

A man with a beard and mustache, wearing a black cowboy hat, is shown from the chest up. He is looking off to the left. The background is a sunset over a landscape with rolling hills and a field.

His ranch was everything
to him, but would it
matter if the woman he
loved didn't stay?

LIAM

MEN OF CLIFTON MONTANA BOOK 31

Bestselling Author

SUSAN FISHER-DAVIS

LIAM

Susan Fisher-Davis

Men of Clifton, Montana

Book 31

Liam Men of Clifton, Montana Book 31

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and I appreciate your support.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Table of Contents

[Copyright](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Other Books By Susan](#)

Chapter One

The cool spring air had Siobhan O'Brien tugging up the collar of her jacket. She stuck her hands in her pockets and strolled across the parking lot of Dewey's, the local cowboy bar.

She had an interview with Scarlett Conway, the bar owner, for a bartending position. She'd been a bartender in an upscale restaurant in Denver, Colorado, for five years before moving to Clifton, Montana.

Siobhan's grandmother lived in the little town, convincing her to move here. Her grandmother owned a local shop that specialized in candles and craft supplies. At first, Siobhan wasn't thrilled with living here, but it grew on her, and she fell in love with it.

She stood on her toes at the double doors and tried to peer into the windows, but she wasn't tall enough. She stood five-six, but the windows were up high. Taking a deep breath, she knocked. Scarlett Conway told her the bar didn't open until four and closed at two every morning except Sunday.

She heard someone unlocking the door, then it opened, and a woman with red hair smiled at her.

"Hi. Siobhan O'Brien?"

"Yes. Scarlett?"

"Yes, ma'am. Come in. It feels like it's getting colder."

"It is. I love spring, though."

"Me too. It will warm up soon... or snow. Do you mind if we sit at the bar?"

"That's fine."

"Your resume is impressive. I'm familiar with this restaurant in Denver." Scarlett tapped the paper.

"It was a great place to work."

"So, why did you leave?" Scarlett tilted her head.

Siobhan sighed. "I fell in love with a man who would come into the bar. If you know that bar, you know it's upscale, and only the rich have access." She shrugged. "We fell fast, but Garrison started getting jealous of men hitting on me. It's a bar. Of course, men are going to hit on the bartender. We argued

one night, and he stormed out.” Siobhan took a deep breath. “He was speeding, lost control of his truck, and hit a tree. He died instantly. I had to leave there.”

“I’m so sorry. I can understand wanting to get away. This is a cowboy bar; trust me, they *will* hit on you. You’re a beautiful woman, and cowboys are a different breed. Some can be wild, others can be as sweet as can be, but all of them can break your heart. Some of them live here, but others are just passing through. They’re just looking for a good time. But most of them back off if you tell them. Many don’t have much money, but what they have, they spend it all in the weekend.”

“I can handle them hitting on me. It’s the ones who can’t take no for an answer and think money will buy them anything. I saw a lot of that.”

“You seem to get a little angry talking about them.”

She huffed. “Yes. Like an idiot, I started seeing a man in his thirties before Garrison. That was the common age for men in the bar. He wouldn’t take no for an answer. He offered to pay for my apartment and always bought me gifts. But I did some investigating, and it seemed he was also involved with two other women at the restaurant. I’m glad I didn’t get involved with him. He wasn’t a good man. I hate men sometimes.”

Scarlett laughed. “Doesn’t every woman?”

“I don’t doubt that for a second.”

“Your hours would be Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, four until close. I’m here every night, but Laura Blackstone is who you’ll mostly work with.”

“Am I replacing someone?”

“No. We’re swamped on those nights. I needed more help.”

Siobhan glanced around and saw a band stage, tables surrounding the dance floor, a game room, and a billiard room.

“It’s a great bar.”

“Thanks. How about you make a few drinks?”

“Yes, ma’am.” Siobhan jumped off the stool, strolled around the bar, and looked at Scarlett.

“Tom Collins, Sex on The Beach, and a Toasted Almond,” Scarlett told her.

“You got it.” She prepared the drinks and set them on the bar. She watched Scarlett take a sip from each one, then looked at her.

“You’re hired.”

Siobhan laughed. “Great. Thank you so much.”

“You’re welcome. I’ll see you Thursday at four.” Scarlett got off the stool. “Let me get you a few T-shirts—jeans in the fall and winter. You’ll wear bibbed overall shorts with cowboy boots in the spring and summer. I’ll supply the overalls and shirts. I also need to give you your tax forms.”

“Boots in the fall and winter, too?”

“Yes. If you don’t own a pair, you can get Beckett boots at the Western Wear store on Main Street. They are not cheap. You could buy a cheaper pair, but you’ll be on your feet a lot, so you want comfortable boots. Beckett boots are the best and very comfortable.”

“All right. I’ll get them before Thursday.”

“Be right back.” Scarlett smiled, walked down a hallway, and returned with T-shirts and paperwork.

Siobhan walked around the bar, took the shirts, shook Scarlett’s hand, and walked out the door. She was happy Scarlett hired her. Siobhan liked her and thought she’d be a great boss.

Walking outside, she strode across the lot, climbed into her SUV, and drove to the Western Wear store.

Liam Flynn was tired. All he wanted to do was eat, shower, and collapse into bed.

The damn cattle broke through a section of fence, and he and the men took hours rounding them up. Red Angus was known for being hard on fencing, and no one could convince him otherwise.

Removing his hat, he slapped it against his thigh to remove the dust and dirt, then ran up the steps of his home. He wiped his feet on the mat, entered the house, and hung his hat on a peg. He smiled when his Australian shepherd, Rebel, entered the room. She ran to him and sat at his feet.

“Hey, girl,” he said as he rubbed her ears. The dog was partially deaf, and even though she could hear his voice, the vet told him Rebel could only hear muffled sounds. She was solid white, with blue eyes and Liam always talked to her. He sat on the bench beside the door and removed his boots. Leaning his head back against the wall, he wondered if he had the energy to get up.

When his cellphone buzzed, he removed it from his pocket and groaned when he saw Monica’s number. Nope. Not tonight. He hit *Ignore*, set the phone on the bench, and got to his feet. He removed his flannel shirt, hung it

on a peg, strode from the kitchen, through the living room, and down the hall to his bedroom. He glanced over his shoulder to see Rebel on his heels. She rarely let him out of his sight when he returned home.

He entered the bathroom, stripped off his dirty clothes, and tossed them into the hamper. He turned the water on in the shower, stepped in, and groaned as the hot water hit his skin. If he weren't so dirty, he'd say hell with it, fall on the bed, and sleep until morning.

It wasn't cold, but it was chilly. It was early May, and summer wouldn't be far behind. He loved spring and fall but did not look forward to summer or winter. He sweated his ass off in the summer and froze his balls off in the winter. Such is the life of a rancher.

Being born and raised in Clifton, Montana, you'd think he'd be used to the snow and cold. He was, but that didn't mean he had to like it.

He picked up the shampoo, washed his hair, then scrubbed his tired body. If he weren't so hungry, he'd pass. Even the thought of making a sandwich made him sigh with frustration.

After his shower and a sandwich, he sat in the recliner, watching the weather. He smiled as he saw Faith Maddox on the screen. A good friend of his, Cord Maddox, was married to her. Lucky bastard.

Liam shook his head. He was too busy to get involved in a relationship of any kind. Being too busy ruined more relationships than he could count. No woman understood he had a ranch to run. There were never regular hours. He had no clue what it was like to work a nine-to-five job. He was up before sunrise and didn't quit until he finished the chores. Sometimes he didn't make it home until after nine at night. It would have to be one hell of a remarkable woman to see that.

He knew it was a tough life, but some women accepted it and worked alongside their husbands on the ranch. That was the reason he and Monica broke up. They had a big argument about him working so much.

He had told her how it was when they started dating, and if she couldn't accept that, they should stop seeing each other. She convinced him she was okay with it. It didn't take long to know that she wasn't.

The ranch had been in the Flynn family for generations and would not end with him.

"It will if you don't find someone," he muttered, then sighed. He knew the ranch would live on with his sister, JoJo, though.

At ten, he pushed to his feet, went to his room, crawled into bed, and

closed his eyes. He'd get up tomorrow and do it all over again.

Friday morning, he entered the barn and strode to his office. He had to hand out paychecks. The men had direct deposit, but Liam still handed out non-negotiable copies. He hoped the day went fast because he wanted to go to Dewey's for a night out. Maybe talk to a pretty woman and go home with her. He hadn't had sex in a month and was damn horny.

"Hey, boss."

Liam glanced over his shoulder to see Jerry Garfield, the ranch foreman, strolling toward him.

"Jerry. Are the men out?"

"Yeah. East and north pastures today."

"Okay. I'll be out in a while to hand out checks."

"Yes, sir."

Liam had been running the ranch for over ten years, and it flourished. His father had restrictions because of his blood pressure and a heart attack. He was not supposed to get stressed. Everyone knew Joseph Flynn could never do that, so Liam took over. His father wasn't initially happy, but he didn't mind now. He trusted Liam to take care of it.

His cellphone buzzed, so he removed it from his jacket pocket to see his sister's face. He grinned and hit *Answer*.

"Hey," he said.

"Hi. Can you come to dinner?"

"Tonight?" He frowned. He'd rather go to Dewey's. Not that he didn't love his sister. He did, but he needed a woman.

"No, tomorrow night."

"Sure."

"You can bring a date."

"JoJo, you have to *have* a date to bring."

"Why not Melody? You were together at the Hartland Restaurant."

Liam huffed out a laugh. "I'm not seeing her anymore."

"For God's sake, Liam."

"Hey, I can't help it if I can't find someone. Speaking of someone, is Watkins being good to you?"

JoJo laughed, making him grin.

"Of course. He knows my big brother would come after him."

"I like him, but he better not hurt my sister, or I'll hurt him."

"You're the best brother."

“I’m your *only* brother.”

“Well, there is that. We’ll see you tomorrow at six. Love you.”

“Love you too.” He disconnected.

After putting the phone back into his pocket, he turned on the computer, opened Cas-Port, the program he used for keeping the books and payroll, and got busy.

“I never realized how busy a cowboy bar could get,” Siobhan muttered as she poured another beer.

“I used to think the same thing when I first started.” Laura Blackstone smiled at her.

Laura was a beautiful woman with blonde hair and hazel eyes. She was as sweet as could be.

“I love it, though.” Siobhan set a beer on the bar, and the cowboy winked at her, making her laugh. “They love to flirt, don’t they?”

“Most of them are harmless,” Laura said as she mixed a drink.

“Yeah, I’ve figured that out. I wouldn’t need to work if I had a nickel for every time one of them asked me out.”

Laura laughed. “That is the truth.

Siobhan glanced around the bar. It was standing room only, and she didn’t know how people were even dancing, but since it was a slow song, they didn’t seem to mind.

By nine, she was being run ragged. She’d make a drink, set it on the bar, turn and make another one. It was like a revolving door as she handed a young cowboy another beer.

“Anything else?”

“Your number.”

“One eight hundred, it ain’t happenin’,” she said and grinned when he put his hand over his heart.

“You wound me, darlin’.”

She shook her head, moved to the next person, and made their drinks.

“Hey, darlin’, could I get a beer?”

Siobhan turned to see who that deep, sexy voice belonged to and clenched her jaw to keep it from dropping open when she saw him. *There he was: the man of her dreams.* She stared into dark blue eyes surrounded by thick, lush

lashes. His straight nose sat over the most kissable lips she'd ever seen on a man. Crow's feet fanned out from the corners of his eyes, and she could see a faint shadow on his jaw. God! She loved stubble. Though he wore a black cowboy hat, she saw dark hair on his nape, and she wanted to crawl over the bar and straddle him.

"Ma'am?"

Snap out of it!

"I'm sorry. What can I get you?" *Please say your number! Please!*

"Beer. Whatever's on tap is fine." He nodded, then turned on the stool to look at the crowd.

Damn, what a good-looking man. She put him in his early-to-mid thirties. She was so absorbed in him that the beer spilled over the top of the mug as she held it under the spout.

"Damn it," she muttered as she set it down, picked up a bar rag and wiped up the beer, then wiped off his mug and set it on the bar. He didn't turn around.

"Your beer," she shouted, so he'd hear her over the music. She saw him nod, then he turned on the stool, stood, removed his wallet, and paid her. Then he sat down, picked up his beer, and turned back to face the crowd.

"Keep the change," he said over his shoulder.

Siobhan tightened her lips as she looked at the back of his head. Would it kill him to talk to her? She didn't know what else she could do to get him to notice her. Maybe dance naked on top of the bar? She shook her head. He'd probably ignore that too.

What did she do to him? He wouldn't even talk to her. Most cowboys at the bar spoke with her, even if they weren't hitting on her.

"Are you okay? I saw you spill the beer, and you never do that," Laura said.

"Yes. No." She shook her head.

"What is it? Are you feeling ill?"

Siobhan smiled. "I got flustered by a good-looking cowboy, but I don't seem to exist for that one."

"His loss." Laura laughed.

"Mine too, by the looks of him. Damn, he's so hot."

"Which one?"

Siobhan looked at where he was sitting, but he wasn't there. She glanced around the bar but didn't see him.

“I don’t know where he went. Damn it.”

“He just got a beer, so I’m sure he’s still here. Maybe he’ll come back for another one. Then show me.”

“Will do.”

She couldn’t get over her disappointment. No man had her wanting him so fast. Of course, he disappeared. He was probably only passing through too. Her luck with men sucked.

An hour later, she moved along the bar, taking orders when she saw him again. He sat at the end of the bar, talking to a woman. *Bitch.*

“Laura?”

“Yeah?”

“He’s at the end of the bar, wearing a black cowboy hat, talking to a brunette.”

Siobhan watched Laura look in that direction and smile.

“Liam Flynn.”

“You know him?”

“Yeah. I’ve known him for a long time. He comes in occasionally. He runs a ranch outside of town.”

“My God, he’s just gorgeous. Is he involved with anyone?”

“Not that I know of. He’s a nice man.”

“I want him,” Siobhan said and laughed when Laura did.

“Go for it.”

“He’s interested in the brunette.”

“For sex.”

“He can be interested in me for sex.” She leaned close to Laura. “He makes me horny.”

Siobhan laughed when Laura burst out laughing.

“It’s good to have a man like that. I do. I can’t get enough of Dominic.”

“Well, I can see why. He’s sexy.”

“Yes. Yes, he is.”

“I’ve heard many women say they loved cowboys, but I never understood why until now.”

Scarlett stopped beside them and leaned close.

“Cowboys stay on longer,” she said, making Siobhan and Laura laugh.

Siobhan couldn’t keep her eyes off him as she made drinks or poured beers. She saw his beautiful smile when he laughed at something the brunette said. Perfect straight white teeth and deep dimples peeked in his cheeks.

Good Lord. She saw him look in her direction and wave her over.

“What can I get you?” She smiled, but he didn’t seem to notice.

“A refill for me and a Sex on The Beach for the lady.”

She’d like sex on the beach with this man. Hell, she’d have sex with him anywhere.

“I’ll be right back.”

When he nodded, she wanted to slap him upside his head. She was more interesting than the brunette. She was sure of it. Siobhan knew men found her attractive, so what was his damn problem? She wasn’t being fair to the brunette, and it was because she was jealous of not having his attention.

“Don’t be a bitch, Siobhan,” she muttered.

As the night wore on, she kept her eye on him and the woman. When he led her to the dance floor, she couldn’t keep her eyes off him as he spun the woman around the floor. The man knew how to dance, and she loved dancing.

What would he think if she asked him to dance? Nothing appealed to her more than a good-looking man with a wonderful personality, a sense of humor, and great moves on the dance floor.

Okay, so she didn’t know what kind of personality or sense of humor he had. However, even if he had the nature of a fence post, it still didn’t deter her attraction to him. *Liam*. She liked his name, and with the surname of Flynn, he had to have Irish in his blood, just like she did.

“Siobhan? Are you okay?” Scarlett asked her.

“Yes.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing that gorgeous cowboy couldn’t cure.” She smiled when Scarlett burst out laughing.

“I know what you mean. The first time I met Noah, I wanted to take him upstairs.”

“Upstairs?”

“I used to live in the apartment above the bar.”

“Oh! That was convenient.”

“Remind me to tell you about the stairs.” Scarlett winked.

“I will. Is it available?” Siobhan was looking for a place to live. She loved her grandmother, but they needed their privacy.

“No. I’m sorry. I keep it in case it’s late, and I don’t want to drive home, but I only do that if Noah comes here. I can’t sleep without him, so I drive

home if he doesn't show up."

"Whether you want to or not, right?"

"Yep. I love my man and don't enjoy spending nights away from him."

"Lucky you." Siobhan glanced over her shoulder at Liam on the dance floor.

"Seriously, Siobhan. Let him know you're interested."

"Maybe if he comes in again, but he's going to leave with that woman."

"He can dance," Laura said.

"I love a man who can dance." She sighed as she watched them and then returned to work.

At one a.m., Laura rang the bell and yelled it was the last call. That had the bartenders and servers scrambling. Everyone wanted one more for the road.

Siobhan set beers on the bar, made mixed drinks, and could use one herself. It was one of those nights. This was her second week here. She loved it, but it was much busier than the bar she worked at in Denver.

She picked up a rag, wiped the bar, and took money from the customers. She saw Liam Flynn sitting at the bar alone, when she handed one man his change.

Where was the brunette? Maybe she left, though why she'd leave a man like Liam alone, Siobhan had no idea.

"He could be a jerk," she mumbled, then shook her head. "Laura said he was nice."

She shrugged. Maybe *she* didn't appeal to him.

"What are you thinking?" Scarlett asked her as she put the mugs in the sink.

"That maybe I don't appeal to him."

"Why wouldn't you? You're beautiful with your dark red hair and those green eyes."

"He must be into brunettes."

"Well, he's definitely going to be *into* that one." Scarlett laughed.

Siobhan looked to see the brunette beside him at the bar. She must have visited the little girl's room. Siobhan didn't like her. She didn't even know her. She shook her head. *Jealousy does not become you.*

As she wiped up the bar, she saw him wave Laura over to settle his tab, then walk out with the brunette. And it ruined her night.

With a heavy sigh, she put the rag beside the sink, walked around the bar,

and cleaned the empty tables. She was so disappointed.

At two-thirty, Laura, Scarlett, and Siobhan walked outside into the cool evening air. Scarlett put her arm around her shoulder.

“You’re so down.”

“I am. It’s silly. I don’t know him, but he really grabbed my attention.”

“We know how you feel. I was attracted to Dominic when I was married to Jeb. I knew it was wrong, but after Jeb cheated on me and I divorced him, Dominic and I got together, and I have never been happier. He’s my soulmate.”

“Like Noah is mine. Siobhan, you’ll find someone again. Maybe it won’t be Liam, but you never know.”

Siobhan came to a halt. “I want *him*. I honestly cannot get over how much I want him.” She shook her head. “I’ll never see him again.”

“Yes, you will. He doesn’t come into the bar often, but he does once in a while.”

“When he’s horny?”

Scarlett and Laura laughed.

“That could be.” Scarlett shook her head.

“In case he hasn’t noticed, I’m horny too. I can’t remember the last time I had sex. I need to find an apartment so I can take a man home.”

“Hey, talk to Connie.”

“Connie at the diner? Why?”

“There’s an apartment above the diner that she has rented.”

“Really? I’ll get with her.”

The women walked to their vehicles, bid each other goodnight, climbed into them, and drove off.

Liam got out of bed, pulled on his jeans and T-shirt, and tugged on his boots. Standing, he strode from the room to the kitchen with Rebel on his heels. It was still dark out, but he had to get busy. The ranch didn’t run itself.

The Flynn Ranch was one of the largest cattle ranches, with the Moore Cattle Ranch following closely, then by the Mitchell Cattle Ranch. However, they all followed behind the Triple C. It was the biggest in Clifton, at one hundred thousand acres. Warren and Weston Coleman, Calder Moore, and Preston Mitchell were his friends, so it wasn’t a competition. Most ranches

didn't compete. They each had companies they supplied to.

He entered the kitchen, strode to the laundry room, and removed the flap on the pet door. Rebel barked and ran outside to the fenced-in yard. After a cup of coffee, he pulled his flannel shirt on, settled his hat on his head, opened the door, and stepped onto the porch. The morning air was crisp, but the weather was supposed to be warm today.

He entered the barn, strode down the aisle, and entered the tack room. He picked up a saddle, sat on a stool, and cleaned it. He didn't mind doing it. Everyone rotated on chores, and today was his day for the tack. He ran the ranch, but he worked with his men, and they respected him for it.

The ranch hands were heading to the north and west pastures to round up some cattle. A hauler was due later today to get them.

He remembered last night with the brunette and frowned as he tried to remember her name.

"Not cool, man," he muttered.

He clarified at Dewey's that he wasn't looking for more than a one-night stand, and she agreed. But when she asked if he'd call her, he wasn't sure what he could say he hadn't said earlier. He didn't like hurting anyone because he knew how it felt.

When Monica started on him about not spending time with her, they got into a huge argument, and she gave him an ultimatum. Her or the ranch...

"You expect me to just up and leave a ranch that has been in my family for *generations* because I don't spend enough time with you?" he growled.

"You could make time, Liam. You just don't want to."

"What I want and have to do are two different things, Monica. For God's sake, how do you think I make money? I run the family ranch," he shouted.

"And what should I do while you're out working?"

"The same thing any woman does when her man is working. *Wait for him to come home and not bitch about him working to make a better life for her,*" he snarled.

"Bullshit, Liam! You have ranch hands."

"Who do their part as I do mine. I don't expect them to do anything I wouldn't do myself. You knew this! You knew how busy I'd be and said you were fine with it. I don't work a nine-to-five job, and if you can't see that, we should end this now."

"Fine. Leave. Goodbye, Liam." She walked to the door, opened it, and motioned for him to leave.

It hurt him. He was sure she was the one. Before that, it was Crystal, but she liked other men too much. She loved Liam's money, but always sought a man with more. Then he dated Melody, but it didn't work for the same reason as Monica.

Many of his friends were happily married, but he'd be alone unless a woman came along who would stand beside him on the ranch. He knew he could walk into Dewey's and go home with just about any woman in the bar, but he wanted something more meaningful.

"Last night didn't mean a thing," he muttered.

"Talking to yourself, boss?"

"Hey, Jerry. Just giving myself a talk." Liam smirked.

Jerry leaned against the doorjamb of the tack room.

"Do you need a talk?"

"Probably."

"I noticed you went out last night."

"I went to Dewey's."

"Did you get laid? Cause, man, you needed to."

Liam laughed. "Have I been that bad?"

Jerry chuckled. "Well, put it this way, when you had a woman, you were always in a good mood."

Liam hung the saddle on a rail.

"I've been trying to figure out why I love women so much. They're stubborn, hardheaded, moody, and God help you when they cry." He shook his head. "I wish I could find one who doesn't mind how much I work."

"You will. You're a young man yet."

"I'm thirty-four, Jerry. How old were you when you got married?"

"Twenty."

"See? I'm way behind. Even my sister has someone. My much *younger* sister." He sighed.

Jerry shoved off from the doorjamb. "I'm telling you, it will happen. I have to get to work. I'll see you later."

"Sure." Liam picked up another saddle and sat down again.

At six that evening, he pulled up to Brett's house. It was a nice place. Liam liked Brett. As long as he treated JoJo well, Liam had no problem with him.

With a deep sigh, he opened the door, walked up the steps, knocked, and entered when Brett opened the door to him.

Chapter Two

Siobhan sighed as she poured another beer, turned, set it on the bar, and got another one. It seemed like that's all she did. She barely had time to breathe, but she loved it. Another Saturday night and packed wall to wall.

She set a beer on the bar, and the young cowboy grinned.

"Hi, darlin'," he said.

"Hi, yourself there, cowboy. Do you need anything else?"

"Not yet. Thanks, sweetheart." He touched the brim of his hat.

Was there a man with more manners than a cowboy? Their mamas raised them right.

As she turned to help someone else, she saw him. *Liam. He was here. Oh, my.*

She was heading for him when she saw a woman with blonde hair talking to him. What the hell? How would she ever let him know she was interested if other women kept coming on to him? But who could blame them? He was tall, dark, and mouthwatering.

Taking a deep breath, she walked to where he sat. He looked at her, and her heart slammed into her ribs.

"What can I get you?"

"Callahan and Coke, please."

Siobhan looked at the woman, but she didn't seem upset that he didn't buy her a drink unless the one he ordered was for her.

"On the rocks?" Her hope deflated when he looked at the blonde, and she shook her head.

"Neat." She smiled at Siobhan, but she couldn't bring herself to smile back. The woman had the man she wanted.

"Anything for you, cowboy?"

When his dark eyes shifted to her, she couldn't breathe.

"No, thanks," he said, then turned on the stool to talk to the blonde.

She huffed, moved away to make the drink, then set it on the bar. He stood, removed his wallet, paid her, and waved away the change.

"Thank you," she said.

"Hey," the blonde said.

"Yes?" Siobhan raised her eyebrow.

“How do you pronounce your name?” The blonde pointed at her nametag.

“Siobhan,” Liam said, pronouncing it correctly as Shiv-awn.

“I’m impressed,” she said, almost falling over when he grinned.

“Why is it spelled like that?” the blonde asked.

“It’s Irish.” Liam shrugged.

“I see.”

Siobhan doubted it. *Meow!* She didn’t need to be a bitch. It wasn’t the blonde’s fault he wasn’t interested in her.

“Let me know if you need anything else.” She stared at him, but he nodded. She seriously wanted to slap him. Why couldn’t he look at her the way he was looking at the blonde?

A while later, she took a break, walked around the bar, and sat on a stool. She didn’t know where Liam and that woman had gone. She glanced around but didn’t see them.

“Do you want a drink?” Scarlett asked her.

“No. I’m afraid if I start, I won’t stop, and if that happens, I’ll tell Liam Flynn how much I want him.”

Scarlett shook her head. “Siobhan, you have to do something, or you’ll be miserable.”

“I am already. I can’t believe how much I’m interested in him, Scarlett, and to him, I don’t exist. I give up.”

“Don’t do that. Oh, here he comes.” Scarlett moved away.

Siobhan tensed up when he took the stool next to her. He raised his hand to get a bartender’s attention. Then he glanced at her.

“Break time?”

“Uh, yeah. I had to get off my feet for a while.”

“I can understand that. You’re on them all night.”

“Yes.”

“So... Siobhan. What’s your last name?”

“O’Brien.”

He laughed. “Irish through and through, huh?”

“Yes, on both sides. What about you?”

“Liam Flynn,” he said, putting his hand out for her to shake.

“Irish,” she said with a laugh.

“Definitely, but only on my dad’s side. My mom’s side is French.”

“You don’t have a temper, do you?”

He laughed, and she loved it. He had it all. Now, he just needed to have

her. She snorted, and he raised an eyebrow, so she shook her head.

“I’m sure my temper isn’t worse than others.”

She laughed. “Oh, sure. Remember, I have an Irish father. I’ve heard words from that man that no one should hear.”

“Yeah, my dad is the same way. He rarely says a sentence without a swear word. I’m sure you have a temper.”

“Siobhan? I’m sorry, but I need you.” Scarlett smiled.

“No problem.” She got off the stool. “It was nice talking with you, Liam. Have a good evening.”

“Yes, ma’am. You too.” He touched the brim of his hat, making her sigh, then the blonde started talking with him again.

She walked behind the bar, waited on people, and couldn’t keep the smile off her face. At least he talked with her.

“So you talked to him?” Laura asked her.

“I did. He’s so hot.”

Laura smiled. “Well, you got a foot in the door.”

“I feel like a teenager having a crush on the star quarterback in high school.”

“Hey, don’t make fun of that giddy feeling. It’s wonderful.”

Siobhan nodded. The night was a little brighter, but she knew she had a long way to go to get him interested. She wasn’t going anywhere, so she’d work on it.

The following Saturday night, she set a whiskey drink on the bar, then glanced around. Her heart stopped when she saw Liam at the bar. Taking a deep breath, she headed for him.

“What can I get you, Liam?” He looked into her eyes, and she lost all coherent thought.

“Not sure yet, Irish.” He glanced around.

She took a deep breath. “Don’t you know you’re supposed to flirt with the bartenders?” *Oh. My. God. Did she say that out loud?*

He looked at her, and a slow grin lifted those sexy lips.

“I’m not going to flirt with Keith,” he said, making her laugh.

“Fair enough.”

“I’ll have Tequila,” he said.

She straightened. “Uh, okay.”

“Something wrong?”

“No. You just never order Tequila.”

“I feel like some shots. How about you, Irish? Up for some shots?”

“If I do, you have to pay for it.”

He laughed. “Not a problem.”

Siobhan smiled. Scarlett didn't mind if the bartenders did a drink or two with a customer, and Siobhan loved it.

“Okay.” When he grinned, she sighed. “I'll be right back.”

“Yes, ma'am.”

She walked to the glass shelves behind the bar, removed a bottle of Tequila, two shot glasses, a container of lime slices, and salt, and headed back to Liam. As she passed Laura, she smiled.

“I'm doing shots with Liam.”

“You have got it bad,” Laura said.

“No shit.” She chuckled when Laura laughed.

She set everything on the bar, poured the liquor into the shot glasses, and slid one over to him.

“Are we doing this together?” she asked.

“We can do it any way you want, darlin'.”

Siobhan smiled. “Together.”

He grinned and nodded. After they licked the salt off their hands, they tossed the drink back, and sucked the lime, then slammed the glasses onto the bar.

Siobhan hissed in a breath. “Whew!”

Liam chuckled, and she wanted to get him drunk enough to have her way with him in the storeroom.

“Again?” he asked her.

“Oh, yeah.”

“Well, line 'em up.”

She smiled, moved to the bar, and grabbed four more shot glasses. She carried them back to Liam, lined them up with the other two, then poured the Tequila into each of them as she moved the bottle over them.

“Ready?” she asked.

“Yep. Are you ready, Irish?”

When she winked at him, he chuckled.

“Let's do it.”

Siobhan held up one finger at a time, and on three, they ran through the shots. When they slammed their last glass on the bar, the people along the bar cheered. She laughed, and so did Liam.

“Could I get a cup of coffee? I have to drive home.”

“Of course.” She walked to the industrial coffee pot, placed a cup under the spout, filled it, and then took it to him. She set it on the bar.

“Sugar or cream?”

“No, thanks. Black is fine.” He raised the cup, saluted her, and sipped it.

A while later, he waved her over. She smiled as she walked to him. He stood, handed her money for his tab, touched the brim of his hat, and winked.

“Let’s do it again sometime, Irish. Good night, Siobhan O’Brien.” He made his way through the crowd and disappeared out the door.

Siobhan sighed as she watched him leave. She had fun with him tonight, but she wanted more. She wanted him.

With a deep sigh, she returned to work until the bell rang for the last call and helped clean up once the place was empty. She couldn’t wait to get home and hit the sheets. Too bad a hot, sexy cowboy with dark blue eyes wasn’t joining her.

As Liam drove home, he grinned, thinking about Siobhan doing shots with him. She was beautiful, and he didn’t know why he hadn’t noticed before. He rarely missed a pretty woman. Her dark red hair flowed around her shoulders, and her eyes were emerald green.

“You’re slipping, Flynn,” he muttered.

He knew he would go back to Dewey’s next weekend. He would love to see her again. Maybe ask her out. She seemed like a lot of fun. If he could get back to town.

The next day, he rode his horse along the fence in the west pasture. He knew some of his men were checking the other fields. Others were working in the barns or around the cattle.

His family had been in the cattle business for generations. Liam’s great-great-great-grandfather started raising Black Angus, but the next generation raised Red Angus.

As Liam sat on the horse, he gazed around the property. With twenty thousand acres, it was a non-stop job. A person would never see it all in a day. That’s what ended so many of his relationships.

He tried explaining that to the woman he was seeing, and they told him it was fine... until it wasn’t. They couldn’t understand that it was a twenty-

four-seven, three hundred sixty-five-day job. He didn't get holidays or vacations. He worked. It was his job to keep the ranch prospering, and he did.

Liam knew when the time came, he and his sister would inherit the ranch, and he hoped to buy her out. JoJo wanted little to do with it, especially since meeting and falling in love with Brett.

If JoJo wanted to share the ranch, then that's what they would do. But Liam didn't care. He just knew that he'd live on it as he did now.

His home was over a mile from the main house. He needed his privacy, and his parents needed theirs.

When his horse shifted under him, he swore when he realized he'd ridden the fence but didn't check it. With a sigh, he turned the horse around and rode back.

After checking and repairing the fence, he rode back to the barn, cooled the horse down, and strode to his truck. He was tired, hungry, and needed a shower. It was after seven.

His cellphone buzzed when he got into the truck. He took it from his pocket to see his mother's face.

"Hi, Mom."

"Hi, honey. Are you just getting in?"

"Yeah. A section of the fence was down, and the sun was setting by the time the men got there with the wire. I didn't get much else done today."

"Liam, you know you will get it caught up. Why don't you come to the house and I'll make you something to eat? We had meatloaf. I could reheat it for you."

His stomach growled, thinking about his mother's meatloaf.

"Do you have mashed potatoes?"

"Of course."

"I'm dirty, Mom."

"I'm married to a rancher. I know how it goes. Come to the house."

"Yes, ma'am."

Liam stepped out of the truck, strode through the barn, and across the yard to the house. He would rather go home, but knew better than to tell his mother no. He wiped his feet on the mat, opened the door, and entered the kitchen.

After removing his flannel shirt and hat, he hung them up, sat on the bench, leaned against the wall, and closed his eyes.

"Rough day, son?"

Liam opened his eyes, raised his head, and looked at his father standing in the doorway to the living room.

“Yeah. About twenty-five feet of fence was down.”

“Did you round up the cattle?”

“They weren’t in that pasture, Dad.”

“So, why was the fence down?”

“I don’t know. I could call MDOL and have them check around it.”

“Yes, do that. If someone is staking out the property, we need to know and watch for it.”

Liam pushed to his feet. “Yes, sir. We did a head count, and no cattle are missing, but that doesn’t mean someone isn’t checking the livestock. I need to wash up.”

“Okay, son.” Joseph Flynn nodded and left the room.

Liam went to the hall bathroom, washed his hands and face, then walked back to the kitchen. His stomach growled when he saw the plate on the bar loaded with meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and corn. He grinned when he saw the glass of milk. His mother was a firm believer in drinking milk. He didn’t mind, but JoJo hated milk, and they would always pour hers into his glass.

He sat on the stool, picked up his fork, and dug in. It didn’t take him long to clean his plate.

“It was great, Mom. As usual.” He stood, took his plate and glass to the sink, and rinsed them.

“I’ll put them in the dishwasher. You go get a shower.” Joanna Flynn smiled. “You need it.”

Liam grinned. “I know. I appreciate dinner. I’ll head home.”

“You will stay here tonight. You’re too tired to even walk through the barn.”

“Mom—”

“Don’t argue with your mother, son. You know you won’t win. You can leave from here in the morning. It’s not like it’s your first time staying here instead of going home. Son, your ass is dragging. Get a shower and go to bed.”

“Yes, sir.” He kissed his mother’s cheek, slapped his dad on the shoulder, and headed upstairs.

Once inside his old room, he entered the bathroom, stripped, and stepped into the shower stall. He placed his hands on the wall under the spray and watched the day’s dirt and grime circle the drain before disappearing. He was

so tired; he wasn't sure he could stand much longer.

After washing, he shut the water off, opened the stall door, and picked up a towel. He ran it over his hair, down his body, and hung it over the door.

Entering the bedroom, he removed clean underwear from the dresser, pulled them on, and crawled under the sheets. He never set an alarm. He got up at the same time every day. His internal clock never let him down.

The following morning, the sun shining through the window awoke him.

"What the fuck?" He threw the sheet off, dressed quickly, and ran down the stairs.

He stopped when he saw his parents drinking coffee at the bar.

"Would you like a cup of coffee, son?" his father asked.

"No. Why didn't you get me up?" He strode to where his hat hung, sat on the bench, and tugged on his boots.

"You needed to sleep, Liam."

"Mom, I have too much to do to sleep late."

"I told Jerry this morning that you'd be late. He's the foreman, Liam. He knows his job."

"Not the point, Dad." Liam stood, took the flannel shirt off the peg, and pulled it on. Then he opened the back door and stepped onto the porch.

"Liam."

"Yes, ma'am?" He turned to look at his mother.

"Stop rushing. There's still work that needs to be done."

Liam sighed. "Yes, ma'am, but you know it runs a certain way."

"One day isn't going to throw it all off. Relax. Please."

"I will, Mom. You two have a nice day. Love you both."

"We love you, Liam," his mother said as he closed the door.

He jogged down the steps, strode across the yard, and entered the barn.

"Liam."

"Jerry. I'm sorry."

"You don't have to apologize to me. You're the boss. If you need to sleep in, do it."

"I might need to sleep in, but I shouldn't. What needs to be done?"

As Jerry told him what else to do, Liam pulled on his gloves, nodded, and saddled his horse.

"I have to call MDOL before I do anything."

"Do we have cattle missing?" Jerry asked him.

"No. After we repaired the fence, the men and I did a head count."

“There’s a reason that fence was down. An animal ran into it, or someone deliberately cut it.”

“Exactly. I’ll call Reece. I’ll be around the barns today.”

“All right, Liam.” Jerry laughed. “Just remember, you let it slide when I sleep in.”

Liam grinned. He knew that would never happen.

“Yeah, just like your internal clock never lets you down.” He shook his head. “Idiot.”

Later in the afternoon, as Liam worked in the barn, he heard a vehicle coming up the drive. He set the rake against the wall and strode to the truck. He saw the logo of The Montana Department of Livestock on the door and watched as Reece Maddox stepped out.

Liam strode to him, put his hand out, and shook Reece’s hand.

“Liam, how are you?”

“Good, Reece. You?”

“Great. What’s up?”

Liam explained about the fence, and Reece asked him to show him. They climbed into Reece’s truck, and Liam gave him directions.

As they walked along the fence, Liam followed Reece and watched as he squatted, removed his cellphone from his pocket, and snapped pictures of the dirt.

“What do you see?” Liam asked.

“Tire tracks.” Reece looked over his shoulder. “Did you have a truck or trailer here recently?”

“Not that I know of, but I can ask the men. They could be old tracks. Sometimes the men check the fence on ATVs instead of horseback.”

“I understand, but I don’t think these are ATV tracks. I’ll get some more photos, but check with your men. Rustling is always going on, but let’s hope this isn’t someone casing the place.”

After Reece left, Liam checked with the men, and none had been there—horseback or otherwise.

Liam sure hoped that someone wasn’t looking to steal his cattle. Damn, rustlers didn’t care who they stole from. It wasn’t their livelihood they were destroying. Thank God for agencies like MDOL. They protected a lot of ranchers and farmers.

Heaving a sigh, Liam entered the barn to muck out the stalls.

Siobhan entered the Clifton diner and smiled as people waved or called out to her. She'd been here a month now and loved the place. The townsfolk were friendly and treated her as their own once she settled in.

Sitting at the bar, she smiled when Connie filled a glass with ice and water and set it on the counter.

"Hi, Siobhan. How are you?"

"I'm fine, Connie. You?"

"Just wonderful, honey. What can I get you?"

"I'll have the fried chicken salad, ranch dressing, with a sweet tea, and I'd like to talk to you when you get a chance."

"Oh. Okay. Let me get your order to Owen. Then I'll be with you."

"Thank you."

Connie smiled, gave Owen the order, and walked to her.

"What do you need, hon?"

"I was told you sometimes rented the apartment above the diner."

"I thought you were living with Fiona."

She sighed. "I am, Connie, but her apartment above her shop is so little. I sleep on the sofa. I want my own place again."

Connie smiled and then walked into the kitchen. Siobhan didn't know if she'd upset her, but that was never her intention. She saw Connie leave the kitchen, pour a glass of sweet tea, and set it on the counter.

"Thank you," Siobhan said. She was a little disappointed that Connie didn't mention the apartment.

"And here." Connie set a key on the counter. "You can check it out; if you like it, it's yours. If you take it, you'll have to go to the back of the building to the stairs, but since you're just going to look, I'll let you go out the service door. The stairs are next to it."

"I love you, Connie."

Connie chuckled. "Of course you do."

"How much do you want monthly?"

"We can discuss that if you decide to take it."

"Thank you so much. I love my grandmother, but don't want to live with her."

"I understand. You're a young woman and should have your own place. I'm sure Fiona would understand."

“I hope so.”

Connie touched her hand. “Of course, she will.”

Siobhan nodded and picked up the key. It shocked her that Connie didn’t hesitate to give it to her. She hoped she could afford it.

After her lunch, she asked Connie for the check and paid for it. Connie led her through the kitchen to the service door and opened it.

“These are the stairs. It’s probably a little dusty. No one has lived in it for a while now.”

“I can’t wait to see it. I won’t be long.”

“Take your time. Please don’t feel you have to take it. You’ll have to walk around if we’re busy and don’t hear you knock. I enjoy having someone upstairs, but only take it if you want.”

“Thank you, Connie. I’ll be downstairs in a few minutes.”

Connie nodded and closed the door. Siobhan stared up the stairs, then trudged up them to the stoop. She unlocked the door, shoved it open, entered the apartment, and fell in love with it. The kitchen had a bar separating it from the small living room. The front wall had tall windows that looked down over the street. She glanced down a hallway and then strode down it. A bedroom sat on each side of the hall, with a bathroom between them. When she looked into the bathroom, she laughed. If nothing else had her wanting this place, the clawfoot tub sold it for her.

She hadn’t realized furniture would be provided, which sealed the deal. She’d have to buy a bed, but that wasn’t a problem. It would be wonderful to sleep in a bed instead of a sofa made at a rock quarry. She shook her head. That wasn’t fair to her grandmother. Fiona cared more about her shop than where she lived, and Siobhan loved that about her.

After making her mind up, she stepped onto the stoop, closed the door, locked it, then ran down the stairs and around to the front door. She opened the door, then sat at the counter to wait for Connie.

When she made her way to her, she smiled.

“What did you think?”

“I’d love to have it, but I only work three nights a week, Connie. I’m not sure I can afford it.”

“Of course, you can. All you have to do is pay your utilities.”

“What do you mean?”

“Honey, I enjoy having someone upstairs. If someone knows someone is living upstairs, they might think differently about doing anything to the diner.

Not that we have a lot of crime, but you never know. The furniture is included. Buy a bed, though.”

“Not a problem, but Connie, I can’t expect to live there for nothing.”

“Siobhan, I haven’t charged one person rent to live there. I’m not going to start now. You need a place to live, and I have a place.”

Siobhan blinked her eyes to keep her tears back. The best decision she made was to move to Clifton, Montana. This town was the best. The people in this town took care of their own and took her into their family.

“I’ll take it. Thank you so much.”

“No problem, hon. You can move in whenever you want. I’m sure it needs a good cleaning.”

“I can do that. I’m off until Thursday. I need to tell Grandma.” Siobhan nibbled on her bottom lip. She would never intentionally hurt her grandmother.

“I’m sure she’ll be fine. It’s not like you’re leaving town. You’re just down the street.”

“I know. I’ll go see her now.” Siobhan stood, leaned over the counter, and hugged Connie.

“I’m sure you’ll love living upstairs. I’ll see you later, hon.”

“I know I’ll love it. Thank you again.”

Siobhan walked out into the sunshine, put her sunglasses on, and smiled. It was now mid-June, and she was eager for summer to arrive.

As she walked to her grandmother’s shop, she couldn’t help but think of Liam. She hadn’t seen him in a couple of weeks, and she missed him.

They had a good time together the last time he was in the bar, but she hadn’t seen him since.

Scarlett told her Liam didn’t come in often because the ranch he ran kept him busy, but Siobhan wished he’d come in again.

“How will you get the man interested if you never see him?”

She opened the door to her grandmother’s shop and entered. The place had candles sitting everywhere, along with craft making supplies. Siobhan knew from experience that the back room had candles still in boxes.

“Hi, honey,” her grandmother said.

“Hi, Grandma. How’s your day?”

“Wonderful, sweetie. How’s yours?”

“Good. Uh, I hate to tell you this, but I’m—”

“Siobhan, please don’t tell me you’re leaving Clifton.”

“Oh, no. I wanted to tell you I found an apartment for me.”

“Well, that’s wonderful, honey. You need your own place.”

Siobhan sighed. “I’m so glad you feel that way.”

“Of course, I do. You can’t take a man back to my place.”

“Grandma!” She smiled when her grandmother cackled.

“I’m old, honey, but I remember having a man come calling.” She hugged her. “You need a good man.”

“I had one.”

“Yes, and Garrison is gone. He’d want you to move on.”

“I know.” She grinned. “I met a man but haven’t seen him lately. He came into the bar a couple times.”

“Who is he?”

“Liam Flynn.”

“Oh, my. That is one good-looking young man.”

“You know him?”

“Yes. I know the Flynn family. They’re wonderful folks. His sister, JoJo, works at the bakery across the street.”

“Well, I need to go there. Maybe I’ll ask her where Liam’s been. I hope he’s all right.”

“He’s a hardworking man. Liam works his ass off on that ranch. He runs it. He has for a while now. His father, Joseph, had a heart attack, and the doctor told him the stress of running the ranch would kill him if he didn’t let someone else take over. So, Liam did, and it runs like clockwork.”

“I didn’t know that, but how would I? He rarely spoke to me.”

“You need to change that. So, when are you moving into your new place, and where is it?”

“I’m moving into the apartment above the diner. Connie is letting me live there.”

“Connie is a wonderful person.”

“She really is. I can’t wait to move there. It’s a nice little apartment and furnished. I just need to buy a bed.”

“I wish I had one for you, honey.”

“Grandma don’t worry about it. I’ll go to the furniture store later. Now that I know I have a place, I can take my time.”

“Yes-oh, a customer. I’ll see you later, honey. Have a nice day.”

Siobhan kissed her grandmother’s cheek, smiled at the people entering the store, then walked out into the sunshine. She looked across the street to the

pink awning of the bakery, Sweet Nothings, and decided she would go inside.

She had to admit she hoped to meet Liam's sister, but how would she bring his name up?

"God, Siobhan, you sound like a stalker."

Taking a deep breath, she waited for a break in traffic, crossed the street, and entered the bakery. The smells alone would make her gain five pounds.

She saw the sign for the ticket dispenser, and even though there were only two people in front of her, she removed the ticket and waited.

"Number fifteen," a woman behind the counter said, smiling.

"That's me." Siobhan stepped forward and handed the woman the ticket.

"Hi. What can I get you?"

Siobhan looked at her name tag to see Courtney on it. This was how her luck ran. Of course, his sister wouldn't be here when she visited the bakery.

"That is a tough question. Could I get a vanilla cupcake with lemon icing?"

"Of course. Just one?"

"Yes, please."

The bell chimed above the door, and a petite woman with dark hair entered. She had Liam's dark hair but didn't resemble him.

"I'm sorry, Courtney. Western Wear was so busy." The woman smiled at Siobhan as she went behind the glass cases.

"Hello, welcome to Sweet Nothings. I'm Sloane James. I own the bakery. I don't believe I've seen you here before."

"This is my first time here, and I can tell already that I'll be back. I moved here recently. My grandmother owns O'Brien's Candles and Crafts store."

"Fiona is your grandmother. She is such a sweet woman."

"Yes, she is. I'm Siobhan O'Brien." She put her hand out to Sloane.

"Siobhan? My husband's niece is named Siobhan. I think it's a beautiful name."

"Thank you. How many people work here?" *Really? Don't be so obvious.* She had to stop herself from rolling her eyes.

"Four right now, including me. I am looking to hire someone, though. Are you interested?"

"Oh, no. I was just curious. I work at Dewey's as a bartender."

"I haven't been to Dewey's in ages. Scarlett and Noah are so nice."

"I love working for her." Siobhan glanced around. "It's a great place you have here."

“Thanks.” Sloane smiled.

“Sloane? We’re low on croissants,” a woman said as she came from the kitchen.

“Thank you, JoJo. I’ll get to work on those. Siobhan, it was nice meeting you. I hope you come in again.”

Siobhan nodded and looked at the woman Sloane had called JoJo but saw a blonde. Liam had dark hair, so wouldn’t his sister? *Seriously, Siobhan. How many women named JoJo work in this bakery?*

“I’m sure I will. I have to go shopping for a bed. I’m moving into the apartment above the diner.”

“Really? I lived there before I married Holt.”

“It’s a great place.”

“It is. Just be careful of those steps in the winter. I’d better get to work. Have a great day, Siobhan.”

“I will, Sloane. You too.” Siobhan looked at JoJo. “You too.”

“Thanks. I’m JoJo Flynn. It’s nice to meet you.”

“Flynn? Are you related to Liam?” *Seriously?* She did everything she could not to roll her eyes at the question.

“He’s my brother. How do you know him?”

“I work at Dewey’s, and he was in there a couple of weeks ago. We did shots together.”

“Liam was in Dewey’s? Wow! He rarely comes into town since he’s so busy.”

“I’ve seen him there maybe three times, but not lately.”

JoJo grinned. “They’re branding calves.”

“I have no idea what that means.” Siobhan laughed.

JoJo laughed. “I take it you didn’t grow up on a ranch?”

“I didn’t.” She tilted her head. “Liam has dark hair. I never would have picked you for his sister.”

“He probably wouldn’t either.” JoJo laughed. “My grandmother was blonde. The rest of my family has dark hair like Liam.”

Siobhan grinned. “He’s so handsome.”

JoJo laughed. “He’s a good man. Very hard working.”

“Sounds like it. Well, I’d better get going. I need to buy a bed. It was so nice meeting you, JoJo. If you see Liam, tell him I said hi.” She picked up the white bag with Sweet Nothings, scrolled in pink, smiled, and walked outside.

“Tell him I said hi? God, Siobhan, could you sound any more desperate?”

she muttered as she crossed Main Street to head for the furniture store.

Chapter Three

Liam strode through the barn to his truck, climbed in, and drove home. It was past eight, and he hadn't eaten all day. He needed a shower before anything. He stopped the vehicle at the back door, stepped out, walked up the steps, entered the house to see Rebel waiting for him, and rubbed her ears.

After hanging up his hat, he sat on the bench, took off his boots, and tried to get the energy to stand. With a heavy sigh, he got to his feet, walked to his bedroom, and entered the bathroom to shower.

Once he finished, he walked to the kitchen and opened the fridge to find something, but nothing appealed. He was so damn tired.

With a deep sigh, he shoved the door closed, walked to his bedroom, stripped off his T-shirt and sweatpants, and crawled between the sheets. The bed dipped when Rebel jumped on it. She made several circles and then lay down with a heavy sigh.

"Yeah, I know how you feel, girl," he murmured as he touched her head, and she nudged him with her nose.

The following day, he entered the barn and had the men round up the calves for branding. They were around three months old and needed the Flynn brand, especially since the fence had been down. Nothing happened since they made the repairs, so maybe an animal ran into it.

Rustling happened daily, and ranchers and farmers had to pay attention to their livestock. Liam knew he'd call MDOL again if he had to.

"Hey, Liam," Jerry said as he walked toward him.

"Jerry. The men are rounding up the calves. Once they get them here, we'll get them in the chutes."

"Sounds good, boss. The pens and chutes are ready."

"All right. I'm going to ride up to check that fence."

"Okay. Let me know if you need the men to fix it."

Liam saluted. "Will do."

Walking to the tack room, he knew Jerry was following him, so he turned to look at him.

"Something wrong?"

"You look tired, Liam."

Liam grinned. "It's because I am."

"You're doing too much. This ranch runs perfectly, but you still run yourself ragged."

"It's a never-ending job, Jerry. You know that."

"I do, but don't get so tired that you can't do anything."

"I'll try. I'm going to relax this evening at Dewey's. I met a woman there."

"Oh, yeah? Who?"

"Her name is Siobhan O'Brien. She's a new bartender."

"Well then, you need to see her."

"I know. I'll go tonight if I'm not too tired when I get home."

"Hell, you won't leave the house once you get home. You're going to collapse like your father did if you don't slow the fuck down."

"I get it."

"Do you? Liam, you cannot do it all. We're here for that."

Liam nodded, but he knew he'd never slow down. This ranch was his responsibility, and he'd work it until he no longer could. No one loved this ranch more than he did. No one.

At eight o'clock, Liam stood at the chute, watching the calves get branded. Each time one bawled, its mother would.

"This is the last one," Jerry said as the calf ran into the chute.

"Good. That will do it for tonight. Everyone can go home once this little girl is done," Liam said.

"Why don't you go, Liam? If you want to see that woman tonight, you need to get a move on."

Liam shook his head. "I'm not sure I can drive into town."

"I knew it." Jerry shook his head.

Liam looked at him. "All right, I'll go. Damn."

Jerry chuckled. "You'll feel better once you get there and see her."

"See who?" a ranch hand asked.

"The new bartender at Dewey's," Jerry said.

"Oh, man. I've seen her. She's beautiful. Are you dating her, boss?"

"No, because he's too tired to drive there and ask her out." Jerry folded his arms.

"I said I'd go. Damn, Jerry. You're worse than my parents."

Jerry slapped him on the shoulder. "We all want to see you settle down. To keep this ranch going."

“I don’t need a woman for that.”

“The hell you don’t. You need a woman to stand beside you. Run this ranch with you. Have kids to pass it down to. God knows Monica wouldn’t.”

Liam sighed. “I’m going home to shower. Then I’ll go to Dewey’s. Happy now?”

“I’ll let you know about that. I have to actually see you leave and head to town.”

“Fuck you,” Liam snapped, making Jerry laugh.

“Truth hurt?”

Liam shook his head and headed for his truck. When he heard Jerry laughing again, he threw his middle finger at him and grinned when Jerry laughed harder.

Siobhan was sure she hadn’t taken a breath in hours. It was after ten, and it looked like it wouldn’t slow down until closing. She huffed. She missed seeing Liam, but he didn’t owe her anything. They did shots together, and that didn’t make up a relationship of any kind.

“Damn, is it me, or are we swamped tonight?” Laura asked her as she was making a mixed drink.

“I was thinking the same thing. I feel like I’m on automation. Take an order, make a drink, set it on the bar, repeat.”

Laura laughed. “It can get hectic. Dominic arrived twenty minutes ago, and I haven’t had the chance to say hi to him.”

“I know—”

“Liam’s here,” Scarlett said as she passed by.

Siobhan gasped and almost dropped the drink in her hand. She quickly set it on the bar and glanced around. There he was. At the bar. *With a woman...*

“Damn it.”

“He just got here, and she was already here. I waited on her.” Laura smiled.

“Oh, God. Laura, I love you.”

“I love you too. Now, go take his order.”

Siobhan grinned. “Thanks. I think I will.”

She walked to where he sat. The woman talked to him, but he paid little attention. He looked tired.

“Liam? What can I get you?”

“Hey, Irish. How have you been?”

“Wonderful. You?”

“Good.”

“I haven’t seen you in a while.”

“Branding season for calves.”

She grinned. “I have no idea what that means.”

When he chuckled, she wanted to straddle him and ride him.

“It’s a busy time. Just take my word for it.”

“Okay. Do you want a beer?”

“No, thanks. Could I get a cup of coffee?”

“Of course.” She walked to the coffeepot, filled a mug, and returned to him. “Here you go.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” She stared into his eyes until he glanced away, and she sighed.

She turned away from him, walked along the bar, and took orders. She finally had to admit he wasn’t interested in her and never would be.

The thing was, she had never been so attracted to a man so fast. Even Garrison had to win her over. But it was instant with Liam, and it did her no good. It was time to get over wanting him and move on.

“Hey, sweetheart, can I get a beer?”

Siobhan sighed and turned to look at the man. He was good-looking. With a smile, she moved closer to the bar.

“Bottle or tap?”

“Tap is fine, hon.” He grinned.

Siobhan smiled, got his beer, and moved on to the next patron. She tried to enjoy the evening but was so down about Liam. It was silly, but her heart dropped when he turned those beautiful dark blue eyes her way.

As the night went on, she laughed and flirted with the cowboys. She led none of them on and went home alone. It had been so long since she had sex, she was sure she had forgotten how to do it. She glanced over at Liam.

“No doubt he could remind you,” she muttered.

When Laura rang the bell for the last call, everyone ordered as fast as they could. Siobhan kept making drinks or handing out beer. She took a deep breath and walked to where Liam sat.

“Liam? Do you need anything?”

“A nice bed to fall into.” He smiled.

She folded her arms on the bar. “You look tired.”

“Irish, tired is an understatement.”

“You shouldn’t drive if you’re that tired.”

“I’ll be fine.”

“No. I can tell you’re exhausted. You can sleep on my sofa.”

“I’ll be fine, darlin’. I appreciate the gesture, but I’ll go home.”

“Of course, you will,” she snapped.

“What the hell does that mean?”

She shook her head. “Nothing. Have a good night.”

“Siobhan?”

“What?”

“What did you mean by that?”

Taking a deep breath, she gazed into his eyes and told him.

“Liam, I have done almost everything to make you notice me, and it’s done me no good. You don’t like me for some reason, and that’s fine, but I don’t know what I did to you. You can’t even sleep on my sofa. Please be careful driving home.” She walked away from him and headed for Scarlett’s office down the hallway, wondering where her courage had come from.

“What the hell?” Liam muttered as he watched her disappear into the crowd.

Shaking his head, he waved Laura over to pay for his tab, but glanced toward the hallway. *Women.*

He stood and pushed through the crowd, changed his mind, and went down the hallway. He needed to talk to her.

“Trying to get me to notice her? Oh, I noticed, Irish. I definitely noticed,” he murmured as he strode along the hall.

He had no idea where she’d gone, but she stepped into the hall as he was about to turn around and leave when a door opened. She came to a halt when she saw him.

“Liam? I thought you’d be gone.”

“So, you came out because you thought I was gone?”

She raised her chin. “Yes.”

He did his best not to grin. At least she was honest.

“Why is that, Siobhan?” He stepped closer, making her move back and come up against the door.

“Because I’m embarrassed by what I said.” She nibbled on her lower lip, and he bit his to keep from groaning.

“About me not noticing you?” She nodded. “You’re wrong, Irish. I noticed.”

“Okay, you might have noticed, but you’re not interested.”

Liam chuckled. “You’re wrong... again.”

She placed her hands on her hips. “Bullshit, Liam. You had other women, and not once saw that I was interested in you.”

“Now that I didn’t notice. You hid it well, Siobhan.” He shrugged.

“You didn’t see it because you were with other women.”

“You make it sound like I was with a different woman every night.”

“I only know about the nights you were here.”

“I went home with one of them. I never touched the others. Which was only two. Don’t make me out to be a man-whore,” he snapped.

“I’m not saying that. I’m saying you didn’t notice that I was interested in you because you were with another woman.” She glared at him.

He stared into her emerald green eyes, glanced at her lips, back into her eyes, then leaned in and pressed his lips to hers. He wrapped his arms around her waist when she groaned and pulled her tight against him. Her arms slipped around his waist as he deepened the kiss and slid his tongue into her mouth.

He moved his hands down to her ass and squeezed. She pressed her hips against him, and he slowly raised his hips.

“Damn,” he whispered.

“My thoughts exactly,” she whispered back. “Are you sure you don’t want to sleep on my couch?”

“I’d rather sleep with you.”

She put her hands against his shoulders and pushed, making him step back.

“I’m not ready for that. I’m offering my sofa, so you don’t fall asleep while driving home. Nothing else.”

“I’ll be fine. The coffee helped.” He straightened. “Maybe I’ll see you tomorrow night. Goodnight, Siobhan O’Brien.” He touched the brim of his hat and walked away from her before he dragged her into a room and fucked her.

“Shit,” he muttered as he walked through the crowd.

He stepped outside, took a deep breath of the warm air, then walked to his truck to head home.

Once inside the cab, he looked at the bar’s double doors and shook his head. It was probably best not to come back. He knew he was asking for a heartache if he did. Siobhan was great, and as much as he’d love to know her, he also knew it wouldn’t last between them, and she didn’t seem the type to do one-night stands. Her offering her sofa proved that. It would be best to stay away.

Summer was in full swing, Siobhan thought as she hurried along the sidewalk to get out of the heat. It was July, and the Fourth of July festival started this weekend. She wanted to experience it. It was Friday, and people were setting up.

Connie told her Main Street was closed to traffic, so people could set up booths. Siobhan smiled as she glanced around, seeing the red, white, and blue streamers everywhere and ribbons hanging on street lamps.

Booths sold crafts, vegetables, fruit, and baked goods. She couldn’t wait to do a little shopping.

She wondered if Liam showed up for the festival. She hadn’t seen him in weeks. She had been so disappointed that he didn’t show up that Saturday night. She thought he’d be back, especially after that kiss.

Siobhan touched her lips. The man knew how to kiss, and she had been so happy about that, but now he didn’t come around. Was he that busy, or was it that he just didn’t like her?

She shook her head. He thought the kiss was good too. Good? What an understatement. It had been toe-curling, and she wanted more, but obviously, he didn’t.

“Damn him,” she murmured as she walked through the parking lot to the stairs around the back of the diner.

After climbing the stairs, she unlocked the door and entered the apartment. She loved living here. She added small personal items, and it finally looked like home. She plopped onto the sofa and thought about Liam.

What was it with him? Did he only want a one-night stand? She shook her head. She didn’t do those. Although, after he kissed her, she considered it.

She almost caved when he told her he'd rather sleep with her.

"You've never slept with a man before knowing him. Why start now?" She sighed. "Because he's so damn hot, and I bet he knows how to use those sexy lips on a woman."

Picking up the remote, she aimed it at the TV but found nothing worth watching. With a sigh, she stood and decided to get breakfast at the diner and walk around town. She couldn't wait for the festival.

She entered the diner and smiled when some patrons waved or called out to her. She sat at the counter, picked up the menu, and scanned it.

"Hi, Siobhan. How are you today?" Connie asked her as she poured her a glass of ice water.

"Wonderful, Connie. You?"

"Same. Are you going to the festival?"

"I will tomorrow. I work tonight."

"How's the job going?"

"I love it."

"It's nice to have a job you love."

"Yes, it is. Um, I'll have a western omelet."

"You got it, hon. I'll get that to you soon."

Siobhan nodded and glanced around the diner. She knew a lot of the people could be tourists. There was a bed-and-breakfast, along with a guest ranch in Spring City, that people flocked to every year. The little towns thrived.

Some people loved it here so much they moved here. She was one of them. When she finally visited her grandmother, she fell in love with Clifton, and now there was a man here she desperately wanted. A lot of good that did her.

He tells her he's interested in her but no longer shows up. *Men.*

"Can't live with 'em and can't shoot 'em."

"You have to be talking about men," a voice beside her said.

Siobhan looked to see a woman smiling at her.

"I was. They say we're difficult to understand. I beg to differ."

The woman laughed and put her hand out.

"I'm Lydia Griffin."

"Siobhan O'Brien," she said as she shook her hand.

"Beautiful name. Are you new here?"

"I've been here a few months now. My grandmother is Fiona O'Brien."

“Oh, I love Fiona. I love that store of hers. My husband bought me a set of candles from there a few years ago for Christmas. I have a thing for candles.”

“She has some beautiful ones.”

“Yes.” Lydia looked at the door when the bell chimed, and a big grin lit up her beautiful face.

Siobhan glanced over her shoulder to see a very handsome man enter. He smiled when he saw Lydia, walked to her, kissed her lips, and sat on the stool beside her.

“Colson, this is Siobhan O’Brien. She moved here recently. Siobhan, this is my husband, Dr. Colson Griffin.”

“It’s nice to meet you. What type of doctor?”

“Veterinarian. It’s nice to meet you too, Siobhan.”

Connie set her lunch on the counter and took Lydia and Colson’s orders. Siobhan mentally shook her head. Not every man she’d seen or met was drop-dead gorgeous, but a good bit of them were. She sighed. None appealed to her more than Liam Flynn did, though.

She picked up her fork and dug into her omelet. It was time to get over him.

Liam woke up and swore when he saw the sun streaming through the windows.

“Damn it.”

Tossing off the sheet, he entered the bathroom and quickly showered. Once dressed, he ran downstairs and strode into the kitchen to see his mother standing at the sink.

“Mom,” Liam chastised.

“It wasn’t me this time,” she said.

“Liam, come to my office,” his father said from the kitchen doorway.

“I have to get to work—”

“Did I ask, Liam?”

“No, sir.” He watched his father turn and walk off. His boot heels clacked along the hallway. Liam looked at his mother, but she shrugged.

Taking a deep breath, he followed his father to his office and entered the room.

“Close the door, son.”

“Yes, sir.” Liam shoved it closed, then stood in front of the desk.

“Take a seat.”

“I’ll stand.”

“We’re going to talk. Sit the hell down. Now.”

Liam sighed, sat in one of the wingback chairs, and stared at his father. When he didn’t speak, Liam raised his eyebrow.

“I want you to take a week off—”

Liam shot to his feet. “No. I can’t. There is too much going on.”

“Do you think you have a say in this, Liam? You’re the manager here, but I am still the owner, and until I’m not, you will take orders from me. Look, son, you have been running around like a chicken with its head cut off since you and Monica broke up.” He held his hand up when Liam opened his mouth to speak. “It’s none of my business what’s going on with you two, but this ranch *is* my business, and I will not have you so exhausted that you can barely stand. You will take this vacation, and if you’re still tired when you come back, I’ll make your ass take another one. Are we clear?”

“Yes, sir,” he muttered as he sat back down.

“Good. I’ve already told Jerry, and he agrees. He can run the ranch for a damn week. If he has questions, he knows where to find me. He is *not* to find you. In fact, I don’t want you near the barns. Jerry and the hands will let me know if you show up to work. You will get rested before you have a damn heart attack like I did. If you only need the week, you’ll be back in time for the cattle drive. If you need another week, you’ll miss it.”

“I have never missed a cattle drive,” Liam growled.

His father smirked. “I know.”

Liam sat forward. “Dad, I don’t want—”

“Tough shit. You will start today.”

“*Today?*”

“Since you slept in, you can enjoy the rest of the day.”

“I slept in because no one got me up,” Liam snapped.

“Since when did you need someone to wake you? The festival is this weekend in town. Go have some fun for once in your life.”

“Yes, sir.” He stood and walked toward the door. “I have fun,” he muttered.

“I heard that, and if you can tell me when you last had fun, I won’t make you take a vacation.”

Liam said nothing as he opened the door, left the room, and pulled the

door closed. He gritted his teeth when he heard his father laugh.

“I didn’t think so,” he called through the door.

Liam entered the kitchen to see his mother sitting at the bar with a cup of coffee. She looked at him and raised her eyebrows.

“Did you know he was going to do this?”

“Yes. I agreed with him.”

“Mom, I don’t need time off.”

“You do. You’ve been in a slump. Is it because of Monica? Do you want her back?”

“No. It’s not so much her as any woman. I can’t find one who would stand beside me and love this ranch as much as I do.”

“You’ll find her. Monica wasn’t the one.”

“How did you do it?”

She shrugged. “I fell in love with your father and wanted to be wherever he was. This ranch has been in his family for generations. I couldn’t tell him to give that up, even if I wanted to. I love this ranch as much as he does, though I think you love it even more. You will find someone.”

“I suppose. I’m going to go into town and have breakfast at the diner. Since I’m... *on vacation*,” he practically spat the words.

He watched his mother put her hand over her mouth, and he knew it was so he wouldn’t see her grin. When he narrowed his eyes at her, she laughed.

“Have a wonderful vacation, honey.”

“Whatever. I’m going to quit staying here when I’m tired.” He walked out the door, slamming it behind him. He clenched his fists when he heard his mother laughing.

He trotted down the steps, strode to the barn, entered, clenched his jaw, and practically marched through it and out the other end to his truck. He was furious about this.

After climbing into his vehicle, he fired it up, put it in gear, and pressed the gas, throwing gravel and dust around the truck.

When he reached town, he parked in the church parking lot since Main Street was closed, then walked to the diner.

He opened the door, making the bell jingle, and a few people waved or called out to him. He saw Siobhan at the counter and took the stool beside her. He saw Lydia and Colson Griffin on the other side and nodded at them.

“Hey, Irish,” he said.

Siobhan looked at him and back at her breakfast.

“Liam.”

“Damn, why are you mad at me?”

Siobhan set her fork down, turned on the stool, and glared at him.

“I haven’t seen you in weeks. You said you’d return to Dewey’s, and you didn’t. I’m supposed to be all nice?”

“I said, maybe. I didn’t say for sure.”

“Oh, well, hell. That makes it all right, doesn’t it? Look, Liam, I know I have no say in anything you do, but I thought we’d get to know each other after that kiss.” She shrugged. “Apparently, you don’t want to, and that’s fine, but you never should have kissed me,” she hissed.

“I’m sorry for not going back. I am *not*, however, sorry for that kiss.”

“Well, enjoy it while you can. It’s the first and last time you’ll ever get from me.”

“Is that right? Well, that’s a real shame, darlin’, because I sure enjoyed it.”

“Hi, Liam. What can I get you, hon?”

“Hey, Connie. I’ll have the same as Ms. O’Brien.”

“Good choice. I’ll be back soon with your order. Siobhan, do you need anything, hon?”

“Another place to sit,” Siobhan muttered, but she grinned when he chuckled.

“Ouch,” he said.

“So, why are you here? Shouldn’t you be working?”

“I’m... on vacation.”

“Vacation? I didn’t think you took those.”

“I don’t. My father insisted. He thinks I’m working too hard.” He shook his head.

“Is he right?”

Liam shrugged. “If I’m not rested in a week, I’ll miss the cattle drive, and I never miss it. I look forward to it.”

“Then you’ll just have to get rested, won’t you?”

“I suppose. Are you going to the festival?”

“I am. Tomorrow before work. Are you?”

“I don’t have anything else to do,” he muttered.

Siobhan laughed. “I hope you have a good time.”

“I’m sure I will. I haven’t been to it for years.”

“I can’t wait.”

“Since I’m on vacation, maybe I’ll go to Dewey’s tonight.” He stared into

her eyes.

“Do what you want.” She shrugged.

“Damn, Siobhan. I said I was sorry.”

She sighed. “Yes, you did, and I accept your apology. Maybe I’ll see you tonight.”

He leaned close. “I sure hope so, darlin’.”

He winked when she looked at him, and she rolled her eyes, making him grin. Yeah, he’d love to get to know her, but he didn’t need the pain of getting involved with someone. She was beautiful, with her dark red hair and green eyes. Her porcelain skin was flawless except for a few freckles across the bridge of her nose.

Connie set his breakfast on the counter, filled his coffee cup, and made her way to the other customers. Liam picked up his fork and dug into the fluffy omelet. He moaned when the flavors hit his tongue.

“Good?”

“Fantastic. It’s been a while since I’ve had one of these. Connie has the best omelets.”

“First one for me, but it won’t be the last.” She looked at him. “Unlike that kiss.”

Liam blew out a laugh and then dug into his food again. She had a great sense of humor, and he loved a woman who could make him laugh.

Siobhan waved Connie over. “Could I get the check?”

“Sure.” Connie went to the kitchen, returned, and placed the check on the counter.

Siobhan reached for it, but Liam took it.

“I’ll get it.”

She snatched it from him.

“No, thank you.” She stood, removed the money from her pocket, and walked to the register. She paid Connie, and without looking back, walked out of the diner.

“What did you do?” Connie asked him with her hands on her hips.

“She’s pissed at me.”

“I can see that. What did you do?” she repeated.

Liam shook his head. “It would take too long to tell you.”

“Well, you need to make it better. She’s a lovely person.”

“Don’t be a matchmaker, Connie.”

Connie laughed. “Too late.”

“Could I get my check too?”

“Yes.”

After paying his bill, he walked out of the diner and glanced up and down the sidewalk. The town was packed with tourists and people working on the festival booths. A few women passed him and smiled. He touched the brim of his hat and grinned when they giggled. He saw Siobhan crossing the street but didn't go after her. He'd go to Dewey's tonight and try to get her to stop being angry with him. Women were a pain in the ass, but he loved them. He wasn't sure what he would get into if he took her out.

“Only one way to find out, Flynn.”

He crossed the street and walked to the bakery. He could use something sweet. He entered the shop, strode to the ticket dispenser, removed one, and sat at a table.

It was busy, but he didn't see his sister. Then he grinned when Courtney came from the kitchen and checked who was next. He knew he wasn't, so he didn't move. The door opened, and he glanced over to see a woman enter.

She smiled shyly at him and then removed the ticket from the dispenser. She was pretty, but he didn't know her. She stood beside the glass cases. Her hair was dark and flowed over her shoulders.

“Number twenty,” Courtney called out.

“That's me.” Liam walked to the counter.

“Hi, Liam.”

“Courtney. How are you?”

“Great. What can I get you?”

He gave her his order and stepped back so the next person could place their order.

“Hi, Shay. I'll be right with you,” Courtney said to the woman.

“Hi, Courtney. That's fine. I'm in no hurry.”

Courtney smiled and then looked at him.

“Liam? Here's your order.”

He paid her and picked up the bag.

“Where's JoJo?”

“She took today off.”

“Oh. Okay.”

“She'll probably be at the festival.”

Liam nodded. “I'll get with her later. Have a great day, Courtney, and tell Nevada I said hello.” He turned, touched the brim of his hat at the woman,

and walked outside.

He glanced up and down the street. Now what was he supposed to do?

Blowing a frustrated breath, he headed for his truck and drove home. He'd go fishing at the pond. That was a good way to waste time. He needed to do something before he went to Dewey's later.

"You told yourself it was best to stay away," he muttered.

Shaking his head, he knew he couldn't. He wanted to see Siobhan again.

Chapter Four

Siobhan's feet were killing her. The bar was so busy that she barely had time to breathe. She didn't think she had ever worked this hard.

Even at the bar in Denver. She couldn't help but smile, though, because she loved it. After setting a beer on the bar, she moved to the next customer.

"What can I get you?"

"Beer. On tap is fine, sweetheart." The cowboy grinned at her.

"Coming right up." She got a frosted mug from the freezer, put it under the tap, poured beer into it, and then placed it in front of him.

"Hey, darlin', could I get a beer?"

She froze at his voice and closed her eyes. Even after the way she left him at the diner today, she was hoping he'd come to the bar. Taking a deep breath, she opened her eyes, and faced him.

"Bottle or tap?"

"Tap is fine, Irish," Liam said.

Siobhan nodded, got his beer, and placed it on the bar.

"Thank you."

She nodded because she couldn't say anything to save her life. He was here, and it made her night seem a little brighter. It depended on where it went from here. She moved along the bar, refilling drinks until it was time for her break.

"Scarlett, is it okay to take my break, or do you need me?"

Scarlett glanced around. "Go take it. We'll be fine."

Siobhan smiled, walked around the bar, and headed for the restroom. She saw Liam at the bar, and a woman was talking to him. Could they not leave him alone? Shaking her head, she entered the restroom.

When she opened the door and stepped back into the hall, she saw Liam leaning against the opposite wall with his arms folded and his head tilted down. He raised his head and stared at her.

"What are you doing?"

"Waiting on you, darlin'."

She leaned against the wall beside the restroom door and folded her arms.

"Why?" she asked, and butterflies took flight in her belly when a slow

grin lifted his lips.

He stepped toward her and stopped within a foot. She gazed into his eyes and watched as he glanced at her lips and back into her eyes.

“Do you remember the last time we were here?” he murmured.

“Yes.” She swallowed hard.

“So do I. I can’t get it out of my head.” He placed his face in the crook of her neck.

He smelled fantastic! She closed her eyes and shivered when his lips caressed the skin under her ear. She held her breath when he moved his lips across her cheek to her lips and hovered them above hers. She opened her eyes and stared into his.

“Liam,” she whispered and moaned when he pressed his lips to hers.

He pulled her tight against him and deepened the kiss. Siobhan slid her arms around his waist and kissed him back. She moved her tongue into his mouth, making him groan.

“Get a room,” someone said, and they sprang apart.

Liam grinned at her, and she smiled.

“Busted.” She laughed.

“I would like to get to know you, Siobhan, but only if it’s what you want.”

“I do, but you can’t just disappear on me. I’m not asking for a schedule. I just want to be kept in the loop.”

He nodded. “I get that. We’ll talk.”

“Okay.”

“Can I sleep on your couch tonight?” He grinned.

Siobhan laughed. “We’ll discuss it.”

“Can I wait for you until you’re finished tonight?”

“I’d like that.”

He nodded, kissed her lips, and smiled.

“Me too.”

“I’d better get back. We’re slammed tonight.”

“Yes, ma’am. I’ll be at the bar.”

She stared at him, cleared her throat, and quickly returned to the bar. Her lips tingled, and she would rather be back in the hallway, kissing him.

Going behind the bar, she waited on customers and kept her eyes off Liam. He was too tempting.

“I’m glad you cut your break short. We are swamped,” Scarlett said as she made a drink beside her.

“I know.” Siobhan poured a beer and then set it on the bar.

“I noticed Liam followed you,” Laura said.

“Uh, yeah.”

When neither woman said anything, she looked at them to see them staring at her.

“What?”

Scarlett laughed. “Did you talk, or was he going to the bathroom?”

“We... talked.” She mentally winced at the hesitation.

“Talked, huh?” Laura reached for a shot glass.

“Yes—” She stopped when Scarlett snorted. “What?”

“I saw you two in the hallway.” Scarlett grinned.

Siobhan gasped, then covered her face with her hands.

“I’m so embarrassed.”

Laura and Scarlett laughed.

“Did it look like one of those, ‘I want to be kissed like that right now,’ kind of kisses, Scarlett?”

“The kind that makes you jealous that your man isn’t here doing that with you, kind of kiss, Laura.”

Siobhan dropped her hands and narrowed her eyes.

“I hate you both,” she snapped, then laughed when they did.

“Was it as good as it looked, Siobhan?”

“Honestly? It was probably even better than it looked.” She grinned. “He’s waiting for me after work.”

“Take that man home. I swear, I will never speak to you again if you don’t.” Laura put her hands on her hips.

“I think I will.”

When Laura rang the bell, Siobhan’s nerves kicked in. She took orders for the next hour and kept her eyes off Liam.

Liam watched Siobhan refill drinks, but she never looked at him. He hoped he could go home with her tonight. One-night stands weren’t her thing, but he was surprised to realize that he might want more than that with her.

“Hi,” a soft voice said.

He glanced at the woman beside him. She was a beautiful blonde, but he was too interested in the redhead behind the bar.

“Ma’am.”

“Are you here alone?”

“Uh, not really.” He winced at his answer.

“Not really?” She slid onto the stool next to him.

“I’m waiting for someone.”

“I... see. It’s kind of late for her to show up, isn’t it?”

Liam chuckled. “She’s behind the bar.”

The woman nodded. “I see. Well, she’s a lucky woman. I hope you both have an enjoyable night.”

“Thank you.” He watched her get off the stool and weave through the crowd. No doubt looking for a cowboy to take home. Hell, he had been that cowboy a few times himself.

People started leaving the bar, and he wasn’t sure what to do. He didn’t know if Siobhan stayed to clean up or if she left right away. He caught her attention and waved her over.

“Yes?”

“Do you stay after?”

“Yes, I’m usually out of here by two-thirty.”

“Okay. I’m going to go outside to wait for you.”

Her eyes met his, and he was sure someone had kicked him in the gut.

“All right. I’ll be out as soon as I can.”

“No worries, darlin’. I’m on vacation,” he said with a grin.

When she laughed, he felt relieved that she wasn’t angry any longer.

“I’ll see you soon.” She smiled at him and then picked up glasses and beer bottles on the bar.

Liam paid his tab, nodded, and walked out of the bar. Once outside, he strode to the bench and sat.

A little while later, he saw her exit the bar and glance around. He got to his feet and strode towards her.

“Siobhan.”

“Hi. Do you want to talk here or at my apartment?”

“Your apartment is fine.”

“All right. Let’s go then.”

He nodded, but he frowned when she started walking across the parking lot.

“Where are you parked?”

She stopped and turned to look at him.

“I walked.”

“You... walked? Are you crazy?”

“I live over the diner.”

“I don’t care where you live. No woman should be out alone this late.”

When her hands went to her hips, his first thought was, when will you learn not to piss off a woman?

“It’s a few blocks.”

“A lot can happen in a few blocks. I know there isn’t a lot of crime here, but not everyone in that bar is from here. There is a good bit of tourists here.”

“I’m fine.” She shrugged and began walking again.

“Son of a bitch,” Liam muttered as he ran to his truck, climbed in, then drove after her. “What a damn hardhead.”

He drove alongside her and put the window down.

“Siobhan, get in the truck.”

“How do I know you’re not a person I need to be cautious around?”

Liam stopped the truck, pinched the bridge of his nose, and huffed. He got out of the vehicle and jogged after her. He grasped her arm and turned her to look at him.

“You know better.”

“Do I? I don’t know you at all, Liam.”

“Let’s change that.”

“I will not be a one-night stand for you, Liam Flynn, so you can leave if that’s what you think.”

“We already discussed this. I know you’re not, so let’s see if this can lead to something.”

“Don’t you dare break my heart, Liam Flynn.”

He placed his hand over his heart. “I promise I will try not to do that. Hell, I don’t want you to break mine, either. Been there.”

“So have I.”

“Please, get in the truck. I’ll take you home.”

She sighed, walked to the passenger side, and climbed inside. She put her seatbelt on and looked at him.

“Happy now?” she snapped.

He turned his head away and chuckled.

“Sure.” He drove out of the parking lot, along Main Street, to the diner. He glanced at her.

“Around the back to the stairs.”

Once he parked by the steps, he exited the vehicle and walked around to get the door for her, but she was already out.

“I could have gotten that for you.”

“I can open a door.”

“I know that, but I was raised to do that.”

Siobhan grinned at him. “I know you cowboys have manners, but I’m more than capable of opening a door.”

He nodded, followed her up the stairs, and had a hell of a time keeping his eyes off her legs. That damn outfit she wore emphasized them, and he didn’t even want to think about her ass being barely covered. Shit. If he didn’t get himself under control, he’d embarrass himself. He was sure there had never been a woman he wanted more. Not even Monica.

She inserted the key at the stoop, opened the door, and nodded for him to follow her. Oh, hell yeah. He’d follow her.

Once inside, he hung his hat on a hall tree, raking his fingers through his hair. He was never nervous around women, but this one had him on edge. He wanted her so much but didn’t want to blow this.

“Take a seat. I’m going to change. I’ll only be a minute. Would you like something to drink?”

“No, thanks.”

“All right. I’ll be right back.”

“Yes, ma’am.” He sauntered to the sofa and sat to wait for her.

He glanced around the little apartment. It was a nice place. He knew the apartment was here, but he’d never been in it. He turned to see her walking from the hallway wearing a T-shirt and lounge pants.

“This is a nice place.”

“I love it.” She sat in the recliner and stared at him.

“You’re not going to make this easy, are you?” He smirked when she smiled.

“Should I?”

“I suppose not.” He sighed. “Siobhan, I went through a breakup recently. I’m so busy working at the ranch. At first, she was fine with my hours until she experienced them. I’m up before the sun and go to bed way past when it sets.”

“I’m sure you work hard, Liam, but you get time off—”

“That’s where you’re wrong. The ranch is constantly busy. It keeps you on your toes. Some diseases can kill an entire herd of cattle. Calves and cows

die all the time. Each is important, so you've lost a lot of money and time when you lose one. It's not just the cattle, it's the function of the ranch. It has to run perfectly, or money will be lost. Then there's rustlers. The ranch has to be kept on its toes. There's maintenance too, plus the stalls must be mucked out every day. It's not for everyone, but I love it."

"I can tell, but you have to make time for yourself, and not by a forced vacation."

"I'm the manager. I have to overlook everything."

"Surely you're not the only one who can run it."

"There's a foreman. He's who's running it this week. My dad will consult with him. I don't do that. I do what I think is best. I don't have to take time to talk it over with Dad. I know what the ranch needs."

"I guess, but we all need time to relax."

"Relax? What's that?"

She laughed. "I'll explain it sometime."

He got to his feet, walked to her, took her hand, and pulled her to her feet. She stared into his eyes.

"So, do you want to see if we have anything here, or should I go?"

"I don't want you to go—"

Liam pressed his lips to hers, sighed when her arms wrapped around his neck, and then moved her hands to his hair. Then she leaned back.

"I've never seen you without your hat. Your hair is so thick and soft, and those eye lashes are ridiculous. Do you know how many women would kill for those?"

Liam gazed into her eyes and knew he was in deep shit. He lowered his lips to hers again and tugged her tight against him. She moaned, and it shot right to his dick.

He raised his lips and stared into her eyes.

"You're so beautiful, Siobhan. I want you," he whispered.

"Liam—" She shook her head.

"Yes?"

"I want you too, but I'm afraid you'll break my heart."

"I don't want to do that because I've been there, but sometimes it can't be helped. Everyone takes chances, Siobhan. All of us."

"I know. I've been there too. It's why I don't want to go through it again."

"Can't avoid it, darlin'." He tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and sighed. "Siobhan, if you want me to go, I will, and we can forget about this."

“Can you forget about it?”

“No, but I’m not pressuring you. I like you and want to get to know you, but you have to understand that sometimes I’ll miss dates, not show up, and get too busy to call, or text.” He shook his head. “I’ll try to do better, but I can’t make promises I might not keep.”

“I’d like to try.”

“Okay. We’ll see how this goes.” He kissed her lips again.

“I love how you kiss,” she murmured against his lips.

He grinned. “Right back at you.”

“I want to know you, Liam, and I will try to be patient.”

“It’s all I can ask.” He led her to the sofa, and they sat. He pressed his lips to hers again and pulled her across his lap as he deepened the kiss. Hell, he was in so much trouble here. She could break his heart, and he knew he would never get over her.

Sitting up, he moved her off his lap, kicked off his boots, lay on the sofa, and pulled her on top of him.

“Kiss me,” he whispered against her lips.

She kissed his lips and slipped her tongue into his mouth, making him groan. He moved his hands to cup her face, then slid them into her hair and clutched it in his fists.

Siobhan had never been kissed so thoroughly. He didn’t hold back, and how much she wanted him frightened her. His fingers dug into her hair as he moved his lips over hers. She slowly raised her lips from his and stared into those dark eyes.

“What? Do you want me to go?” he asked her.

“No. I want you to stay with me tonight,” she whispered.

A grin lifted his lips. “I want that too.”

Siobhan smiled, pushed herself up, and put her hand out to him. He sat up, took her hand, and stood.

“Lead the way, darlin’.”

Pulling him with her, she walked backward and stopped at the door. She gazed into his eyes and wanted him more than she could remember ever wanting another man.

“Siobhan, if you’re not sure, I can leave.”

“I’m sure. I just don’t want to disappoint you. I’ve only been with two men.”

“You’re not going to disappoint me, and I’m going to do my damndest not to disappoint you.”

She laughed. “I don’t think that’s possible.”

Liam blew out a laugh. “You never know.”

Raking her fingers through his hair, she smiled.

“We’ll see.” She stepped back from him and entered the room. She glanced over her shoulder to see him still standing in the doorway. “Come here.”

He entered the room, strode to her, cupped her face in his hands, and lowered his lips to hers. He slid his hands down her back to her ass, then picked her up, placed her on the bed, and lay beside her, never taking his lips from hers.

When his hands moved under her T-shirt, she held her breath and blew it out when he cupped her breast in his hand and rubbed the pad of his thumb over her nipple, making it stiffen. Then he lifted the shirt over her head and tossed it to the floor.

“You’re perfect,” he murmured before moving his lips down her neck, chest, and to her nipple then placed his lips over it and sucked it deep into his mouth. She thrust her fingers into his hair to hold him close.

His hand moved to the waistband of her lounge pants, slipped inside, then he raised his head.

“Commando?”

“I could put some panties on if you’d like.” She grinned.

Liam chuckled. “Not necessary, but next time, I want to take those off you.”

Siobhan shivered thinking about it. “Deal.”

He lowered his head, ran his tongue down her belly, then got off the bed. She raised her head to look at him. She swore she had an orgasm at the look in his eyes. She watched as he lifted his T-shirt off and dropped it to the floor. Siobhan groaned, looking at his hard pecs and solid six-pack stomach. Her mouth was watering.

When his hands went to the snap of his jeans, she got on her knees, crawled to the foot of the bed, hooked her fingers in the waistband, and pulled him closer. She stared into his eyes as she unsnapped his jeans and lowered the zipper. His hard cock strained against his underwear.

Shoving his jeans down, she looked at his cock and salivated. Taking a deep breath, she pushed his boxer briefs down, and his hard cock extended. She wanted him like no other. She ran the tip of her finger over the hair that ran from his bellybutton to his dick.

“Move up,” he said.

Siobhan scooted up to the middle of the bed and couldn't take her eyes off him as he leaned down, removed his wallet from his jeans, and took a condom out. She watched as he sheathed himself and licked her lips. He toed his boots off, shoved his jeans and boxer briefs off and stood there nude and she was dying.

He crawled between her legs, holding his weight off her by his elbows, then lowered his lips to hers.

She wrapped her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist. She needed him so much.

“Slow down, baby,” he said as he moved his lips down her neck, chest, breasts, belly, and curls. “I want to take my time with you.”

“Liam...”

When his tongue moved through her curls, she gasped and grabbed the headboard. Garrison never did this, but it felt wonderful. It didn't take long before her belly clenched, and she cried out as she came.

She took deep breaths as Liam moved back up her body.

“Look at me,” he demanded.

She opened her eyes and stared into his. He inched into her, letting her adjust to him. She tilted her hips. He groaned and slammed into her. She wrapped her legs around him again and moved in rhythm with him.

Running her fingers down his back, she dug her nails into his tight ass. Soon, that feeling came over her again, and she screamed as her orgasm hit her. She moved her hands to his arms, but he took them in his and linked their fingers, then placed them next to her head on the pillow.

Liam picked up the pace. She kissed his neck, then bit it, making him shudder. He took her hard and groaned her name when he came. He placed his face against her neck as they fought to catch a breath.

She sifted her fingers through his thick hair, then he raised his head, looked into her eyes, and kissed her lips. He rolled onto his back beside her.

“That was fantastic,” she said between breaths.

“Yes, it was.” He moved to the edge of the bed, stood, and headed for the bathroom. “I'll be right back. Don't go anywhere.”

“Couldn’t if I wanted,” she murmured and grinned when he chuckled. When he reentered the bedroom, she hadn’t moved.

“Are you going to take up the entire bed?”

She raised her head to see him leaning against the bedpost with his arms folded.

“I could.” She slid over. “Come back to bed, Liam.”

He smirked, walked around the other side, climbed in, and tugged her close.

“Let’s get some sleep, Irish.”

“Will you, uh, go to the festival with me?”

“Sure. We’ll do that later today. I need some sleep.”

“Okay. I’ll let you sleep... for now.”

“Turnabout is fair play, sweetheart. Goodnight, or good morning, whatever the hell it is.”

Siobhan sighed, placed her arm across his stomach, her head on his chest, closed her eyes, and fell asleep with a smile.

The sun shining through the window awoke her. Siobhan sat up, stretched her arms above her head, and looked at the space beside her to see it empty. Where was he?

Tossing the sheet off, she got up from the bed, pulled on her robe, tied it, and walked out of the room to head for the kitchen. The living room was empty, and so was the kitchen. Had he left without saying anything? Disappointment ripped through her at the thought. She thought last night meant something, and he knew she wanted him to stay. Plopping onto the sofa, she blinked back tears.

Apparently, last night meant nothing to him other than a one-night stand. *Which she did not do!*

“Seriously, Siobhan? It looks like you did one last night,” she said, then sniffed to keep from crying. She jerked when she heard a key in the door and looked over her shoulder to see it open, and Liam stepped inside with a couple of bags.

She stood and watched him set the bags on the counter, remove his hat, and hang it on the hall tree. Then he turned and saw her. A grin lifted his lips.

“Good morning, Irish. How did you sleep?”

“You’re here,” she murmured and could have kicked herself for saying something stupid.

“Where else would I be?”

“You were gone...”

“I went to the store to buy a toothbrush and razor. I have to shave, and I have a feeling the razors you have will cut the hell out of my face.”

She smiled. “We can’t have that.”

He sauntered to her, stopped before her, and took a few strands of her hair between his fingers.

“Silky soft... like you.” He leaned down, pressed his lips to hers, then raised his head. “I also got breakfast at the diner.”

Her stomach growled at the thought.

“What did you get me?”

“A western omelet. That’s the only thing I know you like.”

Siobhan laughed, wrapped her arms around his neck, and kissed him quickly.

“I’m starving. Let’s eat. Then I need to get a shower.”

“I could use a shower,” he murmured.

“We’ll save water.” She laughed when he chuckled.

That afternoon, Liam held Siobhan’s hand as they walked through the rows of tables and booths. She stopped at them all but spent more time at the booths selling jewelry. She picked up a pair of emerald earrings.

“Those are pretty,” he said.

“Yes. Emerald is a favorite of mine. I’d like to get these, please,” she said to the woman selling them. Siobhan paid for them and then stuck them in her purse as they moved through the crowd.

“Liam.”

He stopped when he heard his name and mentally groaned when he saw JoJo making her way to him.

“Hey, JoJo. Brett.”

“Hi again,” JoJo said to Siobhan.

“Again?” Liam raised an eyebrow.

“We met at the bakery,” Siobhan said.

“I didn’t expect to see you here, Liam,” JoJo said.

“I’m on vacation until Friday.”

“Vacation? You?”

“Yes, damn it. Dad made me take one.”

“Good. You work too damn hard.” JoJo glared at him.

“Look, sis, I hear it enough at home. I don’t need to hear it from you too.”

“Well, you’re gonna.”

“No, I’m not. If you’re going to jump all over me, then we’ll go in the other direction.”

Brett chuckled. “Good luck with that, Liam. You know damn well she’d follow you.”

“Hell, Brett. I know that’s right.”

“Stop talking about me like I’m not here.”

Liam looked at his sister. “Why *are* you still here?”

JoJo gasped, grabbed Brett’s hand, and pulled him through the crowd. Liam laughed.

“You made your sister angry,” Siobhan said.

“Irish, I live for that.” Liam winked and led her to more booths in the opposite direction. Siobhan laughed as he pulled her along behind him.

When they arrived back at her apartment, he followed her inside and watched her set her packages on the counter, then she looked at him and smiled.

“I have to go, Siobhan.”

“What? Aren’t you coming to Dewey’s tonight for the fireworks?”

“I’ll be back. I need a change of clothes and to check on my dog. I should see my parents too.”

“Oh, okay.” She looked at her watch. “It’s almost three. I have to get ready for work too.”

“Give me your number. I’ll call or text you.”

“Okay.” She gave him the number and he entered it into his phone, and she did the same when he told her his.

He walked to her, slipped his arms around her waist, and pulled her close.

“I’ll be there tonight. I promise.”

“Okay. I’ll see you later then.”

“Yes, you will, sweetheart.” He lightly kissed her lips, turned, and walked out the door.

He jogged down the steps, climbed into his truck, and after one more look at her door, drove home.

Chapter Five

Siobhan entered the bar and waved at Laura as she walked to the office. She knocked, and Scarlett opened the door.

“Oh, hi. I didn’t realize it was that late.” Scarlett smiled.

“I just want to put this in the safe, then I’ll help Laura get things ready.”

“That’s fine.”

“Uh, okay.” Siobhan nibbled on her bottom lip. She was dying to tell Scarlett about last night.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. Absolutely nothing.” She grinned.

“Tell me,” Scarlett growled.

Siobhan laughed. “Liam spent the night with me.”

“What? Oh, my God! How was it?”

“Amazing. The man is no slouch in bed.”

“I had a feeling he wouldn’t be. Some men, you can just look at and know. He’s one of them, and so is Noah. Dom, too. They just ooze sex appeal.”

“I can’t wait to see him again.”

“When is that?”

“He said he’d be here tonight. He’d better be.”

“He will. I’m so happy for you.”

“Why are you happy for her?” Laura asked from the doorway.

Siobhan looked at her and told her.

“Oh, wow! I’m so happy for you too.” Laura hugged her.

“It was so good. I want him again. And again.”

“I know how that goes,” Laura said, laughing.

“Okay, girls, let’s get to work. The bar will be busy for sure with the festival going on.”

The women walked from the office to behind the bar. Siobhan filled bowls with pretzels and peanuts and set them on the bar. She then made sure the menus were placed behind the napkin dispensers. Scarlett recently started serving sandwiches; since they sold many, she hired a couple of kitchen workers. It was too busy for the bartenders to take the time to make up a

sandwich.

Later, Siobhan glanced around to see it packed. People lined up at the bar and filled the tables and booths. She set a beer on the bar before a cowboy, smiled when he paid her and waved away the change.

Where was Liam? If he didn't show up, she would be pissed. Pissed? That is an understatement. What is it with men? Why can't they do what they say they'll do? Why be an ass about it?

"Hey."

She inwardly sighed when she heard his voice and turned to see him at the bar, staring at her.

"Hi. I didn't think you were going to make it."

His eyebrow rose. "I said I would."

"You've said it before, Liam."

"Yes, but I promised you I'd be here tonight."

She touched his hand. "I'm so glad you are."

He grinned. "Me too, but I'd rather be at your place... alone."

Siobhan laughed. "I would too, but that's not possible right now."

"Later then. Can I get a beer, darlin'?"

"Tap or bottle?"

He shrugged. "It doesn't matter."

"Okay." She got a beer bottle from the cooler, opened it, and set it on the bar. He picked it up, took a long pull, and set it down.

"Let me know if you need anything else."

"You know I will, Irish." He winked at her, making her smile.

As the night wore on, the bar became more crowded. It seemed there was nowhere to sit, and people were standing toe to toe.

Siobhan handed a cowboy a mixed drink.

"What's your name, darlin'?"

"Siobhan." She pointed to her name tag.

"Pretty name, just like you."

"Well, thank you, kind sir."

He chuckled, and she moved away from him and saw Liam talking to a woman. Taking a deep breath, she headed for him.

"Do you need a refill?"

He turned those dark eyes on her and last night came rushing at her. Her cheeks warmed as she stared at him.

"I'm good, sweetheart." He held the bottle up to show it was almost full.

She grinned and leaned across the bar.

“Yes, you are.” She laughed when he did.

“So, are you two together?” the woman asked.

Siobhan looked at Liam. “Are we?”

He set his beer down, got to his feet, cupped her face in his hands, and kissed her long and slowly. The patrons along the bar cheered. Liam raised his head.

“Are we?”

“Definitely.”

He smiled, kissed her lips again, resumed his seat, and looked at the woman.

“Okay, I get it. Lucky woman.” She walked away and disappeared into the crowd.

Once the sun set, Scarlett rang the bell to get everyone’s attention.

“The bar will close at nine for the fireworks. The parking lot is a great place to watch them. I’ll reopen when they’ve finished. Happy Fourth of July, everyone.”

Siobhan couldn’t wait for the break. She wanted to watch the fireworks with Liam. She frowned and made her way to where he sat.

“You’re going to watch the fireworks, aren’t you?”

“Of course.”

“Okay, good.” She leaned close. “Since you said you’d rather be at my apartment, will you stay with me tonight?”

“I should go home, Siobhan. I have to check on my dog.”

“Oh, okay.” She straightened and turned to leave. Her heart was breaking.

“Hey,” he said, and she looked at him. “You could go home with me.”

“Really?”

Liam shrugged. “I don’t see why not. We can stop at your place to get clothes.”

“Are you sure?” She frowned.

“I wouldn’t have suggested it if I wasn’t. Tomorrow is Sunday. We could go for a ride. Can you ride a horse?”

“Yes.”

“Good, then that’s what we’ll do. I’ll show you the ranch.”

“I’d like that.” She kissed his lips and then got back to work.

At nine, Scarlett rang the bell and told everyone to head outside. They filed out, and most sat in the bed of their trucks to watch the fireworks.

Liam led Siobhan to his truck. He climbed into the bed and put his hand out to her. He lifted her as if she weighed nothing when she placed her hand in his. He removed a blanket from a chest and spread it in the bed.

“Sit, please.”

Siobhan smiled and sat on the blanket, then he sat beside her. She watched him remove his hat, lay back, and pat the spot beside him. With a laugh, she sat beside him, then lay back next to him.

“This looks like a good spot,” she said.

“I’m sure it is.”

Once the fireworks started, she gasped at the beauty of them lighting up the night sky. She smiled as she listened to everyone oohing and awing over them.

“They’re so pretty,” she murmured.

“Yes.”

She looked at him to see him staring at her.

“What?”

“I’d rather look at you.”

Siobhan blinked her eyes. No one ever said things like this to her.

Liam sat up and placed his hand on her cheek.

“Are you okay?”

“No.” She shook her head. “I’m not used to someone saying things like that.”

“What kind of men were you involved with? You’re a beautiful woman, Siobhan, and I will tell you that any time I can—” His breath whooshed out when she threw her arms around his neck and pushed him onto his back. Then she lay on him and kissed his lips.

“Thank you,” she whispered.

“You’re missing the fireworks,” he whispered back.

“I’d rather kiss you.”

“I’d rather you did that too.” He grinned, and she pressed her lips to his again.

She would rather kiss this man than do anything else, and she couldn’t wait to go home with him and spend tomorrow with him.

After the fireworks ended, mostly everyone returned to the bar, and Siobhan got busy again. She didn’t care. She was on cloud nine.

Liam couldn't keep his eyes off her. When she laughed at something a cowboy said to her, he had to smile. His smile slipped when he wondered if this would work for them. He knew sometimes he'd be too tired to call or see her, and he hated the confrontations bound to come.

As he watched her, though, he also knew he wanted to take that chance with her. He hoped she did, too, because once she experienced it, he hoped she'd stay. He grinned when she smiled at him.

When the band played, *My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys*, a Willie Nelson song, the crowd cheered.

At closing, he stood and waved Laura over to him so he could pay his tab.

"Hey, Liam," Laura said as she took his money.

"Keep the change, Laura." He glanced around. "Where's Siobhan?"

Laura looked around. "She might be cleaning up in the storage room or kitchen."

"Okay. Could you tell her I'll be outside?"

"I will." She smiled. "I hope you two have a great night."

Liam grinned. "I plan on it. Goodnight, Laura. Tell Dom I said hi."

Laura nodded and moved along the bar, picking up glasses and bottles.

Liam walked outside and waited in his truck. He'd watch the doors. He climbed into the cab, leaned back, and closed his eyes.

He jerked when a noise woke him, and he looked over to see Siobhan at the passenger door. He pushed the button to unlock it, and she got inside.

"I didn't mean to fall asleep," he said.

"That's okay. When I didn't see you on the bench, I found your truck." She clicked her seatbelt.

Liam sat up, started the truck, drove to her apartment, and parked beside the steps.

"I can run up and get some things. There's no need for you to go."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course." She leaned over the console, kissed his lips, and exited the truck.

He watched her run up the steps and then disappear into the apartment. Sighing, he kept his eyes on the door, and when she emerged, he opened the door, stepped out, and met her at the steps to take her case from her. He set it in the back, got in, and drove them to his home.

When he pulled into the driveway, he drove to the house and heard her

gasp.

“It’s beautiful.”

“Thanks.”

“Did you build it?”

“I had it built, but I knew what I wanted.”

“I love log homes.”

“I always have too.”

“Do your parents live in one too?”

“No, they live in the original farmhouse. I’ll show it to you tomorrow.”

“Today.”

“Yeah, whatever you want to call it. Let’s go inside, Irish. I’m beat.”

“Me too. Someone kept me up last night.”

“Right. You just keep telling yourself it was all me.” Liam grinned when she laughed.

Siobhan opened the door, stepped out, and walked to the front of the truck. Liam watched her stare at the house, then he got out and removed her case from the back. He walked to her, took her hand, and led her to the door.

They stepped inside, and he saw Rebel running into the kitchen. She slid on the floor when she tried to stop when she saw Siobhan.

“Oh, how precious,” Siobhan said as she sat on the floor. “What’s your name?”

“That’s Rebel. She’s partially deaf.”

Siobhan looked at him. “Poor girl.”

“She can hear muffled sounds but that’s all.”

“She’s so pretty.”

“Yes, she’s usually in here or in the living room when I’m gone, so she knows when I get home.”

“Was she born that way?”

“Yes. Some idiot bred two merles, which can cause deafness, blindness, and health issues. Other than being partially deaf, she’s healthy, though.”

“That’s good. What breed?”

“Australian shepherd. She just turned two.”

“How did you end up with a deaf dog?”

“Six months before I had my male Aussie put down. About killed me. Of course, I swore no more dogs, but Tess called me and told me about Rebel.”

“Tess?”

“Dr. Tessa Garrett, the local vet. Someone dropped Rebel off at her office

because she was unruly. She wasn't. They just didn't want to take the time with her. I taught her how to read hand signals. She's a good dog."

Siobhan rubbed her ears. "She's a sweetheart."

He smiled as he watched Rebel try to sit on Siobhan's lap. He put his hand out for Siobhan to take and helped her to her feet.

"This kitchen is gorgeous."

"I'll show you the rest tomorrow. Right now, I need to get some sleep, darlin'."

"Me too," she said, then yawned.

He led her through the dining room, down a hallway, and to his bedroom. That bed looked so inviting. He sat on the bed, took off his boots, stood, and stripped. He stepped out of his jeans and pushed his boxer briefs down. He stopped when he saw her standing in the center of the room watching him, and he raised his eyebrow.

"I enjoyed that," she said with a tilt of her head.

"Stop. I'm tired. We're going to sleep... for now." He placed his hands on his hips and saw her eyes trained on his crotch. "Siobhan," he growled.

When she laughed, he shook his head, pulled the quilt back on the bed, and crawled into it. He put his arms behind his head and stared at her.

"Okay, I'll behave for now." She gave him a sly smile and slowly started undressing.

"Son of a bitch," he muttered as his dick twitched.

Siobhan raised her eyebrows. "What?"

"Nothing. Get in the damn bed."

She laughed, climbed into the bed, and snuggled beside him. He wrapped his arm around her, placed his cheek on her head, and closed his eyes. Rebel jumped onto the bed, laid down, and sighed. Liam smiled and fell asleep.

Siobhan blinked her eyes as the sunshine splayed across her face. She yawned, stretched her arms above her head, and turned to see Liam's side of the bed empty. Then she heard the shower.

She tossed off the sheet, stood, and walked to the bathroom. She quietly opened the door, stepped inside, and saw him in the shower stall, and her mouth went dry.

She opened the shower door and stepped into the stall. He turned to look

at her.

“Good morning,” he said, lowering his head and kissing her.

“Good morning.” She wrapped her arms around his waist and arched her hips against him. Then she smiled. “I think something else wants to say good morning.”

Liam laughed. “All the time with you.”

“Too bad you don’t have a condom.”

“I’ll bring one with me next time.”

“Smart man.”

He chuckled, making her smile. She reached for the shampoo, squirted some into her hand, and applied it to her hair, but Liam washed it, and she thought it was so sexy.

After their shower, they had breakfast and walked to the barn on his property. She loved holding his hand as they walked along the path. They entered the barn and walked down the aisle.

“You can pick any horse except mine, but they’re gentle.”

“Okay. Which one is yours?”

“Third stall on the right. Diablo.”

“This horse is so pretty,” she said as she rubbed the nose of a brown and white Paint.

“That’s Butterscotch. She’s a good horse.”

“I’ll take her.”

“All right. I’ll get the tack.”

Siobhan watched him stroll along the barn and then entered a room. She rubbed Butterscotch’s nose.

“You’re so pretty, and you’re so lucky to have Liam love you.”

Liam carried a saddle, blanket, and reins from the tack room. He hung them on a rail, then reentered the room to get the rest of the tack. Then he led his horse into the aisle and Siobhan couldn’t help but gasp at the beautiful animal.

“He’s beautiful.” The horse was solid black without a speck of another color.

“Yes, and he knows it. He’s shameful around the mares.”

Siobhan laughed. “If you got it, flaunt it.”

Liam chuckled and nodded. “Why not?”

Once the horses were saddled, Siobhan watched Liam grab the saddle horn and vault into the saddle without using the stirrups. She shook her head.

She'd never be able to do that.

"How do you do that?"

"Do what?" He frowned at her.

"Get in the saddle like that."

Liam grinned. "Darlin', I've been riding since I was in diapers."

She smiled and nodded. No way would she tell him she thought it was sexier as hell. Real cowboy. They rode from the barn. Siobhan followed him and couldn't keep her eyes off his broad back.

"You're asking for a heartache," she muttered.

"Did you say something?"

"Not to you." She smiled when he pulled the horse to a stop and turned in the saddle to look at her.

"Are you talking to yourself?"

"Why not? I have some great conversations with myself." She laughed when he chuckled.

"I'm sure. We'll ride to the pond and do a little fishing."

"I don't fish," she said and shuddered.

"Okay, well, you can watch me then. It's a great way to relax."

"I'm sorry. Did you say... *relax*? I thought you didn't know what that meant."

"Touché."

When they reached the pond, she gasped at the beauty of the area. The water looked like glass with the sun shining on it. She saw Liam swing his leg over the horse's head, jump down, and unsaddle the horse. She did the same, walked to the bank, and sat on the grass.

Liam walked toward her with a fishing pole and tackle box. There was no way she'd fish. He sat beside her, opened the tackle box, and took a worm from a container. She looked away.

"It's just a worm, Irish."

"Poor little guy. He has no clue he's about to be devoured."

Liam laughed. "Everything has a purpose in life. This worm's purpose is to catch me a big fish."

She sighed and laid back. "Okay. You do your thing. I'll be right here."

He didn't answer her, but she heard the line being cast and hitting the water.

When she heard nothing, she sat up and saw him on his back in the grass with his hat over his face. The pole lay beside him on the bank.

“I thought you were fishing.”

He removed his hat and looked at her. “I am.”

“That’s it? You just cast out then do nothing?”

“I’m not doing... *nothing*. I’m fishing. You have to be patient.”

“How do you know when you get a fish?”

“I have my hand on the line. I’ll feel a tug.”

“Oh, so this is why it’s relaxing? You don’t really do anything.”

“The worm is doing all the work.”

Siobhan laughed and saw his lips rise into a grin. Damn, she wanted to attack him. Would he have sex in the field with her? She snorted. He’s a man. He’d have sex anywhere.

“What was that for?” he asked.

“I was wondering if you’d have sex in the field.”

He laughed. “Irish, I’d have sex with you anywhere, anytime.”

“See? I knew that.”

“Oh, really?”

She shrugged. “Yep. Since you’re a man, I didn’t think you’d turn sex down.”

He chuckled. “True.”

“A study I read stated that most men under age sixty think about sex at least once a day, compared with only a quarter of women. And that’s not all. Men fantasize about sex nearly twice as often as women do, and their fantasies are much more varied. They also think more about casual sex than women do.”

“And that surprises you?” He chuckled.

She laughed. He looked more rested, and the time off seemed to agree with him. At least it seemed like he was relaxing.

“You need to do this more often, Liam.”

“What? Fish?”

“Anything to help you relax. You work too hard.”

He sat up. “I’ve told you, I have to. This ranch doesn’t work itself.”

“I’m not saying that. I’m saying you do need time off. Don’t you feel more rested?”

“A little. I’ve only been off a few days.”

“So think how much more rested you’ll feel when your vacation ends.”

“True. I’ll be good and rested for the cattle drive.”

“Tell me about it.”

“We move about two hundred head to the west pasture. It’s a four-day job. Two up and two back. We camp halfway up, then set up again when we reach the pasture.”

“Why is it done?”

“The cattle get moved to lush pastures all the time. It keeps the pasture quality by distributing the animal impact more evenly.” Liam shrugged.

“Yeah, okay. I don’t get any of that, but I’ll take your word for it. How many of you go?”

“Ten ranch hands, some of their wives, girlfriends, significant others, and the cook. It’s the only time we allow others along because the men will be away from home.”

“I bet it’s fun.”

“It’s work, but it’s invigorating.”

“If a cook goes, is there a chuckwagon?”

“Of course. We have to eat.”

“Yes, of course. I wasn’t thinking.”

“It’s all right, darlin’. You’re not familiar with it.” He stared at her. “You could go if you want.”

“Really? Oh, wait. What days?”

“We leave on Sunday and return on Wednesday.”

“I’d love to go if you’re sure it’s okay.”

“I asked, didn’t I?”

“Then, yes. I’d love it.”

Liam nodded, then grabbed the fishing pole and jerked it. Siobhan watched the pole bend as the fish took the bait. She watched Liam get to his feet and reel in the line. The line dipped into the water again, bending the rod. She thought for sure the line would snap.

“Did you catch a big one?” She scrambled to her knees to watch as he reeled in the fish.

“Feels like it, but sometimes they fight so much, you can’t tell how big it is until you get it out.” He continued to reel in the fish, moved closer to the bank, took the line in his hand, and lifted the pole. A huge fish hung off the hook.

“Now what?”

“I throw him back,” Liam said as he removed the hook and put the fish back into the water.

“You don’t keep them?”

“No. It keeps the pond stocked that way.”

“That’s nice.”

Liam laughed. “It’s not being nice. It’s being responsible.”

“Whatever. Don’t burst my bubble, Flynn.”

“Yes, ma’am,” he said, but she could hear the laughter in his voice.

After fishing, they saddled the horses and rode back to the house. She smiled when she saw Rebel running for her master.

Siobhan loved that Liam was an animal lover. Especially since he rescued a deaf dog. She could tell how much Rebel loved him. She knew he had saved her.

They entered the house and watched TV for the rest of the day. She didn’t want to leave. She loved being here with him but didn’t want to make him think she was getting too comfortable.

She glanced at him reclining on the sofa, got up, and then lay beside him. She sighed when his arm wrapped around her, and he kissed her shoulder. Yeah, she was in a lot of trouble with this man. Her heart wasn’t sure it could survive if he didn’t want to see her anymore. She placed her hand over his and watched the movie.

Early the next morning, Siobhan stood in front of the mirror in the bathroom, brushing her hair while Liam entered and stopped behind her. Their eyes met as she lowered her gaze. His palms moved to her waist, then glided to the hem of the T-shirt she wore before slipping underneath it to cup her breasts. She moaned when he touched them with his thumb pads and arched her neck so that he could kiss it. His hand moved further down along her stomach until he reached between her legs.

He started rubbing her clitoris, and Siobhan trembled in response.

“Liam,” she whispered.

“I love seeing you in my shirt.”

Their eyes locked as he moved his lips up to her ear, sucked its lobe into his mouth.

“I’m going to fuck you, Siobhan”.

She quivered at the thought and watched in the mirror as he took a condom from his wallet, rolled it on, then pushed her hair aside before pressing his lips to the back of her neck and entering her slowly from behind.

Siobhan’s gaze was locked with Liam’s as their bodies moved together. She wrapped her arms around his neck, resting the back of her head against his shoulder, and closed her eyes. But then he sank his fingers into her hair,

and she opened her eyes.

“Look at me.”

She kept her eyes on him as he continued thrusting. Feeling an orgasm building inside of her, and she bit her lip.

“Liam,” she whispered.

“Not yet.” He placed his lips against her neck and nipped her sharply, making Siobhan gasp.

“Please,” she begged, something she’d never done before. That seemed to trigger something in Liam, and he looked into her eyes with a mischievous grin before plunging back into her, taking her hard. She screamed out in pleasure as she came, never once breaking eye contact, and watched as Liam’s own orgasm rushed over him. He moaned her name and buried his forehead against her shoulder as he gasped for breath.

When it was all over, Liam raised his head and met Siobhan’s eyes with a satisfied smirk.

“It’s always good with you, Liam.”

“Good is an understatement.” He stepped back, then disposed of the condom.

“What can we do today?”

“How about absolutely nothing?”

“Sounds good.”

“We can go swimming later.”

“I would love to, but I didn’t bring a swimsuit.”

“Please. Like you need one,” he said, then laughed when she punched his arm. “Irish, I have been over every inch of your body. It’s nothing I haven’t seen, touched, or tasted.”

“If I’m going to skinny dip, so are you.”

“I always skinny dip. No one can see me in the pool.” He shrugged. “I wouldn’t care if they did. I have nothing to hide.”

“No, you don’t. I’d like to do that.”

“Then we will.”

Siobhan grinned. She was enjoying her time with him, but she couldn’t keep the thought out of her head that he would hurt her. Maybe not intentionally, but she feared losing him when she just found him.

Liam drove her home on Wednesday and was surprised at how disappointed he was. She had to work tomorrow night and wanted to be home the night before. He stopped the truck beside the steps and looked at her.

“I’ll hate sleeping alone tonight.”

“I will too. Will you come to Dewey’s tomorrow night?”

“I should be able to. I’ll let you know if I can’t make it.”

“All right. I hope I see you then.” She stared into his eyes.

“Let me walk you up.” He opened his door, and she did the same.

He removed her case from the back, took her hand, led her up the stairs, and waited as she unlocked the door.

“Are you coming in?”

“No. I need to go. I still have to clean the barn.”

“You’re not supposed to do anything.”

“Siobhan, stalls must be cleaned every day for the horses. It’s a necessity, and it’s not like I’m working on the ranch. It’s my barn. It will just be a few hours, then I’ll rest until I have to do it again tomorrow.”

“Okay. Just don’t overdo it.” She placed her hands on his shoulders.

“I won’t.” He kissed her lips.

“All right. I hope I see you at Dewey’s.”

“Not as much as I do, sweetheart.” He quickly kissed her lips again, then walked down the steps, got into his truck, and without looking back, drove home.

Thursday evening, he entered Dewey’s seeing wall-to-wall people again. The place never failed to pack them in. If it kept up, Scarlett would need to expand.

Liam pushed through the crowd and took a seat at the bar. He saw Siobhan talking to a young cowboy. She hadn’t seen him yet, so he watched her and grinned. She seemed to love the job.

“Hi, Liam,” Laura said.

“Hey, Laura. Can I get a beer? Whatever’s on tap is fine.”

“Sure thing.”

Laura walked to the cooler but stopped beside Siobhan and said something to her. He watched as Siobhan looked his way, smiled, then walked to him.

“Hi,” she said.

“Hey. It’s busy for a Thursday.”

“It’s always like this. What can I get you?”

“Laura got it, thanks.”

“Okay. Let me know if you need anything else.”

Liam smirked. “Oh, I will, darlin’.”

“Do you go back to work tomorrow?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Do you think your dad will let you?”

Liam clenched his jaw. “He’d better.”

Siobhan smiled. “Use that charm on him.”

He raised his eyebrows. “Charm? You think I have charm?”

She leaned close. “You used it on me. Talked me right out of those panties.”

Liam laughed. “I’d like to do it again.”

“Anytime. I’d better get to work. I’ll check back.”

“When do you get a break?”

“Whenever I can. Why?”

“I’d like to dance with you.”

“I’d like that too. I’ll let you know.”

“All right.” He nodded at Laura when she set his beer on the bar.

He picked up his beer, took a long pull, then turned on the stool to watch the crowd. It was better than keeping his eyes on Siobhan.

Chapter Six

Siobhan took money from a cowboy and handed him the change. He winked, making her laugh. She loved the cowboys in the bar. She glanced at Liam and knew she was close to falling for him.

The past week had been great with him, and she was hoping for more, but she also knew she had to be careful with her heart. The man had heartbreaker written all over him. She frowned as a woman sat on the stool next to him and started talking to him. Siobhan didn't blame her. Liam was sexy as hell with those dark good looks.

"Don't you hate it when another woman tries to move in on your man? I've had that happen with Noah." Scarlett shook her head. "It doesn't matter that he wears a wedding band. To most women, if he's here, he's available."

"You don't have anything to worry about with Noah."

"I know that, but the women don't. They don't care who a man belongs to. Of course, some men don't care about that wedding band. I'm glad Noah does."

"Of course, he does. That man is crazy about you."

"I know, and I feel the same about him. That doesn't mean I don't want to slap some woman upside the head if I see her talking to him."

Siobhan looked at Liam, still talking to the woman.

"I don't know about Liam."

"He's always going to have women coming on to him. I mean, look at him, for God's sake. Tall, dark, and handsome fit Liam Flynn to a T."

"He asked me when I could take a break. He wants to dance with me."

"Whenever you want, you can take it. We've slowed a little."

"I will when a slow song starts."

"He's great at fast dances too, Siobhan. Get that man on the dance floor."

Siobhan smiled. She'd love to dance with him. Fast or otherwise, but the thought of him holding her while they danced close together had her praying for a slow song. She got her wish when the band played *When A Woman Loves A Man*, a song by Lee Roy Parnell.

She walked to Liam and smiled. "I can take a break now."

He got to his feet, and she walked around the bar and took his hand. He

led her to the floor and took her in his arms. She loved this song. When he pulled her closer, she wrapped her arms around his neck and put her head on his shoulder. She sighed when he placed his cheek on her head. They barely moved to the music, and she was happy about that. She didn't care if they stood in the middle of the dance floor as long as he held her.

When the song ended, she was so disappointed, but then the band played *Promised Land*, an Elvis Presley song, and Liam spun her around the floor. She laughed when he spun her out, pulled her back, and danced her around the floor. She couldn't keep the smile off her face. He turned her out, spun her around, pulled her close, and kissed her lips when she came up against him. She laughed, and he did too.

Once the song ended, he led her from the floor. She walked behind the bar, out of breath.

"That looked like fun," Laura said.

"That man can dance. It was great. I must be out of shape because I'm out of breath. I don't know how he does it, and he's not even breathing hard."

Laura laughed. "You forget that man works on a ranch. He's probably in better shape than some men who work out constantly. Dominic is in great shape, too, and he never exercises."

"True. Liam has a great body. I about fell over when I saw his pecs and six-pack stomach. Who knew that was under those clothes?"

"I hear ya."

As the night wore on, Siobhan wondered if he would go home with her since he worked the next day. Taking a deep breath, she walked to where he sat.

"Liam?"

He turned to look at her, and she swore her heart stopped looking into those dark eyes. They seemed so dark. It was hard to see where the pupil ended, and the iris began, even though they were blue.

"Yeah?"

"Are you going home?"

"I have to."

"I figured that. I wish you didn't."

"Same here, but I have to get up early. Are you still going Sunday?"

"If that's what you want."

"Of course, I do. You should stay with me Saturday night."

"I'd love to."

They stared at each other until the woman beside him cleared her throat, and they looked at her.

“I guess I’m wasting my time.”

Siobhan smiled. “Yes, you are.”

“Have an enjoyable night.” She looked at Liam and then at Siobhan. “I’m sure *you* will.”

Liam grinned. “I’m sure I will too.”

“I thought you were going home?”

“I am, but I can follow you home before I leave, can’t I?”

“Yes.”

“Good.”

“I’ll, uh, get back to work.”

“I’ll be right here.” He smiled at her.

When the bar closed, she climbed into her vehicle and drove out of the lot, with Liam behind her. She pulled around the back to the steps and stepped out. She watched as he parked his truck behind her and exited the vehicle.

Her eyes instinctively went to his fly and loved how it cupped his sex. God! She knew what was behind that fly.

He took her hand, led her up the steps, and waited while she unlocked the door. Once she pushed it open, she turned to look at him and watched as his eyes dropped to her lips, then back into her eyes. He grinned when she blushed.

“Blushing?”

“Stop it.”

He laughed. “I’m just wondering why you’re suddenly shy.”

“I’m not. If you want the truth, I thought about getting you naked.”

“All you have to do is ask.”

“I don’t want to ask. I just want to strip you and have my way with you.” She grinned when he groaned.

“I’m all for that, baby.” He stepped closer to her, and she moved back into the apartment.

Once inside, he shoved the door closed, grabbed her, pulled her close, and kissed her lips deeply. Siobhan took his cowboy hat from his head, tossed it onto a chair, and raked her fingers through his thick hair. Liam turned her back against the door as they stripped the clothes from each other. She gasped when he ripped her panties off. She shoved his jeans and boxer briefs down and wrapped her fingers around his hard cock, making him groan.

“Condom,” he said.

She removed his wallet from his back pocket and handed it to him. He took a condom out and gave it to her. She stared into his eyes as she ripped the packet open, removed the condom, and rolled it down over him. He closed his eyes until she finished, picked her up, put her back against the door, and thrust hard into her. Siobhan wrapped her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist.

He took her hard, and she tried to catch her breath as her belly clenched, and she cried out when she came, and he followed her over. She leaned her head against the door as she tried to catch her breath.

“You okay?” he asked.

“Yes,” she said between breaths.

Liam let her down and her knees buckled.

“You make me weak in the knees, Liam.”

“You make me hard all the time, Irish.”

Siobhan laughed. “Good.”

Liam chuckled, stepped back, pulled his jeans up, then zipped and snapped them.

“I need to use the bathroom then I really need to go.”

“I don’t want you to go.”

“I don’t want to go either, but I have to. This is part of my job you have to understand, Siobhan.”

“I do.” She brushed his hair back from his forehead. “I really do, but that doesn’t mean I have to be happy about it.”

Liam stared at her then nodded. “Fair enough.”

He kissed her then sauntered to the bathroom. When he came back, she still stood by the door. He tilted his head.

“We’ll see each other tomorrow night and Saturday night.”

“You’re right. You’d better go so you can get some rest. Call me if you have to take another vacation.” She grinned when he clenched his jaw.

“I’d better not. I am going on the cattle drive no matter what.”

Siobhan laughed as she put her arms around his neck.

“I’ll see you tomorrow night, cowboy.”

“Can’t wait, sweetheart.” He kissed her forehead. “I’d better go.”

“Okay. Be careful going home.”

“I will. Sleep well, Irish. I’ll see you soon.” He opened the door, walked out, then closed it behind him.

She felt so lost without him, and that was ridiculous. But after spending the last six days with him, she wanted to be with him all the time. She was so close to falling in love with him.

“You haven’t known him that long. How could you be in love with him?” She shook her head. She wasn’t sure about that but she did know her feelings for him were getting deeper each time she was with him.

Liam entered the kitchen of his parents’ house and saw them sitting at the bar, drinking coffee. He removed his hat, hung it on a peg, walked to the coffeemaker and poured himself a cup.

“Good morning,” he said, and hid a grin when they turned to stare at him.

“You look well rested, Liam,” his mother said.

“I feel rested.” He looked at his father.

“I agree, son. You look a hell of a lot better. I suppose you won’t need another week.”

Liam blew out a relieved breath. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. I was right, wasn’t I? You were exhausted.”

“Yes, sir.”

“What did you do while you were off?”

He leaned his hip against the counter, took a sip of coffee, looked at his mother and grinned.

“I met a woman.” He chuckled when his mother gasped.

“Oh, Liam! I’m so happy for you.”

“Thanks, Mom. I am too.” He shrugged. “We’ll see, though.”

“Give it a chance, Liam. You never know.”

“I’m going to try, Mom.” He rinsed his cup then set it in the sink. “I need to get going. I want to get everything ready for the cattle drive. Are you going?”

“Not this time,” his father said.

Liam smiled. “Siobhan is going with me.”

“What a pretty name.”

“Is she Irish, son?”

“Her last name is O’Brien.” He grinned when his father laughed. “I’ll talk to you later.”

“All right, son.”

Liam put his hat on, opened the door, and stepped onto the porch. He sucked the warm air into his lungs and grinned. It was great being back.

He jogged down the steps, strode across the yard, and entered the barn. He grinned when he saw Jerry coming his way.

“Hey, Liam.”

“Good morning, Jerry.”

“The men are getting the cattle rounded up, so they’ll be ready for Sunday.”

“Good. I’ll check over some things and then be in the office.”

“All right. Liam?”

“Yeah?”

“You look rested.”

“I am. As much as I hated being away, it did me a world of good.” He smiled. “I spent a lot of time with Siobhan.”

Jerry laughed. “Well, I’m delighted to hear that. It looks like she’s good for you.”

Liam shook his head. “I hope so, Jerry. She’s going on the cattle drive with me.”

“That’s great. I don’t miss it, though.”

“I think I would. I was determined to go, even if Dad said I couldn’t.”

“I know you’d hate to miss it. Well, I’d better get with some of the men and hand out their chores. I’ll see you later, Liam.”

“All right.” Liam entered his office and got to work on the books.

Sunday morning, Liam led Diablo and Butterscotch to the trailer hooked to the back of his truck. After loading them, he closed the gate, locked it, and climbed into the cab. He looked at Siobhan and bit back a grin. Rebel lay on the seat beside her.

“Are you awake?”

“No,” she muttered.

He chuckled. “You said you wanted to go.”

“You didn’t tell me we had to leave in the middle of the night.”

“It’s three-fifteen in the morning, sweetheart. Not the middle of the night.”

“Whatever.” She heaved a sigh. “Even Rebel thinks it’s too early.”

“You’re ready to go, aren’t you girl?” He rubbed her ears.

“You always talk to her even though she can’t hear what you’re saying. I love that.”

Shaking his head, he started the truck and drove to the barns, where everyone met. They knew to be at the barns by three-thirty so the cattle drive could start at four.

At four, the men began moving the cattle. Anyone not helping with the herding rode behind so they wouldn't get in the way.

Liam stopped to watch the cattle going with the men riding alongside and behind them. He saw Siobhan talking with another woman and when she laughed, he couldn't help but grin. It seemed she was awake now.

He gave a shrill whistle for the dogs to get the cattle going. Three Border Collies and three Australian shepherds were running the herd, and they knew what needed to be done. Liam rode Diablo back to Siobhan.

"Are you better?"

"Nothing was wrong."

"Seriously?"

"Nothing except you getting me up before the sun."

"It's a cattle drive. We can't wait until noon to get them up there."

"Whatever, Liam Flynn."

He chuckled and saw her bite her lip to keep from grinning, but he saw those dimples peek in her cheeks. He winked and laughed when she did the same. He touched the brim of his hat then rode back to the front.

Siobhan smiled as she watched him ride away. He could ride. Of course, he told her he'd been riding since being in diapers. She'd never be able to ride with that confidence.

"I've never seen Liam bring someone before."

Siobhan glanced at the woman and grinned.

"I feel honored." She laughed when the woman did.

"I come every year. I love it. I'm Margie Collins."

"Siobhan O'Brien. It's nice to meet you, Margie. How long has your husband worked on the Flynn ranch?"

"Terry has been here for fifteen years. He's the herdsman and loves this ranch."

"He must. It's tough work."

"Very."

"What is a herdsman?"

“A herdsman has specific skills only gained with years of learning and doing. An operation like this one benefits from a good herdsman.”

“How long have you been married?”

“Ten years.”

“Kids?”

“No. We didn’t want any.” Margie stared at her.

“That’s your choice.”

“Thank you. Some women look at me like I have lost my mind. Not every woman wants to be a mother.”

“I agree with you on that.” Siobhan glanced at her. “How do you do it? The hours your husband is gone.”

“I have seen that man practically crawl into the house because he was so tired, but he’d get up the next day and do it again. He’s been working on ranches since he was fifteen. He knows what’s involved, and he loves it.”

“Did it ever cause tension?”

“Not for us, but I’ve seen a few divorces with other ranch hands.”

“I bet.”

“I love this ranch too. Even though it’s not ours, we feel like a part of the family. When Terry and I wanted to get married, we didn’t know where we would live. We couldn’t get a home loan, and the apartment was too far from the ranch. Joseph built us a home on a few acres down the road.”

“Joseph?”

“Liam’s father,” Margie said with a frown.

“We haven’t talked much about families yet. I know Liam was pissed at having to take that vacation.”

Margie laughed. “I believe it. That man works harder than anyone else on this ranch. Because of him, the ranch is one of the best in Montana. It’s not the largest, but has one of the best reputations.”

“It looks like his men respect him.”

“They do. He’s a great boss. Not to mention one fine-looking man.” Margie laughed.

“I agree with you about that.”

They rode in silence for a while. The sun beat down on her shoulders, and dust kicked up from the cattle. She waved her hand in front of her face and coughed.

“Didn’t you bring a handkerchief?” Margie asked her.

“No.” Siobhan wondered why Liam hadn’t told her.

She saw him riding back to her... wearing a bandana. He rode alongside her.

“Your bandana is in your saddlebag, Irish. I meant to tell you earlier, but forgot.”

“Oh, good. This dust is bad.”

“It will get worse. I’ll see you in a while.” He nodded, then rode off.

Once they reached an open field, Liam held his hand up for everyone to stop and turned in the saddle.

“We’ll stay here tonight. Let’s settle the cattle, and then we can set up the tents.”

Siobhan watched as the men moved the cattle a little away from the camping area. She smiled when she saw the creek and the cattle drinking from it. She needed to. Her nose felt like it had a pound of dust and dirt inside, and her mouth was dry.

When she saw others dismounting, she did, then led her horse to where Liam sat on his, overseeing the herd.

“Hey,” she said.

“Hi, darlin’.” He pulled the bandana down. “I’ll set our tent up in a few minutes.”

She smiled. “I’ve never done it in a tent.”

Liam laughed. “Do you think you could be quiet? We don’t need a stampede.”

She gasped, making him grin.

“You, Liam Flynn, are not funny.”

“I’m not? I thought I was.” He chuckled and then spurred his horse to move through the cattle.

She watched him maneuver through them and shivered. There was no way she’d get in the middle of those beasts. Her stomach growled, and she looked at her watch to see it was almost ten. They’d been riding for six hours. No wonder her butt was sore. She’d have Liam massage it later, she thought with a giggle.

Once the tents were set up, a firepit was made. It was a beautiful day. Siobhan raised her face to the sun and felt the warm rays on her skin. She glanced around and saw Liam sauntering toward her. She bit her lip, looking at those chaps he wore. They were black leather and cupped his sex, but she also knew it wasn’t just the chaps doing that. He sat beside her on a log.

“Could I talk you into wearing those chaps without pants?” She chuckled

when he laughed. "Assless chaps."

"Irish, all chaps are assless."

She laughed. "I suppose they are."

"So, what do you think?"

"It's beautiful here. I'm having a good time."

"I'm glad. Get some food, darlin'."

"Do you just let the cattle roam?"

"No. A few of the men keep them contained. The cattle need to rest, eat, and drink before we move on."

"Okay."

Liam stood. "Eat, Irish. You'll need your strength."

"For you?"

He grinned. "No. The drive. We still have quite a way to go. I don't want you falling out of the saddle."

"If I do, and I'm sleeping where I fell, please let me be."

Liam laughed. "If that's what you want, but you could fall into a cow patty."

"Then tie me to the saddle."

"Will do, sweetheart." He kissed her head, strode to his saddle on the ground, and removed the bedroll. She had one hell of a time keeping her eyes off his ass in those tight Wranglers.

She watched as he untied it, removed the tent, and set it up. He glanced over his shoulder at her and smiled. And she knew. She had fallen in love with him in such a short time.

"Are you okay, ma'am?"

She looked to see a cowboy smiling at her.

"I'm fine. Do I look like I'm not?" she asked with a smile.

The man grinned. "You looked spaced out there for a few seconds."

"I probably was." There was no way she'd tell him why.

"Enjoy the day, ma'am. It's going to be a hot one."

She watched him walk away. No one seemed to question her being here, but Liam was their boss, so they probably knew better.

Later, she sat on a log beside the firepit and watched the flames reach for the night sky. It was chilly, but the fire felt great. She smiled when Liam sat beside her.

"I'm surprised at how cool it is."

"Higher elevation. The fire feels good."

“Yes.” She looked at him. “I’m having such a good time.”

“Good. I was hoping you would.” He took her hand in his. “I’m about ready for bed, though. It’s been a long day.”

“Your days are always long, Liam.”

“True, but the cattle drive takes a lot out of you. Physically and mentally.”

“Are we getting up at that godforsaken hour again?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Damn.”

He chuckled and stood. “I’m heading to bed. Everyone, get some sleep. It will be a long day tomorrow. Goodnight.”

Siobhan stood, took his hand, and he led her to the tent. She climbed inside, sat on the sleeping bag, and watched him sit and remove his boots. She removed hers, set them beside his, and crawled into the sleeping bag. He had zipped two together.

“It’s colder away from the fire,” she said as she shivered, glad she’d kept her clothes on.

“I’ll keep you warm.” He got into the bag, pulled her close, and held her.

“How long has the ranch been in your family?”

“Over a hundred years. My father’s family came from Ireland, and my mother’s family came from France. I have no idea how they got together.”

“How did they get the land?”

“It was purchased right after the first generation arrived here. It’s never been owned by anyone else, and I hope to keep it going.”

“What about JoJo? Does she want it?”

“She wants the ranch to continue, but since she’s marrying Brett, she’s not interested in running this ranch. She knows I’ll take care of it.”

“No one would doubt that, Liam.” She frowned. “Is Liam short for William?”

“Yes. There has always been a William in the family. My father is Joseph William, and I’m William Joseph.”

“Margie mentioned your father, and I didn’t know who she meant.”

“We never discussed family, did we?”

“No. What’s the age difference between you and JoJo? You seem a good bit older than her.”

“I’m seven years older. She’s twenty-seven. I’m thirty-four.”

“That’s a big difference.”

“There was a sister between us. Kelly died in a car accident a few years

ago. She'd be thirty."

"I'm so sorry. Were you close?"

"We all were. JoJo took it hard. She loved her big sister."

"I'm sure."

"What about you?"

"No siblings. Just my parents and my grandmother."

"Tell me about the man who broke your heart."

"He was killed in a car accident. I worked in a bar in Denver and met Garrison there. We started dating immediately and fell in love, but he hated my job. He accused me of flirting with the men. I didn't. I had to be nice to the customers."

"That's true. What happened?"

"He got furious one night when he saw me talking to another man. We argued, and he stormed out. He was driving too fast for the conditions, slid on ice, and hit a tree. He was killed instantly."

"I'm so sorry, sweetheart."

"I'm not sure we would have stayed together. I've thought a lot about it; all we did was argue. I was on the verge of ending it."

"And that makes you feel guilty, doesn't it?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"It wasn't your fault, Siobhan."

"I know, but it doesn't make it easier."

"How long ago?"

"Five years ago. I was twenty-four, and he was thirty. My grandmother told me to come to Clifton and start over. She thought I could find a good man here." Siobhan stared at him.

"And have you?"

"I think so. I'm just not sure how he feels yet."

Liam kissed her lips. "He's crazy about you."

She wrapped her arms around his neck. "I feel the same about him."

"So glad you do." He deepened the kiss and then lifted his lips.

"Tell me about Monica."

He sighed, and she bit back a grin.

"We met three years ago at Dewey's. She came onto me—"

Siobhan snorted. "Of course, she did."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Liam, women come onto you all the time. I tried, but you didn't notice."

“Come on. I did, but I told you I knew you weren’t the type for a one-night stand.”

“How would you know that?”

Liam shrugged. “Men know. Promiscuous women don’t hide it.”

“I see.”

“Anyway, we started dating. I told her about the ranch and what it meant to me. She told me she understood.” He shook his head. “She didn’t. It wasn’t long before we started arguing about it. I left her alone too often. I invited her to a cattle drive, but she said she didn’t want to go. She was probably afraid she’d break a nail.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine. I told her that if she couldn’t handle it, maybe we should just break up.” He shook his head. “We did. She’s called me a few times, but I don’t answer. I have nothing to say to her, and I don’t need to hear anything she has to say. Not anymore.”

“You were in love with her.”

“I was, but I got over it faster than I thought I would. I guess I wasn’t in love as much as I thought.”

“That’s how I felt.” She yawned. “I’m so tired.”

“Let’s get some sleep, darlin’. Tomorrow, we get up and do it again.”

“Can’t wait,” she whispered and fell asleep.

The following day, Liam rode alongside the cattle. The dogs nipped at any of them lagging behind. He smiled as he watched Rebel chasing them. She loved this. It was her instinct to herd. He looked behind him to see the men riding beside the herd.

This was his life. He glanced around the land and knew he’d never give it up for anything or anyone. He looked at Siobhan to see her riding with Margie, and both had their bandanas on.

He hoped she was the one to stick around and stay with him. He knew it was so early in their relationship, but he also wanted her with him. Would she stay? He hoped so.

It was hard on some women. Others loved it, but it wasn’t for everyone. It took a lot to run a ranch. No matter what kind of ranch it was. It was hard, tedious work, and he loved it.

When lunchtime rolled around, the men stopped the cattle, dismounted, and headed for the chuckwagon.

As everyone sat on a log around the empty fire pit eating, Liam looked at each man. They were all good men and women. They liked Liam letting them bring their significant others. It gave them time together.

“This is so good,” Siobhan said as she bit into her steak.

“Thanks.”

“Is this your beef?”

“Yes.”

“It’s wonderful. What type do you raise?”

“Red Angus. The family started with Black Angus but switched a few years later.”

“What’s the difference?”

“Color mostly, but Red Angus is a little more maternal.”

“How many ranches are there raising beef in Clifton?”

“Uh, well, let’s see. The Moore Cattle Ranch, The Mitchell Cattle Ranch, The Donovan Ranch, and The Triple C. That being the largest at over a hundred thousand acres.”

“Wow! I can’t even fathom that. You have twenty thousand, and it’s so vast. I cannot imagine how large that ranch is.”

“You’d never see all of this in a day and probably wouldn’t see all of theirs in a year.”

“Unreal. Do you know them?”

“Yes. I know all of them. They’re good men.”

“Why is it called The Triple C?”

“Coleman Cattle Company.”

“What do the other ranches raise?”

“Black Angus. Except for The Triple C. It raises three different breeds of beef. Black Angus, Charolais, and Herefords.”

“I’ve never heard of Charolais.”

“The Charolais breed became used in the U.S. because producers want bigger, heavier cattle. They’re usually white or cream-colored, with a short coat in summer and a thicker, longer coat in winter. They’re very hearty.”

“How in the world do they keep them separated? You don’t want them to breed with the other cows, right?”

Liam laughed. “Siobhan, they have over a hundred thousand acres. They keep them apart.”

“It must take a lot of work.”

“All ranches take a lot of work, as do farms.”

“After seeing this, I believe it. When we get back, does everyone get a day off?”

“No. We all return to our regular work the day after we return.”

“Can I stay with you when we get back?”

“I wouldn’t have it any other way,” he said as he ran his hand over her ponytail. She smiled at him, and he wanted to drag her to the tent.

“I’m going to ask Scarlett for more hours. I love working there, and a day or two more would get me more money. Not that I need it. I don’t pay rent but still have to buy things.”

“Yes, ma’am. If Scarlett needs you, she’ll let you work more hours. That place is always jumping.”

“It can get hectic, but it’s so much fun. I’ve met a lot of nice people there.”

“Me?”

“Of course.”

He grinned, then noticed one man getting a guitar out and strumming it.

“This must be how the cowboys did it in the old west.”

“It’s stayed the same for decades. It’s a way of life. Some ranches use ATVs around a ranch. We do, but mostly it’s on horseback, and the cattle drive is always by horse.”

“My butt is going to be so sore. I’m hoping you’ll help me with that.”

Liam groaned. “I’d love to. I’ll do that for you later.”

She smiled at him, and he smiled back, kissed her nose, and wrapped his arms around her as they listened to the music.

Once they got back, the genuine test would begin for them. He hoped it worked.

Chapter Seven

As she followed behind the cattle, she couldn't keep her eyes off Liam. He was such a cowboy, and he loved it. She could see it when he rode. This was his life; if she wanted him, she had to accept the life he'd chosen.

She knew she would never ask him to give this up. It would kill him to not be able to do this. The week he was on vacation, he was so stressed for the first few days, but he seemed to enjoy himself later.

She smiled as she watched him running his horse beside the cattle. He had a coiled rope in his hand that he'd slap against his thigh. The dust billowed around them, and she could hear the men whistling, the dogs barking, and the cattle bawling, and it was like watching a Western movie.

With his bandana pulled up, he looked like an outlaw, and she'd seen nothing so sexy. She shifted around in the saddle. That man was having sex tonight, no matter how tired he was. She grinned, since she was sure it wouldn't take much convincing.

When they reached the pasture where they were leaving the cattle, everyone dismounted, cooled the horses, and set their tents up.

She saw Liam talking with another man, then he headed for her and sat beside her on the log.

"Would you like to go to the creek with me? I want to bathe."

"You bathe? Why couldn't I?"

"There wasn't anywhere at the last place, but there's a deep area in the creek here, and I use it. I told Terry I was going, so he won't let anyone follow until I return. I don't need to be surprised while I'm in the water."

Siobhan snorted. "Please, you have nothing to hide."

Liam laughed. "Aww, thank you, ma'am."

"I'd love to get a bath."

"All right. Let's head for the tent to get soap and shampoo."

"Okay."

They entered the tent, gathered their things, and walked to the creek. She stared at the water and wanted to jump into it. She looked to where some cattle were drinking and frowned.

"We're upstream from them," Liam said, and she could hear the laughter in his voice.

"Good. If they peed in it, I didn't want to be in the water."

Liam shook his head, took her hand, and led her down to the bank. He removed his jeans, but stopped when she didn't move.

"Are you getting in?"

She glanced around. "I don't want anyone to see me."

"No one will see you, Siobhan. I promise. Come on." He tugged his shirt over his head and tossed it down.

Her mouth went dry, looking at his chest and stomach. Damn, she was horny. She snorted, and he raised an eyebrow.

"I was looking at you and thinking that I'm horny, but it's an everyday occurrence with you."

Liam grinned. "Right back at you, Irish. Now, come on."

She watched as he stepped into the water and hissed in a breath.

"Is it cold?"

"Damn right, it's cold. But invigorating." He went under the water, came up, and reached for the shampoo.

Taking a deep breath, Siobhan stripped, stepped into the water, and gasped at the cold.

"Shit. Shit. Shit," she said, making Liam laugh.

She moved through the water to where he stood, dipped under the water, and came up shivering. She took the shampoo from him, squirted some into her hand, then applied it to her wet hair. He pushed her hands aside and washed her hair. Then she rinsed it out.

Siobhan put her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist.

"How cold is this water?" she whispered into his ear.

"Not that cold. My wallet is on the bank, though."

Smiling, she pushed away from him, walked to the bank, got his wallet and removed a condom, then returned to him. She reached under the water and wrapped her fingers around his cock, and it came to life. She rolled the condom down over him.

"The water *isn't* too cold, is it?" She laughed.

"Darlin', it could be solid ice, and you'd still make me hard."

She moved her hand up and down his length, and he moaned.

"Shhh, we don't need a stampede," she said, and he laughed.

"Siobhan O'Brien, you are not funny."

"I'm not? I thought I was." She smiled when he chuckled. "Let's make some waves." She put her legs around his waist again and held on as he inched into her. He cupped her ass in his hands and moved against her.

When her orgasm hit her, it hit her hard. She gasped, then laughed when Liam put his hand over her mouth, then put his head in the crook of her neck and groaned as he came.

The following morning, Siobhan stretched her arms above her head and glanced at the sleeping bag to see Liam gone. Of course, he was. The man got up in the middle of the damn night.

She crawled out of the bag, brushed her hair, changed into clean clothes, grabbed her toothbrush, a bar of soap, and a washcloth, and left the tent.

Once outside, she glanced around and saw everyone sitting around the fire pit, eating, and her stomach growled, but she needed to wash up.

She quickly went to the creek, squatted and washed off, then brushed her teeth. She turned when she heard a horse behind her and saw Liam sitting on Diablo, his arms folded on the saddle horn, watching her.

“Good morning,” she said.

He touched the brim of his hat. “Morning, Irish. Did you sleep well?”

“I did. Did you?”

“Yes, ma’am. After breakfast, we’ll be moving again. Make sure you wear sunscreen and your bandana.”

She saluted him. “Yes, sir. You’re the boss.”

“You just remember that.”

She laughed. “Yeah, okay.”

He chuckled. “That was convincing.”

“I thought this was where you were leaving the cattle.”

“We are, but we’re going to spread them out a little, so they’ll graze.”

“Oh, okay.”

Siobhan smiled as she walked closer to him. He looked so hot sitting on that black beast. She jumped back when the horse stuck his nose out at her.

“Will he bite me?”

“He’s been known to bite, but he was just nudging at you.”

“Sure he was. Well, I’m hungry, so I’m going to eat.”

“Eat a good breakfast, darlin’. It’s going to be a long, hot day.”

She looked up to see a clear, blue sky, and even though it was early, the sun beat down mercilessly.

“I will. I’ll see you later, cowboy.”

“Yes, ma’am. Looking forward to it.” He nodded, turned the horse, and rode back toward the camp.

Siobhan sighed. She was in so deep already, but she knew she’d keep

seeing him. She needed him and would continue to see him as long as things were good.

After breakfast, Siobhan sat beside Margie on a log, watching the activities around them. Everyone was packing up, and Siobhan watched Liam rolling up the tent.

“Saddle up,” Terry yelled out.

Everyone got up and saddled their horses. Today, they would head back. They’d camp one more night before returning to the ranch.

Liam reined in Diablo and looked at the men sitting on their horses, ready to head home. He signaled for the dogs to go, and they ran behind the horses.

This was so much a part of his life, and he was glad Siobhan wanted to share it. He glanced back to see her and Margie riding together, talking and laughing. It made him grin. She fit right in.

“Don’t go there, Flynn. We’re not sure how this will go yet.”

“Talking to yourself?” Terry asked him when he stopped his horse beside him.

“Hell, that’s all I do.”

“If a man has a woman in his life, he is *always* talking to himself, and it’s usually to give himself hell.”

Liam laughed. “That is the truth.”

“Siobhan seems nice. Margie likes her, and she doesn’t like anyone,” Terry said, and chuckled.

Liam grinned. “I know.”

“That woman can have me shaking in my boots.”

“And we men think we rule the world,” Liam said.

“Smart men know better. She’s the boss.”

“My dad has said the same thing about Mom. He said he saw the boss’s job, and he didn’t want it.”

Terry laughed. “I understand that. I’m going to head to the other side.”

Liam nodded, then nudged Diablo closer to Siobhan since Margie rode with Terry. Since Liam didn’t have to worry about the cattle, he wanted to ride back beside Siobhan.

“Hey, are you okay?”

“I’m fine. Why?”

“Just wondering if your ass is still sore.”

Siobhan laughed. “No, you helped me with that.”

“Maybe I have some sore parts.” He laughed when she snorted.

“I’ll check them tonight.”

“Can’t wait.”

“One more night.” She looked at him. “I can’t tell you how much fun I’ve had.”

“Good. I love going.”

“I’d go again.”

“I’d like that.” He stared at her then winked, making her grin.

A few hours later, Liam rode to the front of the group and raised his hand so they’d stop.

“We’ll stop here. We’re more than halfway. That way, it won’t take us so long to get back.”

Liam watched as everyone dismounted and began setting up camp.

The following day, Siobhan was so happy to see the barns on the ranch. She’d had a wonderful time, but getting home was always nice.

Once everything was finished and the horses were cooled and put up, she walked from the barn to see where Liam had gone. She spotted him walking with an older couple toward the barn. *Oh, boy. Was he going to introduce her to his parents? Oh, boy. Oh, boy. Oh, boy.*

“Siobhan, these are my parents, Joseph and Joanna Flynn. Mom, Dad, this is Siobhan O’Brien,” Liam introduced them.

“Hello, Mr. and Mrs. Flynn. It’s nice to meet you,” Siobhan said and sighed when they smiled at her.

“Joseph and Joanna, Siobhan,” Joanna said. “We’re happy to meet you.”

“Irish girl, huh?” Joseph grinned, and she could see where Liam got his looks. His father was a handsome man, and his mother was beautiful.

“Yes, sir. On both sides.”

“Good for you, son. Irish girls are the best.”

“Excuse me, Joseph William Flynn?” Joanna put her hands on her hips.

“Next are French girls,” Joseph said, and they laughed when he tugged Joanna close to him and kissed her temple. “How did it go, Liam?”

“Good. No problems at all. Have you heard from MDOL?”

“No, and the fence hasn’t been down since.”

Liam nodded. “Maybe whoever it was saw Reece here and decided not to bother our cattle.”

“Could be. We’ll keep an eye out, though.” Joseph looked at Siobhan. “Come for dinner one night, hon. We’d like to get to know the new woman in Liam’s life.”

Siobhan looked at Liam to see him trying not to grin.

“I’d love to have dinner with you. Maybe you can tell me a few things.”

Joanna laughed. “I like her. I will have no problem telling you about Liam.”

“Enough of that, or I won’t bring her.”

“No one invited you along, son.” Joseph raised his eyebrows.

Liam laughed. “Do you honestly think I’d leave her alone with you two? That won’t happen.”

“All right. We’ll see you both later. Enjoy the rest of the day. I’m sure you’re all tired.”

“I’m exhausted, but I loved it,” Siobhan said and saw Joseph look at Liam, raise his eyebrow, and grin. Then he took his wife’s hand and returned to the house.

“Do you want to go home and rest?”

“I hate to leave, but I am tired.”

“Let me tell Jerry, then I’ll take you home.”

“Okay. Liam? What is MDOL, and who is Reece?”

“Montana Department of Livestock. We had to call them since some fence was down. Reece is an agent, and a good friend.”

“Oh, okay.”

A little while later, he drove her home, and neither spoke. She wondered what was going through his head.

He stopped his truck at the steps, shut it off, and looked at her.

“I’m glad you went.”

“Me too.”

“Let me walk you up.” He opened his door, exited the truck, got her case from the back, then followed her up the steps.

Siobhan unlocked the door and looked at him.

“Do you want to come in?”

He smirked. “Irish, if I go inside, I won’t come back out. I have to get back. I’ll call or text you soon.”

“All right.”

He kissed her lips, touched the brim of his hat, then ran down the steps, got into his truck, and drove away.

Siobhan walked along the sidewalk, smiling at people she passed, and entered her grandmother’s shop. She smiled when she saw Fiona talking with a customer.

“Hi, honey. I’ll be right with you,” Fiona said.

“I’m fine, Grandma. I stopped by to see if you wanted to get lunch.”

“I’d love to. Let me finish up, and we can go. This is Kenzie Porter, Kenzie, this is my granddaughter, Siobhan O’Brien.”

“Hello, Siobhan. It’s nice to meet you,” Kenzie said as she shook her hand.

“You too, Kenzie.”

“Let me pay you for this, Fiona. Cash will pick it up tomorrow.”

“Wonderful. I’m sure Sunny will love it.”

“I’m sure.” Kenzie paid for the craft set, smiled, then walked out.

“She seems nice.”

“She’s a sweetheart.”

“Is Sunny her daughter?”

“Oh, no. Sunny is her grandmother-in-law. Sunny has always done crafts, but anytime it was mentioned buying her some, she’d tell them she didn’t need any. Cash got it for her.” Fiona smiled.

“That’s so sweet.”

“Sunny and Pops raised Cash from a baby when his mother, their daughter, left him behind. He turned into a good man.”

“Do you need to lock up?”

“Yes, honey. I don’t think anyone would come in and take anything, but I don’t want any tourists coming in without me here.”

“It seems like the crowds have gotten smaller.”

“The Bur Oak is closed for the season. The Clifton B and B is still open yet.”

“Okay, well, let’s get a good burger, Grandma.”

“I’m ready, dear.”

They walked to the diner and entered. Everyone waved or called out to

them. They smiled and sat in a booth.

Connie took their orders and then buzzed around the diner. It was crowded, but it always was. Siobhan loved this town and the people in it. Especially a handsome cowboy she couldn't wait to see again.

Liam was supposed to come by to see her tonight, and she hoped he did. The last time he was to visit her, he didn't show. She'd been angry but made herself calm down. He had warned her about this, and she had to accept it.

It wasn't something she was used to doing. If a man said he'd be there, she expected him to do just that, but Liam told her there would be times he wouldn't call, miss dates, or not show up.

She shook her head as she wondered if she could do this. But the thought of never seeing him again made her hyperventilate.

"What's going through your head, Siobhan?"

"Liam."

"Why? Is something wrong?"

"Just that he's going to break my heart."

"Why would you think that?"

As her grandmother listened, Siobhan told her about the situation with Liam.

"Siobhan, he told you how it would be. You can't be upset when it happens."

"You're right, but I've never been in a relationship like this."

Fiona laughed. "That's probably a good thing." She touched Siobhan's hand. "Honey, if you want to be with him, you must take him as he is... a rancher. You know your grandfather was born on a ranch, right?"

"I think Dad mentioned it."

"When we were dating, he missed a lot of dates too. When he stood me up for the prom, I was livid. But once I calmed down, I remembered him telling me how it would be. Just like Liam told you. It's a hard life. I'm not sure there's a harder, physically demanding job."

"But Liam never takes a day off."

"Your grandfather didn't either until I sat him down and told him we needed a day a week together. One day was all I wanted, and you know what? He did it, and he didn't stop doing it until he died. Compromise is needed in every relationship. That is one thing Liam needs to see."

"Thank you, Grandma. That makes me feel better. I'm in love with him."

"I know. I can tell when you talk about him."

Siobhan wondered if he saw it when she looked at him. She tried not to let him see how she felt because even though he said he was crazy about her, that didn't mean he loved her.

After lunch, they walked back to the shop. Fiona unlocked the door.

"I'm going to head home, Grandma. I enjoyed lunch, and thank you for the advice. I'll keep it in mind."

"Honey, that man is a good one. You'd be crazy not to be with him. Your eyes were wide open, dear. He didn't lie."

"I know." She kissed her cheek. "I love you. I'll call you tomorrow."

"All right, honey. I love you too."

Siobhan waved and then headed down the sidewalk to go home. She had to work tonight and wanted to rest.

At nine o'clock, she knew he wasn't coming, and it hurt. She sucked in a deep breath and blew it out.

"You okay, darlin'?" a cowboy at the bar asked her, with a grin.

"Yes. What would you like?"

"How about your number?"

"I'm sorry—"

"Oh, come on, babe."

"No, I'm sorry."

"I can show you a good time."

"Do you know what no means?"

"Come on, I'm not giving up."

"You really should." Siobhan clenched her jaw. She hated pushy men.

"You wouldn't regret it. I'm harmless." He smirked, and she wanted to punch him.

"I'm not."

Siobhan looked to see Liam sitting beside the man, and her heart soared.

"Are you talking to me?" the cowboy said as he looked at Liam.

"Who else?"

"Liam—"

"I got this, Irish. I'm just letting the man know he's not getting your number if I have anything to say."

She opened her mouth to say something, but the cowboy stood up and glared at Liam.

"I would think that's her decision, friend."

"First off, I'm not your friend, and second..." He looked at Siobhan and

shrugged. "It is your decision, sweetheart."

She looked at the cowboy. "I told you, you're not getting my number."

The man clenched his jaw as he stared at Liam until he got to his feet and stood taller. The man cleared his throat, picked up his beer, and disappeared into the crowd. She couldn't wait to get Liam home.

Liam watched him disappear then looked at Siobhan, grinned, and resumed his seat.

"Hi, darlin'."

"Hi, yourself. I wasn't sure you'd make it."

"I told you I'd try. How's your night going?"

"Much better now. How's the ranch?"

"Good." He stared into her eyes and watched a blush move into her cheeks.

"What can I get you?"

"Beer, please. On tap is fine."

"I'll be right back."

"I'll be right here."

Siobhan smiled at him, and his night got better. He was dead tired, but he wanted to see her.

She returned to him, set the mug on the bar, winked, and waited on another customer.

After closing, he followed her home. They entered the apartment, and Liam pushed her against the door, and kissed her deeply. When she moaned, his dick woke up. She pushed his shoulders, making him step back, then she took his hand and led him to her bedroom.

The following day, he strode through the barn with a smile on his face. He loved being with her and last night had been fantastic. He couldn't wait to see her again, but frowned when he wondered when that would be.

Anytime he didn't get to see her, he was disappointed, but running the ranch took up most of his time. It wasn't just a few light chores. Everything had to be taken care of, feeding, health monitoring, breeding, branding, construction and maintenance work, managing business affairs with his buyers, and miscellaneous duties around the ranch.

It was a never-ending cycle, and he loved every minute of it.

As he pulled up to his house, he saw a vehicle he didn't recognize, but swore when he saw Monica emerge from it.

"Now what?" he muttered as he shut his truck off and stepped out. "What are you doing here, Monica?"

"I came to see you since you didn't answer my calls or texts."

"Shouldn't that have told you something?"

"Can we go inside?" She smiled at him, but he didn't smile back.

"No." He folded his arms and tilted his head. "Say what you have to say then leave."

"I miss you—" She stopped when he snorted. "I do, Liam. I didn't realize how much until you were gone."

"Excuse me? Aren't you the one who told me to go?"

"Yes, but I know it was a mistake."

Liam sighed and walked to the steps of the porch.

"No, it wasn't. Please leave, Monica. I'd hate to call the law on you for trespassing."

"You can't be serious."

"Oh, I'm very serious. I'm with someone else now."

Monica stared at him then laughed.

"Whoever she is, she won't put up with your shit any more than I did."

Liam grinned. "So, then why are you here? You *heard* I was seeing someone, didn't you?"

"Maybe, but she won't be happy here on this ranch with you, Liam. No woman would. You can't just work all the time and expect someone to sit alone, waiting for you all the time, only to be let down. Goodbye, Liam."

He watched her drive away, shook his head, then entered his house and headed for the shower.

A week later, Siobhan sighed as she set a beer on the bar. She missed Liam so much. They hadn't seen each other for over a week, and she talked with him once.

"Are you okay?" Scarlett asked her as she touched her shoulder.

"I miss Liam, but I can't let it get to me. This is where we find out how strong I am."

"Siobhan, you are one of the strongest women I know. It will be hard but

remember that it's how it goes if you want him. He's a busy man. Look, when Noah and I first got together, marriage was something he wasn't interested in. He'd been in the same situation as Liam. He worked so much, and any woman he was involved with bitched. He was engaged three times and swore off that kind of relationship. We had a rough start, but I hung in there... for a while. I broke up with him because he wouldn't commit."

"She was going to marry someone else," Laura said as she passed them.

"What?"

"Yes. A man from my past showed up. I told him about Noah, and he said he'd marry me." Scarlett shook her head. "I almost did it."

"You have to tell me about that."

"I will. We're too busy right now, but I'll tell you all about it."

"Scarlett? Could I get more hours?"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I don't want to get a second job, but I could use a little more money."

"Are you okay?"

"Oh, yeah. I'm fine. I'd just like some extra spending money."

"I can give you as many hours as you'd like. Laura only works the three nights because she runs her ranch with Dom when she's not here. I'm here because this is my bar and Noah is so busy, and I'd be bored at home. Boredom is hell on a relationship."

"That's true. I'll work Tuesday through Saturday if that would work for you."

Scarlett hugged her. "You're a lifesaver. You can start next week. Thank you."

"I appreciate it."

"Are you okay?"

"I haven't heard from Liam in almost a week."

"And he hasn't heard from you in almost a week," Scarlett said.

"What?"

"A phone works both ways. Text him. Tell him you're thinking of him. I'm sure he'll call or text back when he can."

Siobhan nodded. "I'll text him."

Scarlett smiled. "Do it now."

"All right." Siobhan took her cellphone from her pocket, found his number, and texted. She stared at the phone, but when no response came, she

stuck the phone back into her pocket.

As the night wore on, she stayed busy, but still thought about Liam. He should have been able to send a text back by now.

“You’re going to drive yourself insane,” Laura said.

“Is it that obvious?”

“Siobhan, he told you how it would be. Decide if you want to do this. But, I have a feeling if you walk away from him over this, it will destroy him. Another woman who won’t stay with him because he’s doing his best to provide for his family and the employees on the ranch. They all depend on him, and he doesn’t want to disappoint them. I know what it’s like to run a ranch. Thank God I have Dominic, but I work alongside him. That man never stops, and Liam is the same way. I’m used to it because I grew up on that ranch. You’re a city girl, so it must be hard to see life that way.”

“I’m in love with him, Laura.”

“I figured as much, but you have to remember how his life is.”

“I know.”

“Noah disappeared on me a few days. I sent texts and left messages, and he never got back to me. We had a huge argument about it. It wasn’t that I was checking up on him to see if he was really busy. It was that I was worried. I was so pissed,” Scarlett said.

“Oh, she was too. He’s lucky you took him back.” Laura smiled.

“Siobhan, I work a lot too. I am always at this bar. Noah and I had to make this work, and we did. You and Liam can, too. He’s such a great guy.”

“I know he is. I’m so crazy in love with him, but I don’t know how he feels. He told me he was crazy about me.”

“Then he’ll be in touch—” Scarlett stopped when Siobhan’s phone buzzed.

Siobhan removed it from her pocket to see she had a text message. Holding her breath, she opened it and grinned. She showed it to Laura and Scarlett.

‘Thinking of you too, Irish. I hope to see you soon.’

“I feel one hundred percent better,” she said and smiled.

Laura and Scarlett laughed.

“Good, now let’s get back to work.” Scarlett strolled along the bar, taking orders.

Siobhan couldn’t keep the smile off her face for the rest of the evening. She missed Liam and wanted to see him, but she’d wait.

Saturday evening, she laughed as she watched a cowboy flirt with Scarlett. Siobhan saw her point to Noah sitting at the bar, and Noah raised his glass to the young cowboy, who quickly took his beer and made his way through the crowd.

Siobhan could understand why. Noah Conway was a big man. He was muscular and intimidating when standing at his full height. Any man would be a little hesitant to make him angry.

She set a whiskey on the bar at nine, took the man's money, and turned to the cash register. When she turned to give him his change, she saw Liam at the bar. He stared at her.

She handed the man his change and then made her way to Liam. She folded her arms on the bar and smiled.

"Hi. I didn't think I'd see you, but I am happy you're here."

"Me too, Irish. You're a sight for sore eyes."

She touched his cheek. "As are you."

"Come home with me?"

"Yes."

"Can't wait."

"What would you like?"

"You."

Siobhan laughed. "If only."

Liam chuckled. "You got that right. I'll wait."

"It will make it sweeter. What can I get you?"

"Callahan and Coke. It's been a hell of a week."

"We'll talk later. I'm so glad you're here."

"I am too."

She smiled, made his drink, and set it on the bar. He picked it up, saluted her with it, and sipped. She winked, making him grin. God, she wanted to drag him out of here. He was so sexy. With a sigh, she returned to work and couldn't wait for the night to end.

Chapter Eight

Liam couldn't keep his eyes off her. Damn, he missed her. The day after they got back, he hated taking her home. He wanted to keep her with him, but he knew he couldn't. Not yet anyway.

He admitted he was in love with her and hoped she felt the same about him. It terrified him she might not. He had to work tomorrow, but planned on getting it done quickly so he could spend time with her.

She waited on another customer, and he grinned when she laughed at something the man said. The patrons loved her.

"Hi, Liam. Do you need a refill?" Laura asked him.

"No, thanks, Laura. I want to keep my wits about me."

Laura glanced at Siobhan and back at him.

"She was miserable."

"So was I." He shook his head.

"Well, at least it's mutual."

"Yes, ma'am."

He picked up his drink and tossed it back. He didn't know why he even ordered it. He came here to see Siobhan; now that he had, he wanted to get her out of here and into his bed.

When he followed her home later, his damn dick was hard thinking about getting her naked.

He parked behind her, stepped out, and followed her up the steps. He waited while she unlocked the door, pushed it open, and stepped inside. He followed her in, grasped her arm, and turned her back to the door.

"I need you so much, Siobhan," he murmured as he put his face in the crook of her neck.

Her fingers sifted through his hair, and he raised his head and looked into her eyes.

"I need you too, Liam." She wrapped her arms around his neck.

He unhooked the clips on her bibbed overalls and lowered the straps. She toed her boots off as she gazed into his eyes. He pushed the overalls down, and they fell in a pool around her feet. She stepped out of them and kicked them across the room. Then her fingers went to the snap of his jeans. She unhooked it, lowered the zipper, and slipped her hand inside to wrap around

his hard cock.

He groaned and arched his hips. "I want your hands all over me, darlin'."

She smiled at him, shoved his jeans down past his knees, dropped to hers, and took his cock into her mouth. He fisted his hands in her hair and moved his hips in rhythm with her mouth.

"Siobhan," he whispered as she sucked on him.

He clenched his jaw when she ran the tip of her tongue around the head and jerked when she cupped his balls.

Blowjobs were nothing new to him, but this was Siobhan. The woman he wanted in his life for as long as he had on this earth. He couldn't take it much longer. He grabbed her arms, pulled her up, and quickly stripped her of her panties. Then he lifted her, put her back against the door, and inched into her.

"Liam," she moaned, and he stepped back from her.

"I need a condom." He took his wallet from his jeans, retrieved a condom, rolled it on, and thrust hard into her. Her legs wrapped around his waist, and her fingers clutched his hair. He took her hard against the door.

Her breathing increased, and he could feel her inner muscles clenching around his cock, as she screamed his name when she came. He slammed into her and groaned when his orgasm hit him. Hard.

Placing his face in the crook of her neck, he sucked in a deep breath. Siobhan had her head against the door, trying to catch her breath.

"God, that was fantastic," he said when he could.

"Yes."

Liam let her legs down and held onto her while she gasped for air.

"Are you okay?"

"I am. Are you?"

"Wonderful," he said with a grin.

"Let me get dressed, and we can leave."

"Sure, but I need to use the bathroom." He pulled his jeans up, zipped and snapped them, then followed her down the hallway.

She was bare-ass naked. All she had on were socks and her Dewey's T-shirt. Shit. He entered the bathroom, disposed of the condom, and entered the bedroom. They'd leave in a little while. He needed her again.

Later, as he drove them to his home, he kept his eyes on the road, so he wouldn't look at her. She made him hard with a look.

"What are we doing tomorrow?"

"After I get my chores done, we can go for a ride or just stay inside."

“You have to work?”

“Siobhan, I work every day. We’ve been over this.”

“I know. What will I do while you’re working?”

“Anything you want. I won’t be long.”

“Okay.”

He didn’t know what he could say. She knew this. He had told her repeatedly.

“Siobhan…”

“It’s fine, Liam. For some reason, I thought you were taking tomorrow off.”

“Darlin’, I’ve told you I don’t take days off. The stalls have to be cleaned every day. There are things that can’t be put off.”

“All right,” she whispered.

He pulled onto the berm of the road, stopped the truck, and looked at her.

“Is it?”

“What do you want me to say?”

“That it really is all right.”

“I suppose it has to be.”

“No, it doesn’t. If it’s not, then tell me now. I never lied to you about how much I work. I wasn’t making it up—”

“I know that,” she said through clenched teeth.

“Do you? Did you think I was just telling you that, for God knows what reason?”

“Of course not.”

“Of course not,” he mocked. “You forget I’ve been here before. I thought you were different. That was obviously my first mistake.” He put the truck in gear, turned the wheel, and drove back to town. “Son of a bitch.”

They didn’t speak as he drove back and pulled to the steps. She got out without looking at him, slammed the door, got her case from the back, and marched up the steps. He watched her stop, turn around, and move down two steps. He lowered the window.

“I knew you’d break my heart, Liam Flynn. I fucking knew it!” She turned and ran up the steps, unlocked the door, went inside, and slammed the door. He raised the window, hit the steering wheel with his fist, and swore at the pain. Taking a deep breath, he drove home. Swearing the entire way.

“When will you learn that you’re better off alone? I thought this time would be different.” He snorted. “There you go thinking. Idiot.”

The following day, he rode the fence in the east pasture and saw a section down. He dismounted, took his tools from the saddlebag, and repaired it. All the while trying to forget her.

Siobhan did all she could to not cry. Scarlett asked her what was wrong, but she broke down anytime she tried to tell her. She was sure Scarlett knew it had to be about Liam.

“Siobhan? Do you want to go home?” Scarlett asked her.

“No. This will keep my mind off it. If I go home, I’ll be miserable.”

“You *are* miserable.”

“I’ll be better here. Please.”

“Of course. I just thought you’d feel better away from here.”

“I’d rather work.”

“Okay. Then get to work.” Scarlett moved along the bar, taking orders, and Siobhan made drinks.

When would this night end?

She’d been here since four, and it was only nine. There was a good-sized crowd. Not as many as Friday or Saturday nights, but for a Tuesday, it was packed.

“What can I get you?”

“Beer, on tap, please, darlin’.”

She tried to smile at the cowboy, but failed. She got his beer and then set the mug on the bar. He winked, but she turned from him to wait on someone else. She glanced around to see if Liam was here, but she knew better.

Being a Tuesday, he wouldn’t come into town, and even if he did, she knew he wouldn’t come into the bar. Not since the last time they were together. Damn that man.

“Come to my office,” Scarlett said as she passed her.

Siobhan watched as she walked down the hallway and disappeared. Taking a deep breath, she set the drink she’d been making on the bar and headed for the office.

She knocked on the door and entered when Scarlett told her to come in. Siobhan opened the door, stepped inside, and walked to the chair opposite Scarlett’s desk.

“Am I in trouble for something?”

“No. I wanted you to take a break, and I had a feeling if I told you to, you wouldn’t have. This way, you have no choice.”

Siobhan shook her head as tears threatened.

“I screwed up, Scarlett.”

“How?”

“Liam was taking me to his place when I mentioned him working the next day and that I thought he’d take it off. He got angry, telling me I knew he worked every day. When I said, all right, he pulled over and asked if it really was all right, and I said, I suppose it has to be. That didn’t go well at all. He said he thought I’d be different, and it was his mistake to think that. He turned the truck around and took me home. I haven’t heard from him.”

“Give him time—”

“It won’t matter how much time I give him. He’s finished with me. He thinks I’m like Monica. I’m not.”

“I know you’re not, and he’ll come to realize it too.”

She shook her head. “He won’t. It’s over. I messed up.”

“Then you apologize.”

“I’ve thought about it, but even if he accepts my apology, he won’t see me anymore. He’s been in this position a few times, Scarlett, and if he thinks it’s going to happen again, he’ll stay away. God! I love him so much.” She blew out a breath. “I should go back to Denver. It’s probably best.”

“I’d hate for you to do that, Siobhan.”

“I don’t want to, but I also don’t want to run into Liam if I stay.”

“I get that. I really do. I’ve been in a similar situation. Make a decision that you can live with. If you stay, you’d have to hope you didn’t see him, but if you go, you will *never* see him. Does that make sense?”

“Yes. I’ll give it some thought. I know it would hurt my grandmother if I left. She loves having me here.”

“We all do, Siobhan. You have fit in so well with all of us. You’re a part of this community.”

Siobhan nodded because she could say nothing to save her life. She wanted to make the right decision, but never seeing Liam broke her heart. She was damned if she did and damned if she didn’t.

“I’m going back to the bar. You can stay here for a while if you’d like.” Scarlett pushed the chair back and stood.

“I’ll be out in a minute.”

Scarlett stopped beside her and put her hand on her shoulder.

“I feel for you, Siobhan. We’ve all been there with hardheaded men. Take it from someone who has been in a similar situation, don’t give up too soon.”

“All right.”

Scarlett nodded, then walked out of the office. Siobhan couldn’t go back out there yet. Trying to put on a smiling face was proving difficult for her. She’d love to go home and cry, but it seemed like that was all she had done since Liam left.

When October arrived, Siobhan still hadn’t decided to leave. She hadn’t seen him in a month, and her heart still ached. She needed him so much.

There would never be another man in her life like Liam Flynn. She knew that with all her heart, and she had ruined any chance to be happy with him.

Liam strode from the barn, across the yard, and walked up the steps to his parents’ house. He wiped his feet on the mat, opened the door, and entered the kitchen.

His mother sat at the bar, drinking coffee.

“Good morning, Liam.”

“Morning, Mom. Is Dad in his office?”

“Yes, is something wrong?”

“A section of fence is down again. I want to let him know.”

“Okay.”

Liam walked from the kitchen along the hallway, knocked on the office door, and entered.

“Dad?”

“Come in, son. What’s up?”

“We have a section of fence down again. I’m going to call MDOL. Do you want to talk to them?”

“Liam, that’s your job, son. Just let me know if we have a problem with rustlers.”

“Yes, sir.” Liam turned to leave.

“Liam?”

“Yes, sir?” He looked at his father.

“Are you doing all right? You seem...” His father waved his hand.
“Quiet.”

“Are you saying I’m not quiet?” Liam grinned.

“You know damn well what I mean.”

Liam huffed. “I’m fine, Dad.”

“I don’t believe that for a damn minute. Your mother mentioned it too. Is something going on with you and Siobhan?”

He clenched his teeth. “There is no me and Siobhan. We broke up last month.”

“Why? You seemed happy.”

“The ranch, Dad. The same as it always is.”

“There’s a woman who will stand with you, son. They’re difficult to find, but hold on to her when you do. Are you sure it isn’t Siobhan? You seemed happy with her.”

Liam sighed and sat in a wingback chair.

“I was, but we argued about me working so much. I don’t know how you and Mom did it.”

Joseph Flynn smiled. “Your mother is the one who stood with me, and she has never regretted it. Has it been easy? Hell, no. We had our fair share of arguments, but worked hard to stay together. Marriage isn’t easy. It’s a give-and-take relationship. You can’t do all the taking, and she can’t do all the giving. You have to make it work too, Liam.”

“Did you take time off?”

“Not for the first ten years.” His father chuckled. “And we argued all the time in those ten years. I knew I had to decide what meant more to me. Your mother beside me, or me doing it alone. You can see how that turned out. You’re going to kill yourself by working so hard, son. Do I need to make you take another vacation?”

“No, sir. I have cut back.”

“I know you have, Liam, but it isn’t enough to make you see Siobhan. Women are strong, and so is their love for their families, but they don’t always like being alone. No one does. A little alone time is good for anyone, but not to where you get lonely. There’s a big difference between being alone and being lonely, son.”

Liam stood. “I know, Dad. I’d better get back and call MDOL.”

“All right, son. Let me know if they find anything.”

“Yes, sir.” Liam closed the door behind him and strode to the kitchen.

“Are you calling MDOL?”

“Yes, ma’am. As soon as I get to my office.”

“Liam?”

“Yes, ma’am?”

“What’s going on?”

“Nothing, Mom. I’ll talk to you later.”

“William Joseph Flynn, you will not lie to your mother.”

Liam tilted his head down and then raised it to look at her.

“I’m sorry, Mom. I’m not ready to talk about it yet.”

“It’s Siobhan, isn’t it?”

“Yes, ma’am. We’re not seeing each other anymore.”

“Now, that is a real shame. You were happy.”

“I have to get to work, Mom.” He opened the door, walked onto the porch, and pulled his gloves on as he walked across the yard to the barn.

He knew his parents were worried about him, especially his mother. They were close, and she wanted him to be happy. He wasn’t. He missed Siobhan so much, but it wasn’t worth seeing her if she wouldn’t be with him.

Entering the barn, he strode down the aisle to the indoor corral, where he watched Jerry trying to get a horse into the trailer.

“He’s not having any of it. Maybe we should have Trick pick him up.” Jerry held onto the rope as the horse reared up.

“Call him. I have to call MDOL.”

“We have fence down?”

“Yes, I was in my office when the transmitter went off.”

“All right. I’ll get with Trick.”

Liam nodded, pulled his cellphone from his pocket, and called Reece.

“Liam? What’s up?”

“Reece, the fence is down where you checked it the last time.”

“Shit. I’m on my way. I’ll pick you up at the barn.”

“I’ll be ready.”

He stuck the phone in his pocket and placed his arms on the top rail to watch as Jerry tried to calm the horse. With a sigh, Liam climbed over the railing, sauntered to the horse, and took the rope from Jerry.

“Let me see if I can settle him.”

“Good luck with that. This horse wants none of us around him.” Jerry used his phone to call Trick.

Liam murmured to the horse, but it reared up. He tugged the rope, and the horse settled on all fours but kept yanking its head away.

“Come on, boy. We won’t hurt you.” He touched the horse’s nose, but it snapped at him, making Liam jerk back.

“Did he get you?”

“No, but it wouldn’t be the first time a horse bit me.”

“Hell, I know that’s right. Trick is on his way.”

“I hope he can do something with him.”

“There aren’t many horses that man can’t train.”

Liam nodded as he handed the rope to Jerry.

“Leave him in here. If Trick needs help to get the horse in the trailer, we’ll help him, but I know he likes to do that himself.”

“Yeah, he says it’s, so the horse knows who’s the boss.” Jerry grinned.

“I’ll be in my office.” Liam climbed over the rail and jumped down, then headed for his office.

It would be another long, damn day. He tried to keep his mind off Siobhan, but missed her like crazy.

An hour later, he stood in the pasture and watched Reece look around. There were fresh tire tracks.

“None of the men have been here, Reece.”

“It looks like a truck, possibly pulling a trailer. If I were you, Liam, I’d have some men here at night. Better safe than sorry. You know rustlers rarely steal in the daylight.”

“Yeah. I’ll get a headcount, but we just moved cattle to another pasture.”

“I’d put some men there too. I believe someone is interested in taking your beef.”

“Damn it. All right. I’ll get with you after we do a headcount.”

“Sounds good.”

They returned to Reece’s truck, climbed inside, and drove back to the barn.

“How’s married life, Reece?”

Liam watched a grin lift Reece’s lips.

“Fantastic. You should try it.”

“I was thinking about it...”

“Thinking about it? What happened?”

As Reece listened, Liam told him about Siobhan, everything that had happened between them, and how they were no longer together.

“Liam, do you love this woman?”

“I do.”

“Then make it work. I did. You know I never wanted to get married. I was already married to my job, but I didn’t want to be away from Rissa, so I only

took local cases. I never leave unless I'm following a lead. I'd rather be with her. I even stopped working on weekends unless they need me."

"You were gone a lot, weren't you?"

"Before her, yes. I was gone more than home, but I fell hard and would rather spend time with her, so I made it work. As you should. Look, Liam, take it from someone who almost lost the love of his life because he was stubborn. I hurt her a lot, and I'm just happy she forgave me because I'd be lost without her. You seem that way now."

"I've never felt this with any other woman. Not even Monica. I know I hurt Siobhan too, but I'm so busy—"

"Bullshit. Don't be so busy that life is gone before you can live it. I know you love this ranch, Liam. Everyone who knows you knows that, but this ranch won't keep you warm at night or love you as that woman could. If I can do it, you can. Hell, look at Noah. He took a chance, and he couldn't be happier. And what about Trick? You know he loved Kaylee more than anything but when Rayna came into his life, he didn't want her. He almost lost her too. Get your ass in gear, Liam, before someone snatches her up."

That sure didn't sit well. The thought of another man being with Siobhan. She belonged to him. *Yeah, right. You fucked that up.*

"I'll think about it."

Reece shook his head. "Hardhead. Well, get with me after you do a headcount. And post some men with all the cattle. Rustling is in full swing in Clifton, Montana."

"I appreciate what you do, Reece. I'd hate to lose any cattle."

"Hell, even if you lost one, you'd lose a lot of money. Get with me, and we'll go from there."

"Thanks." Liam shook his hand.

"Sure thing."

Once Liam exited the truck, Reece drove off. He entered the barn, found Jerry, and told him to get some men around the cattle. He knew Jerry would take care of it.

He strolled to his office to work on the payroll. His mind was constantly on Siobhan, and wondered if she'd even talk to him again.

The next evening, Liam and two of his men stayed with the cattle. He had his rifle in the sheath, so he'd be ready for anything, but it was quiet.

They kept the cattle together but sat back so no one would see them as they sat on their horses, at the wood's edge.

Liam huffed and was about to call it a night when the cattle started shifting and bawling louder. He nudged Diablo from the woods and glanced around. Something was spooking the herd, and he wanted to see what he had to deal with.

As he sat there, listening, he heard men's voices. He picked up the walkie-talkie, and quietly spoke into it.

"You guys aren't talking, are you? I hear someone."

"Not us, boss."

"Shit," Liam said as he put the walkie-talkie in his pocket.

He nudged the horse to move out a little further. The light of the moon lit up the pasture. He removed the rifle from the sheath, raised it, and looked through the night vision scope. He shifted his eyes around the pasture then swung back when something caught his eye.

"Son of a bitch," he swore when he saw the truck drive through a cut section of the fence, and it was pulling a trailer. He spoke into the two way radio. "They're here. Right where they cut fence before. Stay put."

"Be careful, Liam," one of the men said.

As he walked the horse out further, he heard the gate on the trailer open.

"Hell, no." Liam pulled the bolt lever, and watched through the scope until he saw two men taking horses from the trailer. "Shit."

When they got on the horses, one of them ran his horse at the herd, and the cattle panicked.

"Stampede," Liam yelled into the radio as the herd ran. He nudged his horse to run after them, but halted when he felt a bullet whiz by his head at the same instant he heard the gun shot and it hit the tree behind him, sending bark flying. "Damn it."

"Boss? You okay?"

"Yeah, the bastards shot at me. I'm calling Reece."

"What do you want us to do?"

"Nothing. I don't need you getting shot."

"But—"

"Stay put," Liam snapped, as he called Reece.

"Yes, sir."

"Liam?" Reece answered.

"They're stealing my cattle, Reece. Right now."

"Hell. I'm on my way. Do not interact with them, Liam. Do you hear me?"

“Yeah, I hear you, but they shot at me.”

“Are you all right?”

“They missed me, but I am not letting them take one damn cow, so you’d better get your ass here, Maddox.” He disconnected, put the phone back into his pocket, and raised the rifle again.

When he saw the thieves trying to round the cattle up, he wondered where they were going with them, since the trailer that the horse had been in was too small. Nudging Diablo, he ran back through the woods toward the fence.

He dismounted before the horse stopped, then he walked along the fence to get closer to them. He dropped the reins and crept closer then slipped under the fence to get to where they had cut the fence. He stopped in his tracks when he saw a hauler backed up to the fence.

The property next door was abandoned, and they’d used an old road to get to his place.

“Where are you, Reece? It shouldn’t take you long to get here,” Liam murmured.

“Liam?” The radio squawked.

“Shit,” he said as he turned the walkie-talkie off and hoped the thieves didn’t hear it but he knew they had when they turned in his direction. He was sure they couldn’t see him, but he didn’t want to take any chances, so he backed up, keeping his eyes on them. He stopped when he came up against a barrel of a rifle.

“Drop it and raise your hands.”

“I’m not letting you take my cattle,” he growled as he put the rifle down, and put his hands in the air.

“Too late for that. We’re about to load them. Luckily, not too many of them bolted. We’ll leave you a few,” the man said, and laughed.

“You won’t get away with this. MDOL is on the way.”

“Bullshit. Even if they are, we’ll be gone before they get here. I’m just wondering what to do with you.”

“You’re going to let him go. Now.”

Liam sighed with relief when he heard Reece’s voice.

“I’ll kill him,” the man said.

“And I’ll drop you where you stand, now put the fucking rifle down.”

Liam heard Reece cock his pistol, and he heard another gun do the same. He glanced over his shoulder and could see two figures. He knew Reece but not the other man. He didn’t care who he was, as long as he was on Reece’s

side.

Then as Reece held his weapon on the man, Liam saw the rustler sigh, and then placed the rifle on the ground.

“I’m not alone, and they’re about to drive off.”

“They’re not going anywhere. Two agents are at the truck, and two are rounding up your crew. You’re all going to prison.”

Liam turned to see Reece holstering his weapon and putting handcuffs on the man.

“Thanks, Reece.”

“What the fuck did I tell you, Liam? Did I not say to not interact with them? What the hell were you thinking?”

“I was thinking they’re not going to take my cattle. Damn Reece, I couldn’t sit by, watch them, and do nothing.”

“I get it, but you could have gotten yourself or your men killed. You’re lucky it wasn’t your damn head when they shot at you, but as hardheaded as you are, it probably wouldn’t have done any damage.” Reece looked at the other agent. “Put him in the truck, Alex, and read him his rights.”

“Will do, Reece.”

Liam watched the man leading the rustler away, reading him his rights.

“Where are your trucks?”

“Behind the hauler. I knew where we needed to be.”

“Okay.”

“This looks like a good-sized ring of thieves,” Reece said as he shook his head.

“I couldn’t believe it when I saw the hauler. They had to have planned this out way ahead of time.”

“Yeah. I’d say the tracks we saw were them casing the place. You have a reputation for good beef. They saw an opportunity to make money off you. I’m sure they’ve stolen from others too. The Coleman ranch had close to fifty cows taken recently, and I’d bet money, it was this bunch.”

“I hate rustlers.”

“I do too, but it’s job security for sure.”

“I appreciate you, Reece.” Liam put his hand out for Reece to shake and he did.

“You’re welcome. Don’t ever do this again.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You and your men can repair the fence once we get out of here. Once the

hauler is processed, it'll be towed.”

“All right.” Liam watched as two other agents walked toward them with three other men in cuffs. He called the men on the two-way to come repair the fence once they got the cattle settled.

“I’ll talk with you soon, Liam.”

“Okay, Reece. Thanks for coming.”

“It’s my job. Get some rest. I’ll be in touch.” Reece touched the brim of his hat, then walked through the woods, and disappeared.

Liam sat on the grass. He’d come close to being shot.

“Well, it would have put you out of your misery, that’s for sure.”

After sitting for a few minutes to catch his breath and calm down, he got up, mounted Diablo, and rode home. Never a dull moment on a ranch.

Chapter Nine

Siobhan knocked on the door to Scarlett's office, and it opened.

"I was on my way to the bar. What did you need?" Scarlett smiled at her.

"Can I talk to you?"

"Of course." Scarlett waved her inside, strode around to her desk, and sat.

Siobhan wasn't sure where to begin. She cleared her throat.

"I'm, uh, giving you two weeks' notice. I'm moving back to Denver."

"Siobhan, are you sure this is what you want?"

She blew out a humorless laugh. "No, but I think it's best. I'm scared to death that I'm going to see Liam. And if he's with another woman, I'd want to die."

"I hate to see you go. Maybe you should talk with him before you decide."

"It wouldn't do any good, Scarlett. I haven't heard from him."

"And again, he hasn't heard from you."

"Oh, no. I'm not doing that again. He made it clear how he felt. Damn him. I should never have gotten involved with him. At least my heart wouldn't be broken."

"I'm so sorry. I thought you two were great together. Both of you seemed so happy. I don't want you to go, and I know Laura will be disappointed too."

"I haven't told Grandma yet. I know it will break her heart, but I can't stay."

"Fiona will be devastated, but she'll understand."

"I'm going to call the bar I worked at and see if they have an opening."

Scarlett shook her head. "I hate it, but I totally understand. I thought of leaving here, too, when Noah and I were having problems. So, I get it. I hate it, but I understand."

"Two weeks then."

"Yes. A lot can happen in two weeks, Siobhan."

Siobhan shook her head. "Nothing will happen in this case. I'd better get back out there before the natives get restless."

"Yeah, me too."

Siobhan nodded, stood, and walked from the office with Scarlett behind her. They worked until closing, then Siobhan drove home.

It would be another long night, but she would leave Clifton, Montana, and Liam Flynn. It was all she could do.

The next day, she entered her grandmother's shop to see her talking with a customer, so Siobhan waited. She hated to tell her she was leaving.

Once the customer left, Fiona walked to her and stared at her.

"Siobhan? What's wrong?"

She sighed. "Grandma, I'm moving back to Denver."

Fiona gasped, and Siobhan's heart ached, knowing she was hurting her grandmother.

"I thought you were happy here, honey."

"I was..." She shook her head and bit her lip to keep from crying.

"But you aren't now?"

"No," she said in a choked voice and burst into tears.

Her grandmother's arms went around her, and she cried on her shoulder.

"Please stop crying. You're going to make yourself sick, Siobhan."

Siobhan nodded, stepped away, and told her grandmother why she was leaving.

"I'm so sorry to hear that. You seemed happy being with Liam."

"I love him, Grandma, but it doesn't do me any good."

"Siobhan, if you love him, you take him as he is. You know how hard he works. That's Liam. You don't want to change him, do you?"

"I just want to spend time with him."

Fiona grasped her arms. "Then tell him that. Siobhan, he has to know you're willing to be with him in any way you can. One day a week or even a month. At least you'd spend time together. I told you I did it. You can too."

"Knowing Liam, he won't even take that one day."

"Honey, please give this some thought before you decide. I don't want you to leave. I love having you here."

"I love being here with you. Clifton has grown on me, but I can't stay. I don't want to see Liam."

"Honey, you love him, and I'd bet money that he feels the same way, but you have to fight. Make him see what it means to you."

"Grandma, it won't matter."

"I cannot believe that an O'Brien would back down from a challenge. I didn't, and you shouldn't. I know how tough O'Brien's can be. Sometimes you have to fight for what you want. If you want Liam Flynn, then you go after him. Talk to him."

Siobhan thought about it and then nodded.

“What do I have to lose?”

“Not a thing. If it doesn’t change, then move on. I know that’s hard, honey, but we have to make sacrifices in life. Go talk to him. Today.”

“I don’t know how to find him.”

“I’m sure someone on the ranch would know where he is.”

“You’re right. Okay. I’ll go now. I’ll see you later.” She hugged her grandmother and ran along the sidewalk to get to her vehicle.

Once she drove out of the parking lot, her nerves kicked in. What if he threw her off the ranch?

“Well, then you’d know how he really feels.” She sighed.

She pulled into the Flynn Ranch driveway and stopped at the first barn. She exited the SUV, then entered the barn. No one was around.

“Great. Now what?” She walked out to the other end of the barn but saw no one anywhere.

Striding back into the barn, she walked out the other end and stared at the farmhouse. Did she dare?

“Hell, yes.” She strode across the yard, climbed the steps, took a deep breath, and knocked. It opened almost immediately, and Joanna Flynn stood in the doorway, staring at her with a frown.

“Siobhan, come in. Liam isn’t here right now.”

“Do you know where I can find him? I need to talk with him.”

“I can check the schedule. Have a seat, hon. Would you like something to drink?”

“No, thank you.”

“All right. Just give me a minute. I’ll be right back.” Joanna smiled at her, but all she could do was nod.

When Joanna returned to the kitchen, she held a paper sheet and sat at the bar. She placed the table on the bar and ran her finger along the list.

“He’s in the east pasture, putting up fencing.”

“Was fence down again?”

Joanna smiled. “You’re getting the lingo right, but no. They’re replacing it with new wire.” She stood. “Come here,” she said as she walked to the back door. “See the road on the left of the third barn?”

“Yes.”

“Follow it. It will take you to the pasture. He should be there.”

“Yes, but where there?”

Joanna laughed. "Follow the fence. You should be able to see the newer wire."

"I understand that, but how do I know which way they're stringing it?"

"They run it north to south. They've been there since this morning, so they're probably nearly finished."

"Okay, can I drive there?"

"No. Horseback. Do you need someone to saddle a horse for you?"

"I can do it, but if someone could start it, I'll get out there sooner."

"All right." Joanna stood, walked to the two-way radio on the counter, and called someone, telling them to saddle a horse.

"Won't Liam hear that?"

"Probably, but he won't think anything of it. Sometimes I go out for a ride."

"Okay. I'll head out there now. Wish me luck."

Joanna hugged her. "You don't know how much luck I wish you. He needs you in his life, Siobhan. Make him see it."

"Damn right, I will." She grinned when Joanna laughed.

"One word of advice: don't take any shit. The Flynn men think they rule. They don't. Keep me in the loop. Now, go get him."

"Yes, ma'am."

Siobhan ran out the door and across the yard to the barn. When she entered, she saw a man leading the horse to her.

"Ma'am? Is the horse for you?" He looked confused.

"Yes, it's fine."

"Yes, ma'am. Let me get the stirrups adjusted for you."

"Thank you." She waited as he adjusted the stirrups for her. He looked at her when he finished.

"There you go. Have an enjoyable ride, ma'am." He touched the brim of his hat and strode through the barn.

Siobhan nudged the horse and rode out of the barn. She took a deep breath and followed the road Joanna had pointed out. She had no idea how long it would take her to reach Liam, but she wasn't leaving until he spoke to her.

"Hardheaded, stubborn ass, cowboy," she muttered.

An hour later, she reached the fence and could see the newer wire, so she headed south. When she crested a knoll, she halted the horse when she saw the men working on the fence.

Nudging the horse, she trotted to the fence. Siobhan saw the men looking

at her but didn't see Liam. Had she come all this way, and he wasn't even here?

"Can we help you, ma'am?" a cowboy asked her.

"Where's Liam?"

The man pointed further along the fence.

"He's ahead of us, taking the old wire down."

"Okay. Thank you." She nudged the horse into a run along the fence.

She knew those men had to be wondering what she was doing here. She didn't recognize any of them from the cattle drive. She nudged the horse and rode along the fence.

When she saw him, she slowed the horse and went to where he worked, cutting the fence. He looked up, did a double take, set his tools down, and walked to her.

"What are you doing here, Siobhan?"

"I came to see you. Why else would I be here?"

"I have no clue."

With a deep sigh, she dismounted and walked to him.

"I wanted to talk to you."

"About?"

"Us."

"I thought there was no us anymore."

"Liam, I want to be with you."

"Really? Then why do you question me when I tell you I have to work every day?"

"Because you don't," she snapped.

He clenched his jaw.

"What part of that don't you understand?"

"All of it. You have men—"

"Who do their own fucking chores. I have a barn at my house that must be cleaned daily. Every damn day, Siobhan. I can't take a break."

"Bullshit. Have one of the ranch hands do it. Someone had to do it while you were on the cattle drive."

"Yes, but I don't expect them to do it all the time."

She knew then it was a lost cause trying to get him to change, and she should have known better. Some people didn't like change, and he was one of them. She was fighting a losing battle here. She took a deep breath.

"I'm leaving Clifton and going back to Denver."

Liam stared at her, and she saw him swallow hard, but he said nothing.

“Say something,” she whispered.

“Like what? It seems like you’ve decided.”

She blinked back tears and mounted the horse. Before riding off, she stared at him.

“All I’d need is one day a week with you. I’d do that just to be with you, but you can’t even spend one day with me. I love you, Liam, but I won’t be second to this ranch—”

“Of course you won’t,” he snapped.

“I want to be its equal. Do you know why you won’t make time for me?”

“I have a feeling you’re going to tell me.”

“Because you’re scared—”

“Of what?” he snapped.

“You’re scared that I won’t like this life you’ve chosen. You’re scared that I’ll change my mind and leave you—”

“You are fucking leaving, Siobhan—”

“Because you won’t even try to compromise. How would one day hurt? Even if you cleaned your barn, you’d have the rest of the day. You won’t even do that.”

“You don’t get it.”

“You’re damn right I don’t. I can’t believe that every rancher works like you do.”

“They do. A ranch is an enormous responsibility. I’ve told you it’s a never-ending job.”

“You’re going to kill yourself if you don’t slow down. Your father had a heart attack because he wouldn’t. Do you want that?”

He shook his head. “I’m fine.”

“Don’t you want children to hand the ranch down to?”

“Of course I do,” he growled.

“You can’t have them by yourself. Goodbye, Liam Flynn. I wish you a lot of success in your lonely life.” She spurred the horse and rode back to the barn.

Liam watched as she rode off, then disappeared over the knoll.

“Son of a bitch,” he swore.

Taking a deep breath, he returned to the fence. Anything to keep his mind off the fact that she was leaving Clifton and him behind.

Later, he entered his parents' house to see his mother cooking dinner.

"Hi, Mom." He hung his hat up, but turned to look at her when she didn't answer him. "Mom?"

"I'm a little angry with you right now, Liam."

"Why?"

She set the spoon she'd been using on the spoon rest and looked at him.

"You're making a big mistake."

Liam sighed. "Siobhan."

"Yes, Siobhan. What is wrong with you? Even I can see you're in love with her."

"She's leaving, anyway."

"Leaving?"

"Yes."

"You're a fool, William Joseph Flynn, and I never took you for one."

"Mom—"

"Go home, Liam. I don't even want to look at you."

He huffed, took his hat off the peg, slapped it on his head, and walked out the door, slamming it behind him.

As he entered the barn, he clenched his jaw and fisted his hands. He didn't want her to go, but could he do as she asked? Was it too much to ask? One day a week?

"Hey, Liam."

He turned to see Jerry walking toward him.

"Jerry? What's up?"

"The guys have gotten the hay baled and stacked."

"Okay." Liam looked at his watch. "Get some of them to do the maintenance, and the others can move some horses to the east pasture, since the new fence is installed."

"Will do."

When Jerry didn't move, Liam raised his eyebrow.

"What?"

"Who was here for you?"

Liam closed his eyes for a few seconds and huffed.

"Why?"

"Luke mentioned he saddled a horse for a woman. A real looker, as he put

it.”

“Luke needs to mind his own fucking business.”

“Yeah, so, who was it? Siobhan?”

“Yes.”

“Well, since you’re in such a shitty mood, I’d say it didn’t go too well.”

“She’s leaving Montana.”

“What? Why?”

“Why? Because I work too much. Same shit, different day.”

“I thought you were smarter than that. Liam, we all need a day with someone we love. I don’t know how I’d cope if I didn’t take those two days a week off. Trixie and I do so much together in two days that it makes getting through the week easier. I’m home in the evenings, but we know how that goes. She knows I can be called out at all hours, but she also knows those two days will be here soon, and we’ll be together. I know you love this ranch, Liam. No one doubts that, but what good is it if you don’t have someone to share it with? Hell, you even give the men days off.” Jerry sighed. “I’ll get with the men. You need to do some thinking. Do you want that woman to leave? Because if you don’t, then you’d better do something.”

Liam watched him stroll from the barn, then headed home. He’d have to find something to eat since his mother threw him out of the house. He sighed as he parked the truck beside the porch.

Siobhan entered the bar, waved at the bartender, then walked behind the bar. She’d been back for two weeks and was trying hard not to think of Liam. It was so hard not to because she was miserable.

Thank God for good makeup. It covered the dark circles under her eyes. She cried constantly. She missed him so much. But she knew he didn’t miss her since he hadn’t called.

He had to know she was back in Denver by now, but he didn’t care. She wanted to call Scarlett and ask if he’d been in, but she was afraid to hear that he had left with a woman.

“Hey, you’re early,” Ted, the bartender and her boss, said.

“I had to get out of the apartment.”

He put his arm around her. “I’m so sorry, hon. You haven’t heard anything from him?”

“No. He’s one stubborn cowboy.”

“You should have been more stubborn.”

“I tried, Ted. Anyway, let’s get ready for the dinner crowd. Did you and Greg have an enjoyable weekend?”

“We did.”

“I’m happy for you.”

“I am too. I can’t wait to marry that man.”

“He feels the same about you, Ted.”

“I know. I hope you make the wedding.”

“I’ll try, but I can’t promise. I’m not sure I can make it through a wedding.”

“Sugar, you need to go back and get that man.”

“No. I did my part. It’s over. I’ll be fine, I promise. It will take some time, but I’ll get there.”

“I hope so. We’re all here for you.”

“I know.”

As she was making drinks, she heard *I Will Always Love You* by Whitney Houston playing and had to go to the restroom before she broke down in front of everyone.

Once she got herself together, Siobhan returned to work. It was nothing like Dewey’s, and she missed that bar. She also missed Scarlett and Laura, but most of all, she missed Liam.

Every night, she cried herself to sleep. She’d lost weight because she had no appetite. It was November, and she wondered what Liam was doing. Working at the ranch, no doubt. She thought it was a noble trait that he worked so hard, but needed to care for himself too.

She smiled as she set a mixed drink on the bar. The man didn’t even thank her. *Jerk*. Some people had no manners, but most cowboys at Dewey’s did. She choked back a sob.

“You need to go home,” Ted said as he made up a drink.

“I don’t want to. I’d just sit there and cry.”

“I didn’t mean home to your apartment. I meant home to Liam.”

“Oh, Ted. I’d love to. I miss him so damn much.”

“He must be something if you miss him this much.”

Siobhan removed her phone from her back pocket, scrolled through it, found what she was looking for, and turned the phone for Ted to see. She couldn’t help but smile when his eyes widened as he looked at the picture of

Liam. It was one she had snapped while on the cattle drive. He sat on Diablo with his arms folded on the saddle horn and wore a beautiful smile as he watched the cattle.

“Holy hell. What a damn fine-looking man. I wish I was single.”

Siobhan laughed. “It wouldn’t do you any good.”

“Because he’s straight?”

“Because he’d leave you alone all the time to work.”

“Honey, when a man looks like that, I don’t care what he does during the day. As long as he’s sleeping beside me at night, I’d be happy.” Ted took the phone from her and stared at the picture. “Oh, my. He’s wearing chaps. I love a man in chaps.”

Siobhan took the phone, looked at the photo, and her heart ached.

“I do too. I’m so lost without him.”

“I’m telling you, if you’re this miserable, how can you not return to him? You’re alone now, Siobhan.”

“I know. I just can’t go back and think he’ll change. He won’t. Not for me, not for anyone.”

“Then you change. What’s so hard about that? I’d hate to see another woman grab onto him and take him any way she can get him.”

Startled, Siobhan looked at him, but he had turned to wait on a customer. She nibbled on her lower lip. Should she have taken him in any way she could get him? Did he love her? Would he take her back if she returned to him?

Her grandmother wanted her to visit for Thanksgiving, but she had told her she couldn’t. Now she was giving it some serious thought.

Liam rode Diablo into the yard and saw JoJo’s vehicle. She must be visiting their parents. He entered the barn, dismounted, and cooled the horse down.

As he walked him through the barn, he saw his sister enter and head for him. Shit. He didn’t need any more damn lecturing, especially from his little sister.

“Liam?”

“Yeah?”

“Are you okay?”

He stopped and looked at her.

“I’m fine.”

“You’re not fine. You miss Siobhan.”

“JoJo, butt out.”

“I will not. I thought you were miserable when you and Monica broke up, but this is way worse.”

Liam said nothing as he turned Diablo to head the other way, but JoJo followed him. He sighed.

“Say something.”

He halted. Siobhan had said those same words to him.

“What do you want me to say? That I miss her? I do. That I love her? I do. Now, leave me alone. Go home to Brett.”

“Liam—”

“Please, JoJo. Just let it go.”

“Okay. I will for now, but if you ever need to talk, you know where to find me.” She turned to leave.

“JoJo?”

“Yes?”

“You know, a time is going to come when we have to talk about how to run the ranch once our parents are gone.”

JoJo sighed. “I know. I hate thinking about them being gone, but it’s not something we can avoid.”

“What do you want to do?”

“About the ranch?” He nodded. “I don’t know, Liam. I live with Brett.”

“That’s why I’m asking.” He removed his hat, thrust his fingers through his hair, and resettled the hat. “I’d love to buy you out.”

“What?”

“If you don’t want to sell out to me, we’ll work it out. This is your ranch too—”

JoJo laughed. “No, it’s not, Liam. This is *your* ranch. I’ll talk to Brett about it, but he’ll probably think as I do.”

“And how is that?”

“I don’t need two ranches, but do you think it would bother Mom and Dad?”

“We can talk to them about it.”

“All right. Let me talk to Brett first, then we’ll get together.” She hugged him. “Please call Siobhan. You’ll need her with you when you eventually

own all of this. You two would have beautiful kids.” She kissed his cheek. “I’ll see you on Thanksgiving.”

“Okay. I’ll see you.”

On Thanksgiving Day, Liam sat at the dinner table, pushing his food around on his plate with his fork.

“Liam? Stop playing with your food,” Joanna said.

He snapped his head up and narrowed his eyes.

“I’m not playing with my food,” he growled.

“Don’t take that tone with your mother, son.” Joseph stared at him.

“Yes, sir. I’m sorry, Mom.”

“If you’re not going to do justice to my cooking and the fact that I worked all morning on this, then you can leave.”

Liam sighed, ran his fingers through his hair, and stood.

“I think I will. It was great, Mom—”

“How the hell would you know? You haven’t eaten a thing,” JoJo said.

Liam glared at her and looked at Brett.

“Do something with your woman.” He clenched his jaw when Brett chuckled.

“I have no control over her, and you should know that.” Brett looked at him.

“I’m leaving. I don’t need everyone ganging up on me. I’ll talk to you later.” He strode from the room, removed his hat from the peg, shrugged on his coat, and walked out the back door, slamming it behind him.

January brought a snowstorm, and Liam stood at the barn doors watching the snowfall.

“Liam?”

“Hey, Terry.”

“Are you doing okay?”

“Yes.”

Terry shook his head. “I don’t believe that. When are you going to man up and go get that woman?”

“I’m not.”

“Damn, you are one hardheaded man. You should go to Dewey’s one night and get a woman if you don’t want that one.”

Liam looked at him. “Who said I didn’t want that one?”

“Well, hell, Liam. You did. You let her go. Find another one. You’ve been a real pain in the ass.” Terry turned and walked down the barn’s aisle.

“I don’t want another one,” he muttered.

It had been the worst months of his life trying to live without her. He needed to get drunk and forget everything that concerned Siobhan O’Brien. He looked out at the snow. He would go nowhere tonight. He’d head home, open a bottle of Callahan whiskey, and get good and drunk. Maybe it would help him sleep, too, because God knows he hasn’t.

Two nights later, he drove to Dewey’s. Why, he had no idea. He sure as hell would not look for a woman. The one he wanted was in Denver.

He entered the bar and groaned at the crowd. He pushed through them, reached the bar, and sat on a stool.

“Liam. It’s good to see you,” Laura said.

“You too, Laura. Could I get a Callahan and Coke?”

“Sure thing. I’ll be right back.”

“Yes, ma’am.” He turned on the stool to watch the crowd, then spun around when Laura placed his drink on the bar.

“Let me know if you need anything else.”

“Thanks, Laura.” He hesitated. “Uh, Laura?”

“Yes?”

“Have you, uh, heard from Siobhan?”

“We text all the time.” Laura stared at him. “You made a mistake.”

He huffed. “I know.”

“Then why are you sitting here? Go to Denver and bring her home.”

Liam ran his hand over his mouth. “It wouldn’t do any good.”

“It will if you tell her what she needs to hear.”

He stared at Laura. Was she right? Would Siobhan come back to him if he did as she asked? Hell.

“You need to grow some damn balls, Flynn.” He put money on the bar and walked out.

Siobhan laughed at something a customer said, but it died when she saw him. *Liam*. He sat at the bar, and she couldn’t stop staring. Was he really here, or was she imagining it?

“Sweetheart, isn’t that your man?” Ted asked her.

“He’s not my man, but yes, that’s Liam. Why is he here?”

Ted chuckled. “Now, why do you think he’s here? He’s here for you,

sugar. He's even more handsome in person."

"He can't be here," she whispered as hope soared at the thought.

"Well, he is, and you just remember how you felt when your friend you worked with at the cowboy bar... what was her name?"

"Laura," she said, not taking her eyes off Liam.

"Yeah, Laura. Remember when she told you he'd been shot at? You said it would've killed you to lose him. You have the chance to make sure you don't."

Taking a deep breath, she nodded and walked to Liam. He didn't take his eyes off her.

"Liam? What are you doing here?"

Her cheeks warmed as he stared at her, and she watched a grin lift his lips.

"I'm here for you, Irish."

"For what?"

"To take you home."

"Liam—"

"Siobhan, I will do anything to get you to come back to me."

"Including taking time off?"

He smirked. "Yes. I've been taking Sundays and Mondays off."

"And how long will that last?"

"For as long as you're with me. Siobhan, I am so in love with you. I don't want to run the ranch without you. I want you beside me as my equal, and I will never put the ranch before you."

She blinked tears away and stared at that gorgeous face.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, ma'am. Positive."

"I miss you so much, Liam."

"Then come back to me, Irish."

She glanced at Ted to see him nod, then looked at Liam.

"All right, but if you—"

"Darlin', I promise I will not work on those days unless there's an emergency." He gazed into her eyes. "You have my word."

"Where are you staying?"

"In a hotel across the street."

"Check out," she said, smiling, and then laughed when he did.

"Siobhan?"

She looked at Ted.

“Yes?”

“Honey, you’re fired. Now, get the hell out of here, and go home to Montana and this man.”

“Thank you,” Liam said.

“You’re welcome. I know you’re straight, but if you ever change your mind...” Ted grinned, and Liam laughed.

“I think I’ll have enough to contend with.”

Ted laughed. “No doubt. Get out of here, you two.”

Liam stood and removed his wallet to pay for his drink, but Ted waved it away.

“On the house. Any man who can make her smile again deserves a free drink. Siobhan, please keep in touch, and invite me to the wedding.”

“Oh, but he hasn’t mentioned that,” she said while looking at Liam.

“I want you in my life, Siobhan.” He reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a small black velvet box. He opened the lid, and she gasped when she saw the large diamond ring. “Siobhan O’Brien, will you marry me?”

She nodded as tears rolled down her cheeks.

“Yes?”

“Yes, yes, yes!”

Liam chuckled, took the ring from the box, slid it onto her left finger, and kissed her knuckles.

“Let’s get out of here.”

“Yes. Let me get my coat and purse.” She looked at Ted and then hugged him. “Thank you so much. I’ll be back for your wedding.”

“You’d better be.” He looked at Liam and put his hand out to him. “You take care of my girl.”

“Count on it. Thank you.” Liam shook his hand.

Once she returned from getting her coat and purse, Liam took her hand and led her out.

Liam drove them to her apartment in silence and he wondered what was going through her head. He glanced at her, but she kept her eyes on the windshield. The only words she said to him were the directions to her place.

He drove into a spot, shut the truck off, and looked at her. She stared at him, and he watched a slow smile lift her lips.

“You’re killing me,” he said.

Siobhan slid across the seat, touched his cheek, and kissed his lips.

“I don’t want to do that. I have missed you so much, and I need you.”

“I need you too, darlin’, but I’m not sure I can make it out of my jeans.”

Siobhan laughed, and he did too.

“I’ll be gentle,” she said, and he groaned. “Come on, Liam. Let’s go inside.”

Taking a deep breath, he stepped from the truck and walked to the front to see her waiting.

“I could have gotten the door.”

“I’m too horny to wait.”

Liam barked out a laugh.

“I can see this will be quick.”

“We have all night, baby. All night.” She took his hand and led him to her apartment.

Once inside, Liam pushed her against the door, leaned against her, and kissed her deeply. He moaned into her mouth.

“God, I’ve missed you,” he said, then slid his lips down her neck and back to her ear. “I need you.”

“Liam,” she whispered, and he had to clench his teeth to not embarrass himself.

They ripped each other’s clothes off. Liam took a condom from his wallet and handed it to her, but she tossed it across the room.

“Why did you do that?”

“I’m on birth control, and I know you’re safe.”

“I am, and I want this so much,” he said as he lifted her and inched into her. They both groaned. “You feel so good. I don’t know if I can make this last.”

“I don’t need it to last this time. Just take me over, Liam.”

“Yes, ma’am. Always.” He took her hard against the door and pressed his lips to hers.

She tore her lips from his and screamed as he felt her clench around his dick when she came. Liam put his lips against her neck and groaned long and low when he came.

Later, as they lay in bed, Siobhan held her hand up to stare at the ring.

“It’s beautiful. What if I had said no?”

“Thank God you didn’t, but I could return it if needed.”

“This ring will not come off my finger until you slide a wedding band on it. Then this one will be right back.”

“Good. When do you want to get married?”

“Next summer?”

“Sounds good.”

“Will you wear a band?”

“Of course.”

“I love you, William Joseph Flynn.”

“And I love you, Siobhan... what is your middle name?”

“Brianna.”

“I love you, Siobhan Brianna O’Brien.”

She laughed. “I’m so glad you do.”

“I have some news.”

“What?”

“I’m buying JoJo’s half of the ranch when the time comes.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. I asked her about it, and since she’s marrying Brett, they’ll live on his ranch. We talked to Mom and Dad, and they’re fine with it.”

“Because they know how much you love it.”

“Not as much as I love you. Siobhan, I love it, but if you don’t want to live there...”

“What? Of course, I do. I love the ranch, and it’s a part of you, Liam. That place is in your blood; we will teach our children how to run it. I will never ask you to leave that ranch, Liam. I promise you that.”

He rolled her onto her back and settled between her legs.

“Thank you, but I would... for you. Could we wait a few years for kids? I want some time with you.”

“Of course. How about a couple of years? But we are not leaving The Flynn Ranch.”

“Whatever you say, Irish. Whatever you say.” He lowered his lips to hers. It was a while before they left the bedroom.

Siobhan smiled as they drove up the driveway to the ranch. She glanced around. She had missed this place, but not as much as she had missed the man beside her. Reaching for his hand, she sighed when he linked their

fingers.

“Welcome home, darlin’.”

“I’m so happy to be back.”

“The family is eager to see you. They missed you too.”

“I missed them, Liam.”

“Mom is excited for your parents to visit.”

“My mom is too.”

“Should I be worried about your father?”

“No. He’ll love you.”

Liam laughed. “Sure, he will.”

“He will. I wish you could have met them before we left, but they’re in Florida for the winter.” She sat up. “I cannot believe the snow.”

“This is nothing. A foot is forecasted for this evening.”

“I can’t wait.”

Liam shook his head as he stopped the truck beside the porch of his parents’ house. He looked at her.

“I just want to let them know we’re back. Ready?”

“Yes.”

He grinned at her, and she smiled and then exited the truck. They walked up the steps, but the door opened, and Joseph Flynn stood in the doorway.

“About time you came home, Siobhan.”

“You’re so right.”

“Come in and get out of the cold.”

They entered the house, and Joanna hugged her.

“I’m so happy you’re back. Oh, let me see.” She took Siobhan’s hand in hers to look at the ring. “It’s beautiful.”

“You did good, son.”

“Thanks, Dad.”

“Take her home, son. We’ll see you tomorrow for dinner.”

“Yes, sir. Are you ready to go home, Irish?”

Siobhan wrapped her arms around his waist and gazed into his eyes.

“Home is wherever you are, Liam.”

He kissed her lips, took her hand, led her back to the truck, and drove them home.

Epilogue

Siobhan stood in front of the mirror and stared at her reflection in awe. Her strapless white gown was adorned with lace and pearls on the bodice, and a full skirt flowed around her to the floor. She wore elbow-length, white fingerless gloves that matched the bodice. She had to admit; she looked good. She laughed.

“What’s funny, dear?” her grandmother asked as she adjusted the veil on Siobhan’s head.

“I thought, I look good.”

“You look beautiful.”

“Thank you, Grandma.” She quickly blinked tears from her eyes.

“Don’t cry, honey. You’ll mess up your makeup.” She handed her a tissue.

Siobhan wiped under her eye. “I’m trying not to. I never wanted to be a blubbering idiot on my wedding day, but now I know why women are.”

“You have every right to be, Siobhan. If I say so myself, you’re marrying a wonderful man,” Joanna said with a smile.

“You raised a good man, Joanna.” Siobhan smiled.

“I’m very proud of my son.”

“Really? I don’t see it,” Maureen O’Brien said.

Everyone laughed. Siobhan loved that her parents and Liam’s parents were friends. They got along so well that they were planning a vacation together.

“You look so gorgeous, Siobhan,” her mother said.

“Don’t cry, Mom, because then I will.”

“Your dad is so proud to walk you down the aisle.”

“I know, Mom. He cried when I asked him.”

“I can’t wait until my wedding,” JoJo said with a grin.

“I can’t either.” Joanna laughed.

“I’m so thrilled for you, Siobhan, and so honored you asked me to be your matron of honor,” Scarlett said.

“I’m so happy you accepted. You’re a wonderful friend, Scarlett.”

There were only two attendants each, since they didn’t want a huge wedding. Scarlett was her matron of honor, and JoJo was a bridesmaid. Liam’s father was his best man, and Brett was a groomsman.

A knock on the door sounded, and Joanna opened it to see Ian O'Brien standing there.

"Come in, Ian."

Siobhan met her father's eyes in the mirror, and she saw him wipe a tear away. He walked to her, and she faced him.

"Siobhan, you look so beautiful."

"Thank you, Daddy. You look very handsome in your tux."

"I hate these things, but I'll do anything for my only daughter on her wedding day."

"Is it time?"

"Yes."

"He's here, right?"

Everyone laughed at her question.

"Of course. I talked to him. He doesn't seem nervous at all."

"That's my boy. Cool as a cucumber under pressure," Joanna said.

Siobhan laughed. "That's so true. I'm ready, Daddy."

He put his arm out for her. "Then let's get you married."

"Oh, my. I'm getting married." Siobhan's nerves hit her, and her hand shook when she picked up her bouquet.

Her father placed his hand over hers. "I'm here."

"I don't know why I'm nervous. I love him."

"We all know you do, and he loves you. Take a deep breath, let it out, and marry that man."

Siobhan nodded, took a deep breath, squeezed her father's arm, and nodded again. They walked out the door to wait for the music to start.

Liam stood in the church's backroom and grinned at Brett.

"You did this on purpose," Brett said.

Liam laughed. "I can't help it if you pissed around getting married."

"William Joseph Flynn, you will not speak like that in the house of the Lord," the priest said as he passed the room.

"Sorry, Father." Liam glared at Brett when he laughed.

"You don't seem nervous at all."

Liam shrugged. "I'm not... yet."

"JoJo and I are happy for you, Liam. Siobhan's a wonderful woman."

“Yes, she is. Reece told me he never thought he’d love someone as much as he does Rissa, and I know how he feels. How I feel about Siobhan makes me wonder what I thought love was before she came into my life.”

“I know what you mean. I thought I loved my ex-wife, but it was nothing compared to how I feel about your sister.”

Liam grinned. “It’s a damn good thing, Watkins.”

“William!”

“Sorry, Father. If you’d quit sneaking around, you wouldn’t hear something you shouldn’t.” He grinned when he heard the priest laugh.

“Son? Are you ready to do this?” Joseph Flynn asked when he entered the room with bottles of beer. He handed one to Liam and one to Brett.

They twisted off the caps and took long pulls, then Liam set his down.

“I don’t want to be drunk on my wedding day.”

“I just needed to quench my thirst.” Joseph grinned.

“Liam? It’s time, son,” the priest said.

“I’m more than ready, Father.” Liam took a deep breath and left the room, with Brett and his father following him.

“Liam?”

“Yeah, Dad?”

“I’m honored you asked me to be your best man,” Joseph said, and his voice cracked.

“Dad, you are my best friend. Why wouldn’t I ask you?”

“Hell, if I know.” Joseph laughed, along with Liam and Brett.

The priest stopped, looked at them, and shook his head.

“You didn’t say anything to him about swearing,” Liam said, frowning.

“It’s a lost cause with your father. I was hoping to stop you from being the same. I can see it’s not going to happen.”

The men laughed as they followed him to a door. Liam opened it, and they stepped into the church beside the altar. The little church was packed, and he knew there were people outside. It was a tradition in Clifton.

When the music started, everyone stood and looked toward the vestibule. Liam hissed in a breath when he saw her. The veil covered her face, but he could see her beautiful smile.

Ian O’Brien looked so proud. Liam was surprised his buttons stayed closed on his tux jacket.

As she glided toward him, Liam couldn’t help but grin when she looked at him and winked, making him chuckle.

“She’s beautiful,” his father said.

“Breathtaking.”

Once she reached the altar, Liam stepped down to meet her and took her hand in his. He kissed her knuckles and swore he heard people sigh.

“You look amazing,” he whispered.

“You look so hot in that tux,” she whispered, and he had to bite back a laugh.

“Are you ready to start the rest of our lives, Irish?”

“As long as it’s with you.”

“Always, darlin’. Always.”

When the ceremony ended, the priest smiled and looked at them.

“You may now kiss your bride.”

“With pleasure,” Liam murmured as he raised her veil and stared into those beautiful eyes. He cupped her face in his hands and lowered his lips to hers.

He had planned to give her a quick kiss, but when her arms wrapped around his waist, he pulled her tight against him and deepened the kiss. It went on until the priest cleared his throat. Liam lifted his lips slowly and stared into her eyes.

“I will love you until my dying breath, Siobhan Flynn. You have my word.”

“Right back at you, cowboy. I can’t wait to start this life with you.”

Liam grinned. Kissed her again, then they turned to face the guests.

“Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. and Mrs. William Joseph Flynn,” the priest announced, and the guests applauded. Then everyone laughed when they heard the crowd outside cheering.

As Liam led her down the aisle, he couldn’t stop smiling. This is what he needed in his life. He would keep his word to her and knew they’d make it work. All they needed were children to hand the ranch down to, and he looked forward to teaching them along the way as his father had taught him.

Siobhan squeezed his hand. He stopped in the aisle, kissed her again, then led her to the outside doors.

When he opened them, he and Siobhan laughed at the crowd, waving and cheering.

He looked at the woman beside him and knew that’s where he always wanted her. Right by his side, and he knew that’s where she’d stay. She loved the ranch almost as much as he did. He thought back to thinking it would

have to be one hell of a remarkable woman to see how much he worked and be able to accept it. He looked at Siobhan and grinned as he knew he'd found her.

Life would never be boring with her. He was sure glad he went to Dewey's and met her. He was even more happy that he'd gone to Denver and brought her back to where she belonged. With him on The Flynn Ranch for as long as they had on this earth.

The End

Other Books by Susan

Men of Clifton, Montana (In order)

JAKE

GABE

BRODY

WYATT

RYDER

RILEY

SAM

BONNER

TRENT

PRESTON

REECE

HOLT

CASH

GRANT

CORD

CALDER

TRICK

SAWYER

NEVADA

COLSON
BOONE
NOAH
DOMINIC
WILDER
LANDRY
NICK
RAND
WADE
RHETT
BRETT
LIAM

Bad Boys of Dry River, Wyoming

LUCAS
MONTGOMERY
COOPER
LINCOLN
DAKOTA
STORM
MICAH

The Callahans

A COWBOY FOR CHRISTMAS

A COWBOY OF HER OWN

A COWBOY'S HEART

A COWBOY TAKES A CHANCE

The Beckett Brothers

BRAYDEN

ASH

JESSE

GAGE

GRAYSON