside of my leg. His soft beard tickles as he moves higher and higher.

He murmurs against my skin. He’s telling me how beautiful he thinks I am, how sexy he finds my body. Most of all, he makes promises of the filthy things he’s going to do to me. The way he’s going to spread me wide and sink nine inches deep. He promises he’s going to take me in every position, going to wear out my pussy.

His kisses and filthy words only stoke the fire more until he reaches the apex of my thighs and finally, he pulls my panties down.

I showered before our date and I know I’m trimmed, but I still fight the urge to close my legs. Before I can do that, he uses his shoulders to wedge between my thighs. “No more showerheads. Only me. I’m the only one who gets to make you come.”

He licks a broad stripe up my seam and I nearly levitate off the bed at how good it feels. I’m part of the dirty book club in town. But I thought all those book descriptions were making it sound better than it is. Turns out, the written word doesn’t even come close to the experience.

It’s a heady feeling knowing that he’s drinking my juices and letting them dribble into his beard. He circles my clit once, twice, three times and I’m coming. The orgasm barrels into me, pulling me under and stealing my breath away.

When it’s over, I slump back on the bed and stare up at the ceiling, surprised by how giddy I feel. “I liked that. A lot.”

“That was only the start,” he promises as he strips off his clothes in record time. He fists his jutting cock.

“Fuck. You’re perfect,” he tells me as he works his shaft. “I’m healthy, but if you want me to wear a condom—”

“I’m healthy too,” I explain.

“Thank fuck,” he murmurs and joins me on the bed. He holds his body over mine, keeping his weight on his forearms. His cock brushes my swollen folds, and he lets out a groan. “You’re so damn soft and wet.”

“You made me that way.” I arch up to meet his body, feeling the way his cock is already leaking all over me and the sheets.

“Are you aching again?”

“So much,” I answer as he positions his cock at my entrance.

He slips inside an inch and studies my face.

I give him a nod and wrap my arms around his shoulders. Then I pull his head down for a kiss. The moment our lips connect, he snaps his hips to mine and thrusts himself inside of me. He fills me completely, leaving me gasping into his mouth.

I shudder at the sensation of being so filled by the man I love. Yeah, I’m in love with Hale Evans. I think I have been since the moment he stepped into that dessert shop.

“Need you to come,” he grunts as he draws featherlight circles around my clit.

I’m already primed from my earlier orgasm, and it doesn’t take more than a few quick strokes for me to be whispering his name.

His release quickly follows mine as hot spurts of his sticky come fill my still throbbing pussy.

“That was…” My voice trails off. My body is too sated to even finish my sentences.

“Fast,” he mutters. The tips of his ears are red again, and I realize that he’s embarrassed at how quickly he came.

I shake my head. “Perfect. But if you think it was too fast, we can try again. I’m all about trying to get it right.” I give him a wink to let him know that I don’t care about how fast he came. The truth is, it’s a turn-on to know my man couldn’t help but shoot his load as soon as he was inside my pussy.

He chuckles and rolls onto the bed next to me, pulling me into his arms. “Oh, we’ll definitely be trying that again.”

HALE

“HALE,” IVY SCOWLS AT ME. ONE HAND IS ON HER HIP AS SHE MOCK GLARES at me across the living room. “He does not need another six-foot teddy bear.”

Ollie, who is sitting smugly on her hip, grunts his agreement. The little traitor.

“No kid has ever been spoiled because they had too many stuffed animals,” I grump right back at her and place the newest fuzzy addition to our family on the couch next to Morton. That cat has no love for me. He hisses at me whenever I come too close, but he adores Ollie. The two of them like playing together when they’re on the floor, and I suspect they’re well on their way to becoming lifelong friends.

It’s been a week of having Ivy here in my space, and it’s been the best week of my life. She and Ollie have made everything click into place. Before, I spent my days in an endless cycle of work, wandering from one lonely day to the next. Now, I can’t wait to get off work because I know I’m coming home to the two most important people in the world and one very ornery cat.

I take in her paint-stained clothes and that spot of yellow paint on her cheek and give her a grin. “I told you I was going to help with that.”

The paint color she wanted for the nursery came in yesterday, and we agreed to work on it together this weekend.

“I couldn’t wait,” she says. “Besides, Ollie was having fun too.”

It took me three hours to find a paint brand that I was comfortable with. Once Ivy chose the color, I wanted to make sure I wasn’t bringing anything toxic into the house. Now that I have the two people I care about the most in the whole world, I want to protect them from everything, including killer paint fumes.

Ivy rolled her eyes when I said that, but she went along with it and let me order the paint which was nearly a hundred dollars a gallon. It seems it should cost less to make healthier life choices, which had me researching how to start my own home goods store.

“Are you mad?” She asks softly.

“Never,” I promise as I stride across the room. I pull her into my arms and press a kiss to her lips. “Never mad at you.”

Ollie grunts, wanting to be acknowledged.

I chuckle. “Or you, big guy.”

I take him from her arms and bounce him.

He babbles excitedly to me, and it strikes me that since Ivy has come into our lives, he seems to be growing by leaps and bounds. Before he had trouble lifting his head, now he does it with ease.

Ivy spends hours on the floor with him every day, practicing strengthening his core muscles. I suspect he’ll begin crawling soon.

I’ve already prepared for that by baby-proofing the entire cabin. The cabinets have safety locks. The sockets have covers now. The toilet has a weird thing on it that won’t let me lift the seat easily. It’s crazy how dangerous my home looks through my eyes now.

“Come see what we’ve done.” She gestures for me to follow her.

I smile when I see the little handprints on the wall from where she’s had Ollie’s help. They’re about halfway done with the room. “Seems you two have been hard at work.”

“And I do believe that our hard work has earned us a break,” she answers as she reaches for Ollie.

She takes a seat in the rocking chair and settles him with a bottle. She’s insisted that the three of us eat breakfast together, and she gives him baby cereal. He doesn’t do much with it besides stick his hands in the bowl and play with it.

I tried to show him the correct way to eat. She shook her head and told me to let him play and learn about the texture.

“The eating will come in time,” she reassured me.

Ivy is great with kids, and I can’t wait until we have a house full of our own. I know based on the research I’ve done that we may have fertility issues to contend with at some point. But I also know there are a million ways to grow a family.

While he enjoys his meal, I pick up the paint roller and resume the work.

I chat with Ivy about our days. She tells me about how much Ollie enjoyed story time and the library. I tell her that I'm thinking of promoting Susie.

"The community manager?" She asks.

"I know she's doing good work. Since I hired her, we've increased revenue by twenty percent. She's helped me see the gym can be more than a place for citizens to work out. It can be where our community gathers."

My original goal was to build a chain of gyms and eventually offer the option to franchise them. Now I'm thinking that I can create community-centric gyms. Maybe I'll model them after the one right here in Courage.

"Why didn't you have a community manager before?" She asks.

"I made the position up on the spot when I found her sleeping in the women's bathroom," I admit. My dad always told me I wouldn't succeed in business because I'm too soft. I believe that being a leader doesn't mean crushing others. It means raising them up.

Ivy beams at me. "That was nice of you."

"When you look at me like that, the last thing I'm thinking about is being nice."

She laughs and shakes her head. "You need to behave. Babies are present." She pulls the bottle from his mouth. He tries to cry, but she makes funny faces. She keeps it up until he gives a loud burp.

"The autumn festival is next week," I tell her. "I was thinking of closing the gym early, so the three of us could go."

Truth is, I've never been much for socializing or activities like this. But with Ollie and Ivy, I find myself wanting to show the two of them off. They're my greatest treasures. What man wouldn't be proud of both of them? Except no one else can have them. They're mine. Just mine.

She gives me a soft smile. "OK, I think we can fit you into our busy schedule."

Ollie is starting to drift to sleep, probably tired from the active day. She pulls his bottle from his mouth, and settles him in his car seat, rocking it softly as she watches me work. He starts snoring, and she grabs a roller, joining me.

I try to convince her to sit down. She spends her days taking care of Ollie, and I know that isn't easy.

When I'm home, I try to make sure that I'm helping too. I don't want to be one of those dads who leave everything to mom. I want to show Ivy that I'm not just an engaged father. I'm her partner in every way.

I arranged to pick up her engagement ring today, but I had to send it back. One of the emeralds was loose in the setting, and the jeweler apologized profusely. He promised me a rush job, stating that he would have it fixed within a week. I hope that's true. With every passing day, it gets harder not to drop to one knee and propose on the spot. Ivy is my everything, and I want her to know it.

I've finished with the last coat of paint when I feel something cold and sticky on the back of my arm.

I turn my head and Ivy dances away out of reach. She giggles. "Oops."

I mock glare at her, far from upset. If my girl is feeling playful, then I'll play with her. I'll always be the one who gives her space to play, create, and explore.

I drop my roller onto the paint tray. "You'll pay for that."

I take several steps forward and cage her against the nearest wall. Then I lean down and kiss her, taking control of her mouth. If there's one thing I've learned over the last week, it's that Ivy likes it when I let my primal side out. She likes it when I take control of her body and her pleasure.

I shove my big fingers into her panties and rub her swollen folds. Silky satin greets me, the way it always does. Fuck, she's so warm.

"Who made you wet?" I'm angry at the thought that she spent all day walking around horny. What if some other bastard in town saw what's mine? The thought has me seeing red. "Who?"

"You did," she admits looking so sexy and panting.

Her answer eases some of the jealousy in me, but it doesn't quite fully. I clamp a hand over her mouth. "Come for me, but do it quietly."

She detonates against my hand the moment I circle her swollen clit. It's everything I can do not to roar my satisfaction at seeing the pleasure on her face.

I yank down my pants and shove deep into her pussy, loving her gasp. I've been taking her day and night for the past seven days, and she still seems surprised by my girth every time.

I put my hands under her, so she can wrap her legs around my hips.

She twines her arms around my neck and kisses me fiercely.

"Mine. This pussy is mine. You bring it to me every time it aches, and I'll make you come on my cock like a good girl."

She whimpers at my words and arches into my touch. That's another thing I've been learning about my woman. She likes it when I talk dirty.

I have her pinned against the wall, her body helpless to do anything but take my big cock. I bounce her up and down, demanding that she come again.

She buries her face in my T-shirt as she cries out her release. The sound of my woman's pleasure heightens my own and before I know it, I'm coming deep inside of her. My seed is in her body, and it's only when I'm spent that I can finally relax.

Every morning when I wake up, I have an overwhelming urge to impregnate her. I'm more beast than human until the moment I know my come is dripping between her pretty thighs. As soon as I know that, the beast inside of me is sated and quiet. At least, for a few minutes. Then he wants her again and it starts over.

"You were made for this cock. Made to squeeze me so good. Yeah, just like that," I tell her. I love the way she looks right now. The way her cheeks are flushed from what we were doing and the glassy look in her eyes lets me know she's been fully satisfied by her man.

Before I can carry her back to our bed, Ollie startles and cries out. "You go take a warm bath. I've got him."

She nods. "Maybe you could join me if you get him back to sleep soon."

I watch her leave the room, her hips swaying. Between her and my son, I have the perfect life. The only thing that could make it better is her wearing my ring and taking my last name.

IVY

THE SMELL OF FUNNEL CAKE AND CORNDOGS IN THE AIR MAKES ME SMILE. Beneath my feet, leaves crunch with every step. Hale and I walked to the autumn festival. It's September here in Courage County. The cooler temperatures and plentiful harvest are more than enough to have everyone in a celebratory mood.

Ollie is against Hale's chest and looking around in wide-eyed wonder like he does any time we leave the cabin. Hale is quietly narrating our lives to him. He always does that. He talks to Ollie and explains things to him.

There are booths lining Main Street, and the traffic has been stopped. Summer is selling her clay creations at one booth, and I pause to admire a figurine of a boy playing with his dog. The details are so realistic that I have to buy it.

As I'm paying for my purchase, Mackenzie and Ginger join me.

Ginger looks at Hale and says, "We want to steal your girl away for a few minutes."

He scowls. He doesn't like to be away from me. He's possessive and convinced another man will try to seduce me. That's ridiculous. There are no other men for me. There's only Hale, my hot mountain man. "Not too long."

The two of them whisk me down the street. We walk arm-in-arm while they pepper me with questions about Hale. They ask me what his cabin is like, if Hale is nice to me, and how I feel about being a nanny.

"Now, it's time for the most important question. Have you slept with him?" Ginger asks.

My cheeks turn pink at the same time that Ginger lets out a whoop. "You did! You slept with him!"

I glance around to see if anyone is paying attention to our conversation, but they're not. The only thing I notice is that Ace is following behind us. He's one of Hale's mountain friends. He's trying to look inconspicuous, but it's pretty obvious that he has his eyes on Mackenzie. Come to think of it, he was hovering outside the gym after our last class too.

I think maybe he has a thing for Mackenzie. There are probably twenty years between them, but then again, there are a lot of years between me and Hale too. Love doesn't tell time. It only knows when you've found your kindred soul.

"Was he any good?" Mackenzie prompts, taking my silence to mean I have a complaint.

I glance around one more time but no one is looking, so I give her an enthusiastic nod. "So good."

"Does he make you happy?" Ginger asks, her voice taking on the note that lets me know she'll have a few choice words to say to Hale if he doesn't. It would be like her to fearlessly confront a man twice her size on behalf of her friend. But that won't be needed.

I can't help smiling. I feel like ever since I moved in with Hale, all I do anymore is smile. I love spending my days with Ollie and my nights in Hale's bed. "He makes me smile every day. I don't know how I got so lucky."

Mackenzie snorts and bumps my shoulder. "You mean *he* doesn't know how he got so lucky."

I roll my eyes at these two.

When I hear Hale call my name through the crowd, he waves me over. I tell my friends goodbye and walk toward him. He's standing next to the family photo booth. "Come on. Let's get the three of us together."

Two minutes.

Two minutes is all it takes for the photographer to take her photos.

As Hale is paying for the prints, I realize that I've never had family photos because I've never been in a family. The thought makes the cavern in my heart that's been there since I was a little girl open wide again.

With a start, I realize this is only pretend. I've been pretending that I could have people that care about me. I'm an imposter. This will never be my life.

The rest of the festival passes in a blur. It feels like moments, or maybe it's hours, pass. Then I'm back at Hale's cabin.

He tries to talk to me, but I shake my head and move to my room. Well,

see that's the problem. It's not my room.

Nothing here is mine.

With jerky motions, I begin dumping my clothes into my suitcase. It's better to leave now. It won't hurt so much. At least, that's what I tell myself. But I still put a hand on my chest.

"What are you doing?" Hale's voice is quiet and laced with hurt. He's confused and bewildered. Just like I always was each time I had to pack up and move.

I don't answer him. I keep putting things in the suitcase, willing myself to stay busy.

Until his strong hands are on my shoulders, stilling me.

Hale turns me to face him.

I blink past the tears that are rolling down my face, trying to see him clearly. I want to remember him happy and smiling. Not the way he's scowling at me right now. "Tell me what's going on."

I gesture to the room. "I can't do this."

"Do what?"

"Do this," I insist. "I don't know how. I'm not the girl that gets a family."

Hale's harsh features instantly soften. He swears and tries to pull me into his arms.

I put my hands against his chest. I can't be against him like that right now, seeking comfort. I need to go. I need to leave. I already care too much. It already hurts. Why does it hurt? Why can't I breathe?

"I'm not letting you leave," Hale insists.

"I don't want to wait until the day you realize that I'm not a good fit. That there's something wrong with me. That I'm too loud or too clumsy or too sick." My voice breaks on the last word. "Every time I got to be with a good family, there was a reason I had to go back. I don't know what your reason is going to be, and I don't want to know. I want to go home."

"You are home," Hale insists.

There's a fierce look in his gaze, mixing tenderness and something else that I can't quite define. Then he reaches into the pocket of his jacket and pulls out a ring box. He opens it. "Look at this."

It's a seven-carat diamond engagement ring with tiny emeralds surrounding it set in a gold band. It's huge and attention-grabbing and so over-the-top that it's somehow completely Hale.

"This is a custom design," he explains. "I had it commissioned the day I

met you. I know this is scary because you've never felt like you belonged anywhere. You've never known what it's like to be wanted. But that changed five months ago. I knew the moment I saw you that you were meant to be mine. I've loved you every single day since then. All the choices I've made from that moment forward have been about you. I love you and I want you to be my wife. I want you forever."

I use the sleeve of my sweater to blot at my face. "You love me?" I repeat the words in a broken whisper.

"I love you," he says as he takes my hand and puts it over his chest. I can feel his steady heartbeat, strong and steadfast. "I'll do whatever you need me to do, but I will not let you go. I will not let you run from this. You're my family."

My heart melts at his words. "Family."

"We're family. We always will be." He gives me a wry grin. "It doesn't matter if you accept my ring or agree to be my wife. You're stuck with me forever. That's what family means. I'll always be by your side. Always be your home."

I throw myself into his arms, sobbing against his shirt and somehow managing out the words, "Yes, I want to be your wife."

He pulls me onto the bed and holds me in his arms as I cry for a little girl who never found her forever family, who never found her forever home. She's all grown up now, and she finally has that. She has a family and a man who will love her through everything.

He holds me through it all, circling my back and reassuring me with soft words. He repeats that we're together now, that I'm safe, that I'm loved.

When I cry myself out, we still hold each other, and Hale reaches for the ring again. He slips it over my finger.

"We're a family," I repeat, staring down at the diamond with the beautiful emeralds.

"Family. Now and forever," he insists, smiling down at me. His expression is filled with so much tenderness and compassion that it makes my heart skip a beat.

"I love you too," I whisper, and this is it. This is the moment I know I do have a family.

I'm not an orphan anymore. I am loved, and I am wanted. I'm going to build a beautiful life with my grumpy mountain men.

IVY

“ARE YOU SURE THIS IS OK?” I ASK MALLORY. SHE’S THE OWNER OF SEW Cute, a store here in town. It’s a dress shop for curvy women, specializing in retro clothing designs.

Hale proposed to me last night. When I woke up this morning, I told him I wanted to marry him today. We’re going to get married at the chapel in town this afternoon. He’s talking to Judge Helen, and he’s getting a marriage license while I look for a dress.

Mallory waves at the shop full of designs. “Whatever you want. It’s my wedding gift to you.”

She has a huge selection of vintage dresses. I’d rather shop locally, and I didn’t want to wear a white dress to my wedding. I want something pretty that I can wear again and again in the future and be reminded of my special day.

“Do you have a color preference?” Mallory asks as she uses her power chair to navigate the layout of her store. She has a neuromuscular disease that affects her mobility. It didn’t stop her hot cowboy husband from marching into her workplace one day and demanding that she marry him on the spot. Rumor is he dragged her down to the courthouse that very day and slid of ring on her finger in front of the judge. They’ve been happily married ever since.

“How do you feel about autumn colors?” Mallory asks as I trail along after her.

“I like anything warm. Reds, oranges, yellows, those colors,” I tell her.

“I have one I think you’ll love.” She reaches for a yellow dress that’s the color of sunshine. The halter top and swing skirt make me smile.

“It’s beautiful,” I tell her.

She gestures toward the dressing rooms. “Try it on. I can make alterations on the fly.”

I’m in the dressing room when I hear Gabby, Ginger, and Mackenzie come in. I can tell it’s them because there’s a flurry of squeals as they approach the dressing room door. I already texted them the plan when I got here.

I step out in the dress that hugs my body like it was made for me. “What do you think?” I ask the girls.

Gabby sweeps me into a wordless hug and whispers in my ear, “I’m so happy for you!”

“I’m happy too,” I sniff. I feel like I’ve cried more in the last twenty-four hours than I have in my whole life.

After years of being alone, I finally have a family. But more than that, I realize Hale isn’t my only family. These women are also my family. They’re my sisters—the way they’ve taken me in and adopted me and treated me as one of their own. They’re my besties, my ride-or-dies.

“This is the one,” I tell Mallory when I step away from Gabby.

Mallory takes quick measurements, but other than letting it out in the bust, the dress is perfect for me. While she makes the alterations, the girls take me back to Mackenzie’s place for some girl time where I get a manicure and pedicure. They help me with my makeup and do my hair.

“It’s exactly the kind of low-key wedding day I wanted,” I tell Gabby.

“Good.” Ginger grins at me. “Save your strength for the wedding night. That’s what I always say.” She winks at me.

I laugh at her, feeling my cheeks heat.

Gabby and Roman are going to be watching Ollie tonight so that Hale and I can enjoy our first married night together. I still can’t believe I’m about to marry the hot mountain man that I’ve been crushing on for five months. It seems so crazy to me, and yet it feels so right.

By the time, our little spa session is over, Mallory has arrived with the alterations. I slip into the dress and together the five of us head to the wedding chapel in town.

The tiny white building is glowing with light from the inside and above the door is a simple inscription, “All are welcome here”. I love that message. I’m so glad I found a place like Courage County to live.

Inside the small chapel, it’s warm and smells of orange and lavender. A

sense of peace washes over me as I stand in the foyer. The minister, who's wearing blue overalls and a checked shirt, smiles at me. His eyes twinkle as he welcomes me with a weathered hand grasping mine. "It's a good day to get married. You got this boy of yours all tied up in knots. The kid is crazy about you."

I chuckle, surprised that I don't feel nervous at all. I know I'm doing the right thing. I'm claiming my family. "I'm crazy about him too."

The minister winks. "Then let's get this show on the road."

Within minutes, Hale is standing at the front of the chapel with Ollie in his arms. They're wearing matching blue suits, both of them fidgeting and uncomfortable in the fancy clothing. But they stop the moment I step down the aisle.

Both of them gaze at me like I hung the moon, and my heart flips in my chest. These two are my future. Being here with them makes me so happy.

We exchange vows, and Hale's voice catches when he promises to love and cherish me. He squeezes my fingers tight and swallows hard.

"You're my everything." Then he's pressing a soft kiss to my lips, totally oblivious to the rest of the ceremony. But I don't care. I wrap my arms around his neck and pull him close.

Today has been perfect, and I can't believe I get to spend the rest of my life with the man that I love.

Hale

IT'S BEEN THE BEST DAY OF MY LIFE, AND IT'S ALL THANKS TO THE BEAUTIFUL blonde sitting in the driver's seat. After our ceremony, I carried my new wife to the center of town. Our friends had set up a small outdoor reception.

I wanted more than anything to immediately pull her back to our cabin and spend the rest of the day consummating our marriage. But this was a day to celebrate, and I wanted my girl to celebrate with her family—the people of Courage County.

Now though, it's early evening and we're finally back in my truck. The windows are down, letting in the cool autumn breeze. The sun is dipping lower in the sky, painting everything in an orange hue.

My fingers are intertwined with Ivy's. The moment I took her hand during the ceremony, she gave me the biggest smile. My heart flipped in my chest. I can't believe she agreed to be mine. I'm the world's luckiest man.

I glance over at her noting the blush on her cheeks. "What are you thinking about?"

If her thoughts are headed in the same direction as mine, I know exactly why her face is so red.

"Check your suit coat pocket." She giggles. I love that sound. It's my favorite one in the world, the one that lets me know my girl is happy.

I do as she said, my fingers instantly going around something silky. I pull out the pair of skimpy underwear and frown at her.

She giggles again. "I'm not wearing panties. I took them off before we got the truck."

A stream of expletives fall from my lips, and I growl at her to pull the truck over. The moment we're safely parked on the side of our little mountain, I'm unbuckling her seatbelt and pulling her into my lap. Our movements are frantic as we both work to get my pants down then I'm sliding into her wet heat. We both groan.

"Is this what you needed, Mrs. Evans?"

Her fingers pull at the short strands of hair on the nape of my neck. She gives me a shy smile. "I'm Mrs. Evans."

"You are Mrs. Evans," I repeat as I surge up into her channel.

She squeezes me tight as more moisture floods my swollen cock. "I like it when you call me that."

"I can tell," I chuckle as I press kisses to the column of her throat while my other hand strokes her mound. She comes against me with a keening cry of ecstasy, and I follow her right over the ledge into the best orgasm of my life. There's something about knowing this woman is my wife, and she's mine to hold forever.

"I love you." The words are a broken whisper because my throat is tight with all the love I feel.

"I love you, husband," she whispers as she buries her head in my shirt.

I don't know what the future holds for my beautiful warrior or what our lives will look like, but I can't wait to spend the next fifty years with her finding out.

IVY

BOOK CLUB NIGHTS ARE MY FAVORITE. IT'S MY CHANCE TO CATCH UP WITH all my friends and talk about our favorite spicy reads.

I used to come here and hate my pathetic love life. But since getting married to my own hot mountain man, I find the books serve a more practical use. Mainly, inspiration for our bedroom activities. Hale doesn't mind at all. He's always up for trying new things in the books I've read.

He loves me so well, that there's no room in my heart for a book boyfriend. Besides, I think my husband would be jealous if I did ever crush on a fictional character. He's crazy possessive, and I love that about him. We've only been married for a month, but it's been the best month of my life.

"What did you think about it?" Ginger nudges me in the side. In tonight's meeting, there are only four of us. Me, Gabby, Ginger, and Ivy. We're sharing dessert at Gabby's cabin.

She's an excellent cook when she's not busy running the auto garage in town. I'm not sure what she said or did to get Roman out of the house for a few hours. He's normally glued to her side. All the men of Courage County tend to be over-the-top and want to watch over us constantly.

My husband has texted me three times since I left our cabin an hour ago. He wants me to check in and let him know whenever I get to my destination. At first, I found it weird. But now, I know that it's just because he cares so much.

It doesn't help that my vehicle is old and having trouble. Hale has tried to convince me to buy a brand-new car, but I haven't let him. He insists that what's his is now mine, but I'm not used to being a millionaire. Or rather, the wife of one.

Yesterday, we met with Henry, Hale's attorney. My husband insisted on making sure that my name is on all of his accounts. He wants me to have access to everything. I tried to point out that he built his businesses long before I came into his life, but he said he doesn't believe in splitting assets.

While we were there, I did ask for one thing. I asked Henry to add my name to Ollie's guardianship papers. I love Ollie so much. He's mine. Just like Hale is.

"What did I think about what?" I ask, blinking at Ginger.

"You know, the *thing* he did," Gabby says as she puts another pan of brownies in the oven. Her brownies are so sweet that they give me a sugar high that seems to last for days.

I think she's referring to the bondage scene in the book where the hero ties the heroine up. I nibble on a bite of my still-warm brownie. "It was steamy."

The truth is, I read that scene three times in one sitting. I'm not sure that I'm brave enough to try something like that just yet. But that doesn't mean a girl doesn't fantasize. If I brought it up with Hale, I have no doubt he'd be willing to give it a try. In or out of the bedroom, all I have to do is ask him for what I need. He's always happy to deliver.

"The brother's best friend trope just isn't for me." Mackenzie wrinkles her nose then glances at Ginger. "Sorry."

Ginger wiggles her eyebrows. "That's because you don't have a brother with a hot best friend."

I'm pretty sure that Ginger is not so secretly in love with her older brother's best friend, Grizz. He's a hulking mountain man who runs the camping store here in town.

Before I can comment and tell her to go for it, the direction of our conversation changes and we're discussing Gwen's new book. She's another woman who lives in these mountains with her husband. But unlike us, she doesn't just read steamy books. She writes them too.

By the time I leave our meeting, my stomach hurts from laughing with the girls, and I have a pan full of brownies to take home with me. I always leave the book club feeling lighter and happier than when I arrived, which is saying something because my life is already pretty awesome.

When I get home, I come into the cabin quietly in case Ollie is sleeping. He's not, but he's well on his way. Hale is holding him in the rocking chair in the nursery. They're reading a book together about a little otter looking for

home. Ollie's eyes are already starting to droop, and I can't say I blame him. There's just something soothing about the deep rumble of my husband's voice.

Hale looks up when he hears me in the doorway. His beard has bits of baby cereal in it, and I'm pretty sure I don't want to know which bodily fluid has stained his T-shirt. "Why don't you let me take over for a few minutes?"

It's what he asks me every time he gets off work. He loves running the gym, but he's training Susie to take over more of the day-to-day operations. He says he wants to spend more time with Ollie and me.

He passes me our son and kisses me on the lips. It's a deep kiss, promising a night filled with delight once our boy is asleep.

I finish the story with Ollie who drifts off easily once I put him in the crib. I watch over him for a few minutes. My life is perfect, and now I'm going for a shower with my husband.

Hale

I LET THE SHOWER WATER BEAT DOWN ON MY BACK AND MELT INTO THE warmth. I love nights when I get to hang out with Ollie by myself. But I can't deny that it's exhausting keeping up with my son. He's getting big, and he's crawling now.

He's hitting milestones faster than ever thanks to all of Ivy's tender care. She's an amazing mother. I know she'll be just as amazing when it's time to grow our family in a new way.

Just as I'm thinking about her, warm palms slide over my abdomen. Her hot lips are on my back, searing my flesh in the best way. "Hey there, husband."

"Wife," I growl the word as she presses her tits against my back.

Her hands dip lower as she grasps my aching cock. She struggles to take my girth. She always does, but it doesn't matter to me. Just the feel of her touching me is enough to send my body into overdrive. I instinctively drive my hips forward, thrusting into her hand.

She slides her soapy fingers along my balls, caressing me there. Then she's whispering in my ear, her breath hot against my skin, "You're so good

to me.”

“And I’m about to be even better,” I grunt and gently move her hands. I turn around and scoop her into my arms. If my balls weren’t nearly ready to explode, I’d carry her to bed and take her nice and slow. But I’m barely hanging on and when I slide one thick finger into her pussy, she’s already sopping wet. “Someone got horny during book club.”

She thinks I’m being nice whenever I tell her to go to book club. She thinks it’s a great sacrifice for me. While I do miss her in the evenings when she’s gone, the truth is she comes home so damn horny. She’s always soaking wet and begging me to fuck her on those nights.

Last time, she wanted me to stretch her across the kitchen island and pound into her from behind. I was more than happy to oblige. When my woman bent over and offered herself, I rammed hard into her tight hole and worked her little clit until she was a trembling, incoherent mess.

She whimpers, her body clamping down on my digit. “I feel so empty when I’m there.”

“That’s because you need your man filling you.” I pull my finger from her sweet channel. Her juices glisten on it, and I hold it up to her lips. She sucks, groaning at her taste. “That’s a good girl. Hollow those cheeks just like you do when I put you on your knees.”

The moment she does, I thrust hard into her pussy. It’s a snug fit. She makes me work for every damn inch, squeezing my shoulders as her nails dig into my flesh. Fuck, I love the morning after an intense night. Love walking around knowing her marks are all over my body while mine are on hers.

I hammer into her quickly again and again. “Pinch your tits. Get there fast.”

She squeezes her perfect little nipples then she explodes all over me, drenching me in her juices. My balls draw tight at the pleasure on her face. But I push back against my own need for release, determined to make this good for her.

I pound into her tight body until she goes limp in my arms. Only then do I let myself paint her womb with my come. Spurt after sticky spurt goes deep into her body, reminding her of who she belongs to.

She’s boneless and exhausted after. I shut off the water and dry her before wrapping her in a towel and carrying her to our bed. She snuggles underneath the blankets and gives me a sated smile. “I think we should host the book club here. Then I don’t have to drive home.”

“I think I would end up fucking you in front of your friends,” I answer.

She makes a whimper, and I file that away for later. We’re just discovering the things we like, just now finding our sexual tastes. It’s amazing to get to share this with her, to explore this together.

I settle next to her on the bed, burrowing under the covers with her. We’re wrapped up in each other, cocooned in our own little world. “There’s something I want from you. Or rather for you.”

“If it’s more orgasms, I’m in.” Her hand absently strokes my chest.

“It has to do with paperwork.”

She fights a yawn and loses. “You already added me to the property deed for this place and the gym. There can’t be anything left to give me.”

It’s true that I’ve made her a partner in every way. Legally, she has half of this cabin and the property it sits on. She’s a co-guardian of Ollie. She owns half the gym, half my app company, and all of my heart.

Despite all of this, she doesn’t want a cent. When I noticed she wasn’t spending anything from my bank account, I figured she was feeling shy or nervous. So I set her up with an account that’s only in her name. She still won’t spend anything. She insists it’s because there’s nothing more she wants in life than the family I’ve given her.

But there is one more thing she wants. One thing I can give her. “I was thinking more like college applications.”

She arches an eyebrow at me. “Do you want another degree?”

“No, I want you to go to school. If it’s still your dream to be a pediatrician, then you should see that through.” I won’t have her give up on her dreams for me or Ollie. She deserves to pursue the things that are important to her.

She swallows. “I want that too. But Ollie is so little. I know you mentioned daycare as an option, and it works for a lot of families. But I’m not ready for that just yet. Maybe when he’s older.”

“What if we split the time with him? I’ve been setting things in place so I can take more time away from the gym. I’ll watch over Ollie while you’re at class, and we’ll figure the rest of it out as we come to it.”

“That’s why you’ve been working so hard with Susie, isn’t it?”

I nod and capture her hand. I bring it to my lips and press a gentle kiss to her palm. “You don’t have to choose between your dreams and our family. I’ll always be the one cheering you on and encouraging you to go after them.”

She's quiet for a long moment. "There are probably some scholarships I'm eligible for and—"

I frown at her. I know she's used to doing everything by herself, but she doesn't have to anymore. She doesn't have to work herself to the bone or worry about where her next meal is coming from. "Or you could accept that your husband is a millionaire and let him help you."

She opens her mouth to argue with me but I kiss her instead. I sweep into her mouth and stroke her tongue with my own. She relaxes into me and sighs when I pull away. "That is a very convincing counterargument."

I chuckle. "Just let me take care of you."

"Only if I can take care of you too," she teases as she reaches for me under the covers.

I'll cheer my wife on as she goes after every one of her dreams and be her loudest supporter along the way. She's amazing, and I plan to spend the rest of my life showing her that.

EPILOGUE

IVY

I WALK DOWN THE STONE STEPS, LEAVING BEHIND THE WARMTH OF THE college building. There's a slight chill in the autumn air. Normally, my husband picks me up from my college classes, but he had a business meeting this afternoon. He did text me to tell me he loves me and that he's thinking of me.

I texted him a sexy picture I took in our bathroom this morning. I'm sure he'll get me back later tonight by holding me down and giving me endless orgasms. The thought has me smiling as I get into my shiny red car. He insisted on buying me a brand-new vehicle as soon as he realized I'd be traveling between Courage County and Asheville for my college classes.

I finished my freshman year requirements over the summer. Now I'm starting my sophomore year. I love all my courses, and I can't wait to get my prerequisites done so I can start on the path to studying medicine.

The drive back to Courage goes quickly. I always find it easier to come home than drive to college. There's something about knowing I have a place to come home to. It fills me with happiness and joy.

I have even more reason to celebrate after my morning appointment with the specialist. I didn't mention it to Hale because I didn't want either of us to get our hopes, but the confirmation means I haven't stopped smiling.

As soon as I'm in town, I drive straight to the gym. Three months ago, I mentioned to Hale that I wanted to see if Jenna offered a mommy-and-me yoga class at her studio. The next thing I knew, Hale had recruited Jenna to do one of her mommy-and-me classes at the gym where he could keep me under his watchful eye.

Ollie is already inside the gym. He's squirming on Mallory's lap, eager to

get down and explore the world around him. He's eighteen months old now and getting bigger every day. His vocabulary is constantly growing, and he's beginning to develop his personality.

I see it in small ways and big ways. Like the way he tells me no when I try to put him in the green shirt instead of the blue, and the way he prefers the taste of carrots to peas. He follows his dad around constantly. It's clear he idolizes Hale, and the feeling is mutual.

I've tried to reach out to Katie a few times to let her know that her son is healthy and happy. She ignores my calls or if she does answer, she cusses me out. The last I heard from Hale is that she's using again.

He told her she could never have her son back. But that when she's ready to get sober to call him, and he'll help her get into rehab. We're trying to leave the door open for Ollie's sake so that if Katie does seek sobriety in the future, she can have a relationship with our son. It'll be a carefully supervised one, but we won't stand in the way of them getting to know each other.

Mallory passes me my boy, interrupting my thoughts. I cover him with kisses, beyond grateful that he calls me mommy. I know that Mallory and River are working on adopting kids. They were approved this week, and they've both been over the moon.

"Good day?" Mallory asks.

"And it's getting even better," I tell her.

There's a pole in the gym now. Hale had one permanently installed after the popularity of Ginger's classes. She even has one specifically tailored for seniors. Turns out, there are some very flexible blue-haired ladies in town.

Jenna takes her place at the front of the room. She demonstrates the various poses with the moms and the kids. She never loses patience with the wriggling little ones, and I'm chuckling at their antics.

As usual, the gym is empty except for the class. Hale kicks out the men from the gym when the women are holding a class. He says it's because he wants to create a safe environment.

I always roll my eyes at my caveman. Everyone knows it's because he doesn't want anyone staring at my ass when I'm bending over, which is fine by me. There's only one man I want to stare at me. My cheeks heat even now as I feel his gaze through the darkened window.

When class is over, I chat with a few ladies before they leave. Mallory reaches for Ollie.

"Where are you taking him?" I demand. Hale is not the only one that's

possessive over his family. I am too.

She gives me a mischievous grin. “Talk to your husband.” Then she’s rolling away with Ollie in her arms.

As the doors close behind her, the lights in the gym dim. A slow, sensual beat fills the air. I feel Hale leaving his office before I ever hear him. There’s something about his presence. My body is tuned into his all the time.

He stalks across the floor, his footfalls heavy. Each one landing in time with my thumping heartbeat. His voice is a low, urgent growl, “Dance for me.”

A week ago, I mentioned having a naughty dream like this. I can’t believe that he remembered or that he’s going to such lengths to make it come true.

He pulls a folding chair from nearby and sets it in the center of the room in front of the pole for Ginger’s classes.

Passion and desire thrum through my veins. Excitement makes my hands shake as I reach for the buttons on my shirt. I unbutton each one slowly, prolonging the moment. Then I let the material pool at my feet. My skirt is next until I’m standing in front of Hale in my skimpy bra and panties.

I reach for the pole, the cold metal steadying me as I let my body fall into the familiar routine. But the entire time, it’s not my body I’m aware of. It’s Hale’s.

I’m aware of the way his metal chair creaks as he shifts and each slow inhale that he makes. His zipper is loud as he pulls down his pants and frees his cock. He tugs himself roughly, squeezing his girth. He swears under his breath, and I know my man is close.

I kick off my underwear and straddle him. I let out a hiss when our hot skin connects. I gyrate my hips, working to take him. He’s so thick. It’s never been easy to take him, but I wouldn’t change my man for anything. Besides, I like the feel of his big cock.

He leverages up, sealing our bodies together.

I let out a soft sigh. Yes, right here is perfection.

He grips my hips and bounces me up and down, controlling our rhythm and pace even though I’m the one on top. I like the way he always takes control of me. The way he demands my body and commands my orgasms.

“Come for me now,” he says as he strokes my clit with featherlight touches.

I explode all over him, my juices running down my body and soaking his lap. As soon as my orgasm starts, I feel his release follow. He frantically

hammers into me as he pumps his seed into my pussy.

I collapse against him, completely spent. “You know how to show a girl a good time.”

He chuckles and presses a soft kiss to my neck. “Happy anniversary, sweetheart.”

He helps me back into my clothes, and he’s tucking himself back into his pants when I whisper, “I have something to tell you.”

“Why are we whispering?” He asks. The gym is closed, almost all of the lights are off and we’re the only two people here.

“Because you’re supposed to whisper when you talk about a miracle,” I explain.

He chuckles and puts an arm around my shoulders, leading me toward the exit. “And what’s our miracle?”

“I’m pregnant. The specialist confirmed it this morning.”

Hale stops walking. “Don’t fuck with me. Are you serious? Fuck, please be serious.” He puts a hand on my stomach. “Are you healthy? Is our little one?”

“Clean bill of health for both of us,” I quickly reassure him. Shortly after we got married, I started seeing a fertility specialist who helps women conceive after being exposed to chemo and radiation.

The testing was hard and invasive but in the end, the doctor told me she was very confident that I would be able to conceive naturally and carry a child to full-term. Hale and I were elated by the news, but we haven’t rushed to try for a baby. We’ve both been content to let it happen when it happens and now, it’s here. There’s a little piece of Hale and a little piece of me growing together in my belly.

There’s a sheen of tears in his eyes then he’s wrapping his arms around me and crushing me against his body. He presses a kiss to the top of my head. “You did it.”

“We did it,” I counter as I burrow deeper into his shirt. I can’t believe it’s been a year since I married my sexy husband. He is an amazing father and a selfless partner who’s with me through everything. But most of all, he’s my forever and now we’re watching a dream come true as we grow our family.

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

READ NEXT: STALKED BY THE MOUNTAIN MAN

There's only one man I've ever loved—my father's best friend, my stalker.

Mackenzie

He follows me around town. He prowls around my house. He's always in the shadows. My father's best friend thinks I don't know he's the man stalking me.

But here's what he's about to learn: I'm as obsessed with him as he is me. And tonight, I want to tease him out of the shadows and into my bed.

Ace

A man shouldn't hunt a young woman. A man shouldn't scent her like prey, and he definitely shouldn't prowl around her home at all hours of the night.

Especially not if she's his best friend's daughter. It's shameful and forbidden, but it's not going to stop me from corrupting the wide-eyed little angel and dragging her into a very dirty paradise.

If you love an OTT alpha mountain man who's obsessed with his curvy woman, it's time to meet Ace in *Stalked by the Mountain Man*.

Read Mackenzie and Ace's Story

COURAGE COUNTY SERIES

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

Love on the Ranch

Her Alpha Cowboy

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

Her Older Cowboy

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

Her Protector Cowboy

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

Her Forever Cowboy

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

Her Dirty Cowboy

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

Her Sexy Cowboy

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

Her Wild Cowboy

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

Her Wicked Cowboy

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

Courage County Brides

The Cowboy's Bride

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

The Cowboy's Soulmate

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

The Cowboy's Valentine

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

The Cowboy's Match

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

The Cowboy's Obsession

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

The Cowboy's Sweetheart

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

The Cowboy's Angel

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

The Cowboy's Heiress

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

Courage County Warriors

Rescue Me

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

Protect Me

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

Shield Me

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

Courage County Fire & Rescue

The Firefighter's Curvy Nanny

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

The Firefighter's Secret Baby

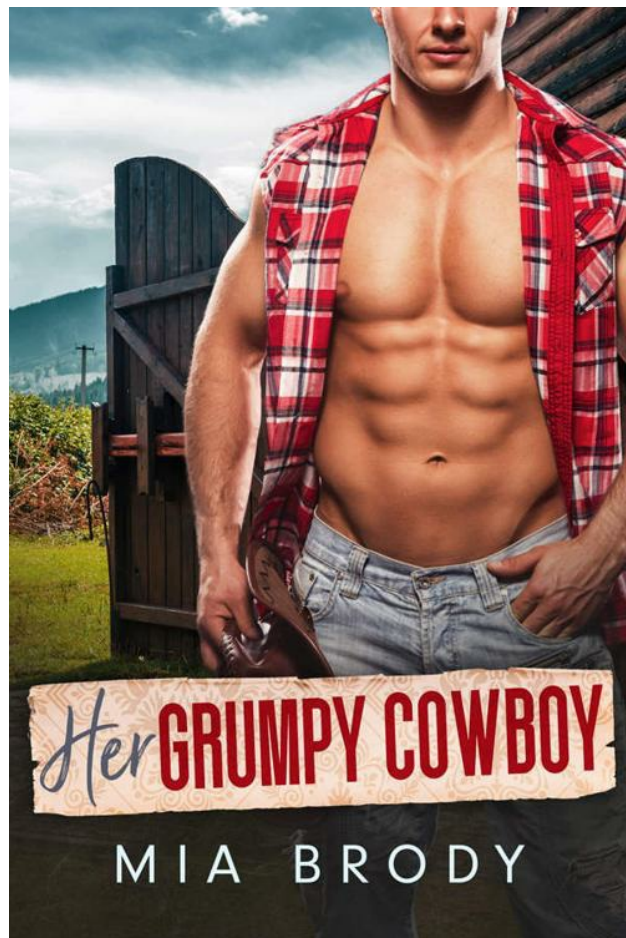
After a scorching one-night stand with a sexy firefighter, I realize I'm pregnant...with my brother's best friend's baby.

The Firefighter's Forbidden Fling

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

GET A FREE COWBOY ROMANCE

Get Her Grumpy Cowboy for FREE:
<https://www.MiaBrody.com/free-cowboy/>



LIKE THIS STORY?

If you enjoyed this story, please post a review about it. Share what you liked or didn't like. It may not seem like much, but reviews are so important for indie authors like me who don't have the backing of a big publishing house.

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

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

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

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

