

SCROODGES'S

Curvy Neighbor

MISTLETOE LOVE SERIES

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

L O N I R E E

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Curvy Neighbor
MISTLETOE LOVE SERIES

Scrooge's Curvy Neighbor

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Chapter 1

Will



“ARE YOU FUCKING SURE?” DARE FROWNS AT ME AND DROPS DOWN ONTO THE sofa we dragged through a ridiculously small door.

“No.” No use lying to my twin. He knows me better than anyone else. “But I’m still doing it.”

“Amelia is going to miss her favorite uncle.” He’s pulling out all the tools in his guilt arsenal.

“I distinctly remember you telling Saint he’s Amelia’s favorite uncle last

week.” I stare at him with a raised eyebrow, daring him to tell me I’m wrong.

He leans back and throws his arms over the back of the sofa. “I can’t believe you’re going to be happy running a sporting goods store.”

It’s the same thing I’ve been telling myself for the last three months since I decided to uproot my life and move to Silver Spoon Falls, Texas.

If I’m honest with myself, I’ll admit Dare and Saint are part of the reason for my move. I love my family more than anything in the world, but I’ve been... restless. Watching the two of them find and marry their soulmates and have children, while I remained single and lonely, sucked monkey balls. I love my brothers and their families, but I want a family of my own.

Eight years ago, I retired from professional football within months of Dare retiring from professional baseball. It didn’t take us long to realize the nomad life wasn’t for us.

We returned home to Riordan Cove to take over our family business, Riordan Enterprises. The challenge kept me satisfied for a while, but restlessness started to worm its way into my soul with each family gathering I attended by myself.

“I’m looking forward to the change.” I’m truly hoping the fucking “magic” water in this town does its trick and brings my soulmate to me. I’m goddamn desperate enough to believe the silly fairytale the town’s residents love to spread.

One of my old college buddies moved to the small Texas town to coach the high school football team and found his soulmate within months.

When Garrett told me about his new relationship, envy cut through my soul. While I’m happy my good friend found the woman who completes his world, I want the same for me.

Not that I'd admit to anyone my desire to find my soulmate is the real reason I packed my bags and moved halfway across the country.

"Uh-huh." Dare isn't fooled, but he lets the subject drop. "Saint got the easy part of this move. Fucker." Our younger brother stayed back in Riordan Cove since his wife is due to give birth any day now.

"I don't know about that." I fake shudder. "He's got a fucking houseful of kids under eight to take care of." While Dare only has two kids, Saint is trying to populate the entire country with four kids under eight and one more on the way.

Who am I kidding? I'm fucking jealous as hell.

Dare's sigh answers for him.

Moving here and opening up The Golden Goal appealed to me after so many years of loneliness.

"Are you positive this is what you want?" Dare walks over to the refrigerator and pulls out a beer for each of us.

"I am." I take the bottle from his hand and sip on it as I stare out the front picture window. A flash of honey-colored hair draws my attention. The rest of my response dies away while I watch the curvy blonde walk across the lawn to check her mailbox. Fuck me, she's goddamn perfect and way the hell too goddamn young, but my unruly cock doesn't give a fuck.

"Are you listening to me?" Nope. I have no fucking clue what the asshole said. When she drops a piece of mail on the ground and bends over to pick it up, my heart stops in my chest as I stare at the most perfect ass I've ever seen.

Damn. My cock turns rock hard as I fight the urge to groan out loud. My asshole brother would never let me forget if he realized I'm drooling over a

girl I can't have.

From this distance, it's hard to estimate her age, but the frilly shorts and pink t-shirt with a lollipop on the front tell me she's way too goddamn young.

"What are you staring at?" Dare hops up and heads over to see what has captured my attention, but my gorgeous neighbor steps into her house before he makes it over.

"I'm just checking out my new neighborhood." And my new gorgeous neighbor. At least, I assume the tempting little morsel checking the mail lives across the street. As the lie rolls off my tongue, my brother stares at me, not fooled in the least.

I run my hand down the back of my neck and breathe deeply, attempting to wipe my mouthwatering neighbor from my mind. What the hell is happening to me?

"Where do you want to have dinner?" he finally asks, and I breathe a sigh of relief at the change of subject.

I jump at the chance to concentrate on something besides the stunning girl living across the street. "I've heard the Broadway Steakhouse has the best steak in the area." I've been dying to give them a try since my first visit to Silver Spoon Falls, but I haven't had the time.

"What are we waiting for?" He rubs his hands together. "I'm fucking starving."

"You're always starving." I laugh and he flips me off.

"I'll Uber over to the hotel to take a shower, and you can pick me up on your way to the restaurant." He isn't staying here since I only brought my furniture for the master bedroom and the living room from Riordan Cove. This is a new start in more ways than one.



AFTER DINNER, I DROP DARE OFF AT THE SILVER SPOON FALLS INN AND HEAD back to my home.

I've spent the last few hours miserable and attempting to forget the cause of my discomfort. The curvy little temptation across the street has filled my thoughts since I first laid eyes on her earlier.

I walk into the dark kitchen and toss my keys and wallet on the breakfast bar. Glancing around at the emptiness around me, I make a mental list of the things I need to buy for my new home.

I grab a beer and head to the living room, figuring I'll watch a little television before I turn in.

I'm flipping through the channels when movement outside my large picture window catches my attention. I reach over my head and turn off the light then walk over to stare out into the darkness.

I almost swallow my goddamn tongue when I see her. What the fuck is she wearing? My blood heats as my eyes move over her luscious curves barely hidden by the tight pants and short t-shirt that leaves half her goddamn stomach exposed.

I'd love to wrap my hand in the silky golden blonde hair hanging halfway down her back as I pound into her from behind. The fantasy rolls through my mind on a continuous loop as stare at her.

Before I'm able to think better of it, I storm out the front door and head straight to her. "Have you lost your goddamn mind?" Her mouth drops open as I lose control of my mouth. "What the fuck are doing out here wearing

next to nothing?” As the words burst from my lips, I watch her stunning honey-colored eyes narrow into a seething glare.

The streetlight illuminates the edge of the driveway around us and I stare into her eyes, noticing the little ring of green circling her irises. Fuck she’s so goddamn gorgeous.

“What?” Her screech stings my ears as a berry-red blush moves across her gorgeous heart-shaped face. “Who the heck do you think you are? The clothes police?”

“I’m... I’m...” I don’t know who the fuck I am right now. My world just turned upside down and sideways. I frown down at her silently for the longest time, searching for the right words, but none come to me.

She doesn’t give me the chance to respond before poking her finger into the center of my chest. “You have no reason to complain about what I’m wearing, Scrooge McJerk.” Her sassy reply causes my palms to itch with the urge to spank her gorgeous ass. “If you don’t like my outfit, stay in your house and don’t look.” That isn’t happening. I plan to look, touch, taste, and make her mine. Soon. Once I fix the situation my blown mind has caused.

“What... What are you doing out here?” I feel like I’ve taken a hit right to the center of my forehead with a two-by-four. I know it shouldn’t be my concern, but I can’t resist.

She glares at me for several moments before explaining very slowly and precisely like I’m a goddamn idiot. “Not like it’s any of your business, but I’m looking for Roger.”

Maybe I have lost my mind. “Roger?” I manage to roar past the lump in my throat. Oh, hell no. There’s no way I’m going to let some other asshole have her. She’s mine, or at least she will be once I get my head out of my ass and act like a normal human being.

“It still isn’t any of your concern, but Roger is my cat.” She rolls her golden eyes and huffs after slamming her hands down on her curvy hips.

One thought echoes around my mind on a continuous loop as her words register. *There’s no other man and nothing standing between me and my baby doll. Except her age, but we’ll deal with that issue later.* I stare at her in the darkness and realize she’s older than I first thought, at least early to mid-twenties. Still a little young for me but not illegal.

Relief cuts through me, and I take several deep breaths, attempting to get myself under control before I reply. Too bad, my efforts fail, and I end up roaring, “You still shouldn’t be out here in the middle of the night by yourself.” That’s sounds fucking reasonable to me. “Anything could happen to you.” Like your crazy neighbor kidnapping you and keeping you forever

“It’s not late, and this is the safest neighborhood in the safest town in Texas.” Her stunning eyes flash as she stands up to her full five-foot-nothing height and glares at me. Fuck me. I barely resist the urge to throw her gorgeous ass over my shoulder and rush home to hide her away. “And I hate to repeat myself, but what I do isn’t any of your concern.”

Oh, baby doll, I plan to make it my business. I open my mouth to inform her of my thoughts but close it without uttering a word. I’m losing ground with my girl, and I need to change tactics before I really piss her off. “It’s too cold to be out in that.” I point down at the thin t-shirt giving me a birds-eye view of her luscious curves.

“I didn’t have time to throw on a jacket.” She rolls her eyes dramatically while growling adorably. “Roger ran out the door when I opened it for my First Class Pizza delivery. While I’ve been here dealing with you, he’s out there running free. He could be anywhere by now.”

Here’s the perfect chance to spend time with her and to start repairing the

damage my blown mind already created. “Why don’t I help you look for Roger?” I ask and hold out my hand. “I’m Will Riordan, your new neighbor.”

Chapter 2

Jazzy



SCROOGE MCJERK IS SMOKING HOT, AND I KNOW TOUCHING HIM WOULD BE A huge mistake, so I ignore his hand. “I don’t have time to deal with you right now.” Gramma Liz would roll over in her grave if she heard me being rude to our new neighbor. “I need to find my cat.” And forget all about my new neighbor.

I take off jogging in the direction I last saw my flighty cat heading. I can feel my new neighbor following right behind me. The hair on the back of my neck stands up while goosebumps break out all over my body from his nearness,

and find myself fighting not to glance over at him.

“Roger!” I call out and look around Mrs. Jefferson’s large evergreen. When I don’t find him resting underneath hunting unsuspecting birds, I keep moving down the street. “Roger, I’m going to go back to the hard cat food you hate if you don’t come back right now.” It’s a threat that usually works with my large kitty.

“Are you threatening your cat?” McJerk laughs like it’s unusual to talk to your cat.

“Yes.” I glare at him over my shoulder. “I can look by myself.” I would actually prefer not to have him judging everything I do.

My rudeness doesn’t deter McJerk in the least. “Where does he usually go?” And I want to kick him when I realize he isn’t even a little out of breath while I’m gasping for air.

“He usually stays in the house,” I wheeze out. “How are you not out of breath?” I hate naturally athletic people.

“I usually run a few miles every day.”

Of course, he does. I roll my eyes dramatically, knowing he can’t see it in the dark.

A gray streak jumps from the Andersons’ bushes and rushes straight for me. I guess the hard food threat finally convinced Roger to stop being difficult. I lean down, and my thirty-plus-pound cat jumps into my arms. I guess my spoiled kitty has had enough outside time.

“Holy shit.” McJerk blinks several times. “That’s a goddamn mountain lion, not a cat.”

I hug Roger close and cover his ears while glaring at my unhelpful neighbor.

“He’s a normal-sized Maine Coon cat.” Who happens to love pizza and ice cream so he might be a little pudgy. McJerk stares silently at me as I turn toward my house. The entire walk back down the block, I fuss at Roger for causing all this. I’d do anything right now to avoid dealing with my new neighbor. “Thanks for helping me.” Although he didn’t do much except raise my blood pressure. “I have to get Roger home.”

His freaking long, muscular legs have no trouble keeping up with me as I rush home. When I reach my front yard, I turn to him. “Thanks again.” I give him a fake smile and turn away to call over my shoulder, “Welcome to the neighborhood.”

I’m a few steps from my front door when I realize Scrooge McJerk is right behind me. “Wait.” He places his hand on my shoulder as I reach my front door. “I’m not done talking to you. I don’t even know your name.”

“Jazzy Matheson,” I tell him as I make my way to the door. “I don’t have time to talk right now.” I need to get rid of him before something crazy happens. Like falling for his warm, dark brown eyes.

The door opens, and Skye comes strolling out, oblivious to the situation. “What happened?” She blinks sleepily. “I woke up, and the pizza was sitting on the table next to the door, and you guys were gone.” I take a step to the side and glance over my shoulder, and her eyes follow my movement. Her mouth falls open when she finally notices the handsome giant standing behind me. “Oh.” Her eyes widen as she looks back and forth between me and McJerk.

“Skye,” I guess I’ll have to introduce them. “This is our new neighbor, Scrooge McJerk.” I can’t help myself. “He yelled at me while I looked for Roger.”

“You like to push my buttons, don’t you, baby doll,” he grumbles behind me

before holding out his hand to my younger sister. “Will Riordan.”

Skye looks back and forth between us several times before she steps over and holds out her hand. “Skye Matheson. We heard you were moving in soon.”

Before they can get into a long conversation, I hand Roger to my sister and turn back to our neighbor. “Thank you for your help.” Not that he was much help. He mostly followed behind me breathing down my neck. “We have to eat our pizza before it gets cold.”

My sister blinks several times at my silly excuse but doesn’t resist when I push her in the front door before slamming in our new neighbor’s face.

“That was rude,” she grumbles and drops Roger on the sofa. “He’s a hottie.”

“He’s a grouchy scrooge,” I insist, and my sister stares at me for a few minutes. “And I don’t want to talk about our new neighbor.”

She stares at me for a few moments before changing the subject. “Why didn’t you wake me up when you got home?” After a long day of stocking and inventorying our boutique, Curvology, I returned home to find my sister dead asleep on the sofa and didn’t have the heart to wake her up.

“You’ve only had four hours of sleep in the last two days.” I put the pizza on the breakfast bar and grab us each a paper plate from the cabinet. “I decided to let you sleep until dinner got here.” It was a great plan until Roger decided to throw a wrench in it by escaping.

“I appreciate it,” she groans and reaches for a piece of pizza. “I’m dead on my feet.”

We’ve been a little extra busy since Letty, our middle sister, met Lex, her soulmate, and cut back her hours at the store.

“Letty said she’d be in tomorrow so I can stay home and sleep.” Skye throws

her feet up on the table. “I can’t believe how fast the store took off.”

It’s been crazy since we moved to town and opened our plus-size boutique using the small inheritance our grandmother left us two years ago.

Our parents haven’t been in our lives since they decided three little girls cut into their time to party. Gramma Liz took over raising us and did a pretty spectacular job of it.

To honor her, we decided to take a chance and pool all our inheritance money together to finance a boutique dedicated to curvy women since the three of us have spent our entire lives hunting for clothing that complements our full figures.

We chose Silver Spoon Falls for our new adventure after I traveled here for a conference. I fell instantly in love with the small yet quirky town and forced my sisters to come and visit to see for themselves. It didn’t take long for us to realize we’d found our forever home in the small Texas city.

Since Letty has an accounting degree, she takes care of the business side while I use my fashion merchandising background to run the buying side. Skylar invested her inheritance in the boutique.

Our youngest sister had planned to only help with staffing while she takes online classes to finish her marketing degree, but Letty’s new relationship changed things. Sky cut her online class schedule a little so she could step up and help me with the store. Plus, we’ve hired three part-time employees to help pick up the slack.

“I know.” I sit next to my sister and reach for a slice of our double pepperoni, extra cheese pizza. “We might have to hire another part-time employee.”

“Let’s see how things go after the Christmas season is over.” Skye sits back and stares at me with a raised eyebrow. “Now, tell me what really happened

with the hottie across the street.”

“Nothing,” I lie. Something big happened, and I’m terrified talking about it will make it even more real. How do I admit that the Scrooge living across the street made my heart flutter in a crazy, unbelievable way? *I don’t*, is the answer. I ignore it and hope it goes away.

Chapter 3

Will



OVER THE NEXT WEEK, I SEE JAZZY IN PASSING, BUT SHE ALWAYS MANAGES TO avoid me. Like the goddamn plague. It's embarrassing to admit, but I breathe easier each time I get a little glimpse of her.

I go to bed every night thinking about her and wake up each morning hot and horny from the steamy dreams of her that tortured my sleep all night long.

She's on my mind every single second of the day, but I've been too fucking busy to push the issue with her. It kills me to wait, but I don't want to make

any more mistakes with my girl since I plan to keep her. Forever.

The remodeling on my store is done, and the inventory started arriving yesterday. We only have three weeks before the grand opening, so things are crazy.

Once I get everything under control at The Golden Goal, I'm going to put all my effort into winning over my girl before I lose my goddamn mind.

I pull up and park behind the shopping center. I'm heading to the back entrance of The Golden Goal when I glance over to the sidewalk and a flash of honey catches my eye.

Fucking hell. I get a brief look at the woman's curvy hips and silky legs and know instantly it's my baby doll. What the hell? I jog over to the front of the building and look around the corner in time to see her disappear into Curvology, the boutique two doors down from my store.

Before I'm able to stop myself, I walk up to the glass door. I see Skye standing at a rack steaming long dresses and pull the door open. As I step into Curvology, the bell over the door rings and Skye spins around. Her mouth makes a perfect O as she stares back at me.

"Hello." She smiles and hangs the wand up. "Will, right?" she asks, and I nod my head. "May I help you with something?"

"I saw Jazzy come in here." Now, I sound like a goddamn stalker, but I don't care.

"She's in the back. I can get her if you want?"

"Thank you." I'm on my best behavior since I don't want to make any more costly mistakes with my girl. "I'd like to talk to her for a minute." To convince her to give me a chance.

Skye opens one of the white French doors and calls, “Jasmine, you have a visitor.” One more piece of info about my girl.

“Who?” My pulse accelerates while my cock turns rock-hard as she steps through the door.

“Me.” I step forward and smile at her. “I was heading to work when I saw you walk in here. I thought I’d stop in and say hi.” My heart squeezes in my chest at the look of horror written across her gorgeous face.

“Work? Where do you work?” Her deer-in-the-headlights look tells me she isn’t happy to see me. I guess I’ll have to work overtime to win her heart.

“I’m opening The Golden Goal a few doors down.” I point toward my store where I should be working my ass off, but my baby doll is more important than opening on time.

Her eyes grow wide. “You have to be kidding?” She glances over at her sister. “You’re the new store owner?” The town grapevine fell down on its duties. I thought everyone in town already knew about me buying the old hardware store to turn it into a sporting goods megastore.

When I started making plans to move here, Garrett warned me how effective the gossip in this small town is.

“I am.” And I’m thanking my lucky stars right this second. “It looks like we’re neighbors at home and work.”

The frown lines running between her eyebrows tell me she isn’t thrilled with this development. *Soon, baby doll, I’ll win you over.* I step close to her and take one of her soft hands in mine. Her mouth opens and closes like a fish as I bring it to my lips for a light kiss.

I know I’m in so fucking much trouble here when my lips tingle from the brief touch.

“Lucky freaking me,” she mutters under her breath and steps back when a door opens behind us. I take several deep breaths, attempting to get my hard cock under control while she turns to talk to the white-haired woman stepping out of the fitting room. “Aunt Ophelia, how did that dress work?” Why does that name sound familiar?

The older woman glances over at me, and I can see the wheels spinning behind her light blue eyes. “It was perfect.” Her knowing blue eyes never leave mine as she holds out her hand. “Hello, I’m Aunt Ophelia Crawford.”

I’ve heard of the infamous little old lady who’s been banned from several businesses in town. Looking down at the sweet, innocent-looking older woman, I have a hard time believing any of the rumors. “Nice to meet you, Mrs. Crawford.” She gasps when I kiss her hand, too.

“Oh, please. Call me Aunt Ophelia.” The skin on the outside of each of her eyes crinkles as she smiles at me. “Everyone in town does.” Great. The gleeful look in her eyes informs me she’ll have the fucking grapevine buzzing the minute she leaves the store.

“Aunt Ophelia’s niece, Scarlett, is married to Hacker Taylor,” Skye explains, and I realize everyone in this small town knows absolutely everything about everyone else, and I’m behind the eight ball. I need a goddamn playbook to keep up.

“I met Hacker before I moved here.” I’ve met most of the Silver Spoon MC members. Their president, Cash Montoya is also the CEO of Montoya Investments. He helped me arrange my financing to buy the Golden Goal without investors.

I was the quarterback of the Nashville Wings until I retired several years ago. It didn’t take me long to realize how much I hated traveling half the year. I returned to Riordan Cove to help my twin run our family business. When we

attempted to expand the marina, our investors, mostly family members, put up tons of roadblocks in our way. We succeeded in the end, but the situation put a bad taste in my mouth for dealing with investors. Inevitably, everyone has their own interests in mind, and I didn't want my store controlled by someone else's greed.

I decided to buy The Golden Goal outright to make sure I maintain control of my business.

"Well, welcome to our little town." Aunt Ophelia smiles and claps her hands together. "I'm sure you'll love it here."

I already fucking do, and I'm starting to realize I'm head over heels in love with my curvy little neighbor.

Garrett explained the whole town's water situation to me when I moved here. Evidently, the residents believe the water in Silver Spoon Falls contributes to the high number of happy couples in town.

After meeting Jazzy, I stopped buying bottles and started guzzling the fucking water right out of the faucet because I can use all the help I can get.

Chapter 4

Jazzy



MY BACK TEETH GRIND TOGETHER WHILE I WATCH MCJERK CHARM THE PANTS off of Aunt Ophelia.

I can't believe my freaking luck. Not only do I have to put up with seeing him at home, but he's opening a huge sporting goods store two doors down from Curvology.

When Skye leads Aunt Ophelia over to the counter to ring up her purchase, I turn and glare at the pain in my rear. "Why did you come in?" I need to get

him out of here before I do something stupid. Like handing him my heart on a silver platter.

When he steps closer, his woodsy scent wraps around me, turning my insides to jelly. “I wanted to invite you to dinner.” He smiles down at me, and the hunger shining from his dark brown eyes causes my knees to weaken. “So, I can apologize for my behavior last week.”

“You already apologized, and I’ve forgiven you.” I’m purposely trying to be difficult. I don’t understand what the heck is happening here. “So, there’s no need for us to have dinner.”

He leans over and whispers next to my ear, “There’s every need. I want to get to know you, baby doll.” I’m in so much trouble here.

“I... I... uh.” My brain completely shuts down, sending every excuse I could come up with flying right out the window. “Okay.” Did I just agree to have dinner with Scrooge McJerk?

A huge smile breaks out across his handsome face. “Is tonight good with you?” he asks. He’s even more freaking gorgeous than I’d originally thought. Seeing him up close under the bright lights causes my blood to heat to nearly boiling. I barely resist the urge to run my fingers through his dark brown windblown hair. “Baby doll?” He frowns, and I realize I’ve been standing here silently staring at him.

“If you don’t mind having a late dinner.” Hopefully, by then, I can work on building up my defenses against my hot, new neighbor. “I work until seven on Tuesdays.”

“Is eight o’clock good with you?” he asks, and I nod my head. “I’ll see you then, baby doll.” He leans over to place a light kiss on my cheek and winks at me as Skye and Aunt Ophelia both gasp, reminding me they’re watching. I stand frozen and watch him walk to the front door. Before stepping out, he

turns and gives me a little wave.

A thought suddenly occurs to me, and I call out before I'm able to stop myself, "Where do you want to meet for dinner?"

"I'll come get you."



AT TEN MINUTES UNTIL EIGHT, I'M PACING THE FRONT HALL WHILE ROGER sits on the edge of the sofa watching me. "You're going to wear out the floor." Skye plops down on the sofa and reaches for the remote control.

"I have no idea why I said yes." I feel like my silky emerald dress is suddenly constricting around me. "I have to change."

"Stop." Skye stands up and walks over to me. "You've already changed three times, and that dress is perfect. It brings out the green in your eyes."

"And it hugs every jiggle and bulge." I've never been self-conscious of my abundant curves, but meeting Will has thrown my world into a tailspin. After he left Curvology earlier, we did a little online snooping and found out all about him. He was a popular quarterback before he suddenly retired early in his career. After that, he mostly fell off the radar except for a few articles about his family business.

"It emphasizes your gorgeous figure," my sister corrects me. "And you're going to knock rich, handsome Scrooge McJerk dead."

We both jump at the loud knock at the door behind us. "Show time," I whimper under my breath as my palms turn sweaty.

Skye opens the door and smiles at him. “Hi, Will.”

“Hi.” He smiles at my sister before handing me a bouquet of red roses. “You look beautiful, baby doll.”

“Thank you.” I reach for the flowers, appreciating the opportunity to leave the room for a minute. “I’ll run and put these in water before we go.”

My chance for a quick reprieve dies a quick death when my sister steps in. “I’ll do that for you.”

I turn away from Will and glare at my sister, the traitor. “Thank you,” I grit out. “Are you ready?”

“I was born ready,” he teases, and Skye laughs.

What happened to sisterly support? “I won’t be late.”

“You don’t have a curfew.” She’s going overboard throwing me under the bus.

“Payback is a bitch,” I mouth to her, and she rolls her eyes at me.

When he takes my hand in his, I almost stumble in my sky-high silver sandals, but Will pulls me close, stabilizing me. “Sorry. These heels hate uneven concrete.” The tiny spindles are nearly impossible to walk in, but I love the way they make my short legs look miles long. I attempt to put space between us, but he only tightens his hold.

“I could carry you to my house if you want,” he offers, and I stumble again. This time at his offer.

“That’s okay.” My voice sounds like a constipated squirrel. “Where are we going tonight?” That’s a safe conversation that doesn’t lead to me throwing myself at McJerk.

“I made you dinner at my house.”

Bad idea. Bad idea. Sirens go off in my mind as I stumble for the third time.
He doesn't even ask before lifting me against his hard body.

Chapter 5

Will



FUCK. SHE WAS MADE FOR ME. HER LUSCIOUS CURVES MELT AGAINST MY chest, sending all the blood in my body racing straight to my cock, and I almost stumble.

This gorgeous little doll stole my goddamn heart the first time we met. Now, I need to worm my way under her prickly exterior and win her heart.

I step into my kitchen and set her on her feet. “Why don’t you take off your shoes and get comfortable while I finish dinner.”

“That sounds great.” When she bends over to unhook each sandal, her luscious tits almost pop out of the top of her neckline, and I have to look away to keep my cock from erupting in my pants. “God, that is so much better.” Her delicate moan fills the kitchen, and I have to close my eyes and count backward from fifty to maintain control. I want to hear her moaning my name while I eat her sweet little pussy.

“I’m glad,” I croak out and open the oven to check my roast. Anything to distract myself from the tasty little morsel standing a few feet away. I stick the meat thermometer in it and turn back to my girl. “Would you like something to drink?”

“Do you have white wine?”

“I do.” I walk over to her. “Come with me and I’ll let you pick out a bottle.” When I discovered my new house had a main floor wine cellar, I thought it was a waste of space, but now I’m glad I have a pretty good selection of wine.

“Holy cow.” She spins around when we walk into the chilly, darkened room. “How many bottles of wine do you have in here?”

“I lost count.” I take her soft hand in mine and lead her to the last row in the corner. “The white wines are over here.”

“Uh.” My girl bites her pouty bottom lip while she concentrates, and I almost self-combust. She reaches for a bottle and turns to me. “Is this one okay?”

“You can have anything you want.” Anything at all, including my heart.

“Thank you.” She’s so goddamn sweet. I’m tempted to eat her, up but I need to cool my jets and take things slow. I keep telling myself this is a marathon, not a sprint, but my ornery cock refuses to listen. The fucker is ready to tear through my pants.

I somehow make it through our meal without throwing her gorgeous little ass up on the counter and fucking her until she's too exhausted to resist what's happening between us.

"I'll help you with the dishes," she offers when I get up to put our plates in the sink.

"I'll do it later." I'm not going to waste this date with her cleaning my goddamn kitchen. "Would you like to watch a movie?" It's already ten o'clock, and I should let her go home and get some sleep, but I can't let her go.

She shocks the shit out of me, answering, "That sounds great. Tomorrow is my day off so I can sleep in." I'm supposed to be at the store at seven am, but I'll do without a few hours' sleep to spend more time with her.

After our movie, it takes every ounce of control I possess to walk her home. She inputs the code to open her door and turns to me. "Thank you for a very nice dinner."

There's no way I'm leaving without a kiss. Her soft, pouty lips have been calling to me, and I can't resist them anymore. "You're welcome, baby doll." I cover her sweet lips with mine and groan as her mouth opens for me.

I pull her soft, curvy body against mine and run my tongue along the inside of her mouth. Her tongue shyly follows my lead, and I realize she isn't very experienced.

Approaching the point of no return, I pull back and lay my forehead against hers. "I want to eat you up," I whisper against her lips and watch as she does the fish out of water thing again. "But I want to do this right."

"What is this?" She swallows and steps back to stare into my eyes. My brave little baby doll isn't some pushover. In that instant, she steals the rest of my

heart and soul. I'm fucking hers for the taking, and she has no idea how I feel.

"This is me wooing you." It's time to lay my cards on the table and kick my wooing campaign into overdrive.

"Wooing me?" She points at her chest. "Like woo... wooing me?" I can't keep up with this conversation. As one of three brothers, I've never had a girl around, except my mother but she doesn't count, to learn how a woman's mind works. "Or do you just want to get me into bed?"

I pull her back against my body and place a soft kiss on one of the little freckles dotting her peaches and cream skin. "I definitely want to get you into bed." She pushes away, but I hold her tight. "And keep you there for the rest of your life. I figure five or six kids should be a good number for us."

Her arms go slack around me as she stares up at me like I've grown a second head. "Five or six?"

"I'll settle for four." I remember my dad's advice from a long time ago. Always start high and leave room to negotiate.

"Uh..." She steps back. "Why don't we start with a second date and see where things go from there?" Hell yes! I mentally fist-pump the air.

"Sounds like a plan. I'll see you tomorrow, baby doll." I give her one more quick kiss and head back to my house. I have plans to make.

Chapter 6

Jazzy



THE NEXT MORNING, I'M LYING ON THE SOFA WATCHING ROGER PLAY WITH one of the ornaments on our tree when the doorbell rings. I glance down at my old t-shirt and fuzzy pajama pants and groan to myself. Oh well, whoever decided to ring my doorbell at eight o'clock in the morning will just have to deal with my casual look.

I pull the door open, ready to blast my early caller, when I find a huge bouquet of pink flowers obscuring the delivery person. "Hello." I glance around the blooms.

“Hi.” The gorgeous blonde smiles at me. “I have a delivery for Jasmine Matheson.”

“That’s me.” She looks vaguely familiar, but I can’t place where I’ve seen her before. “I’m Kyra Rickman.” Her name isn’t familiar. “I own Petal Pushers with my twin sister.”

“Nice to finally meet you.” I smile and step back. “Would you like to come in?”

“I wish I had time.” She hands me the heavy bouquet. Darn. There must be at least thirty or forty flowers. “But my delivery person called in sick so I’m trying to get all these deliveries done before my husband’s meeting later this morning.” I nod my head and smile, but I have absolutely no idea what her husband’s meeting has to do with her deliveries. “He won’t let me go on deliveries alone.” She rolls her eyes and answers my question.

“Oh.” My brother-in-law is the same way with Letty. Lex is a judge here in town, and he’s made sure everyone knows he’d tear this town apart if anyone dares to upset his wife. “Maybe some other time.” I place the heavy bouquet on the table beside the door.

“Sounds great. Have a good day.” She gives me a little wave and rushes out to the white and pink delivery van as a huge giant wearing a cowboy hat hops out.

This freaking town seems to breed handsome, masculine, overprotective Neanderthals, and I’m pretty sure I have my very own caveman.

After arranging the bouquet of pink roses next to the red ones, I pull out my cell phone and look through my contacts for the Scrooge who stole my heart.

Last night before walking me home, he insisted on typing his number into my phone and sending himself a message so he’d have my number. Then he

totally blew my mind when he gave me a key to his house, “just in case” I ever need to get in.

The phone only rings once before his deep voice wraps around me. “I was hoping you’d call, baby doll.”

“Thank you for the flowers.” I drop onto the sofa, and Roger hisses at having his nap interrupted.

“You’re welcome. What are your plans for today?”

“I’m hanging out with Roger and catching up on my favorite show.” I lean back and stare at the twinkling red, blue, and green lights on the tree. So, sue us, we put the freaking tree up a few weeks before Thanksgiving. Working in retail tends to make the holidays fly by, and we didn’t want to forget until the week of Christmas like we did last year. “He’s feeling neglected, so I’m going to give him a little extra petting today.”

“I’m jealous of Roger. I’d kill to have you give me a little extra petting.” His voice drops a few octaves, causing me to squirm on the sofa as dirty fantasies zip through my mind.

“Uh...” There goes that tongue-tied sensation again. It’s like my mouth and brain can’t function together anytime Will is around.

“Maybe soon.” He laughs and I hear him talking to someone in the background. My face heats when I realize someone else heard his racy comments. “I have to get back to work, baby doll.”

“And I have petting to do.” I can’t help myself.

“Save a little of that for me. Are you up to another movie night?”

“I’d love to have another date.” All my resistance fades away, and I realize I’ve been acting like a ninny-poo trying to fight the pull between us. It’s time

for me to pull up my big girl panties and jump in with both feet. Or maybe I'll drop my panties instead.

"Then I'll see you around six o'clock."

"Yes, you will."

After I hang up the phone, I sit back and plan my attack. So far, Will has been putting in all the effort. It's time for me to reciprocate.

I know the perfect little dress for what I have planned for my caveman. Without giving myself a chance to change my mind, I dial Skye's number.

"Hello," she answers. "Are you up already?"

"Roger decided to sit in the middle of my room and howl at the top of his lungs until I got up."

"Ouch." My younger sister laughs. "I'd have a Maine Coon coat right now if he did that to me."

"Uh-huh." We both know he's spoiled rotten because she treats him like a freaking baby. "I actually called because I need a favor."

"Sure. What do you need?"

"You know the black silk dress with silk cutouts we got in last week?" We all drooled over the gorgeous garment.

"You go, girl." My sister whistles. "You're going to knock McScroogie's socks off with that dress."

"I'm actually hoping to knock his pants off," slips out before I'm able to stop the words.

"La-la-la-la," she sings loudly in my ear. "I'm too young to hear stuff like that."

“Will you bring me the dress?” I need to get off the phone and put my plans into action.

“Of course. Do you want the black four-inch heels that go with it?”

“You read my mind.”

“And I’m scarred for life from what I found.” She laughs and hangs up.

I stand up and Roger growl-hisses at me. “Sorry, buddy.” Yes, I’m talking to a cat. “I won’t be able to veg out all day. I have things to do.” The first thing I’m doing is seeing if the Diamond in the Rough Salon and Spa has any waxing appointments for today. It’s been so long since I’ve had a full-service tune-up, I need a professional to handle this job.

It looks like I’m going to put that key to good use and surprise my Scrooge caveman.

Chapter 7

Will



EVEN THOUGH I'M SO FUCKING BUSY THAT I CAN'T KEEP UP, THE DAY DRAGS by at a snail's pace. At five o'clock on the dot, I turn off my computer and head straight for the door. Work can wait while I take care of the most important business.

On the way home, I ignore the speed limit and rush home to my girl. I have enough time to get a quick shower before picking up Jazzy if I hurry. Tonight, I'm going to work overtime to prove to her she can trust me and our growing relationship.

When I walk through the kitchen door, my nose perks up and I'm shocked her delicate fragrance is still noticeable in the kitchen.

I glance at the clock and see the second hand moving at the speed of light. I don't have much time, so I jog up the stairs. I rip my shirt over my head before tossing it in the upstairs laundry room as I rush by.

I'm dragging my pants down my hips when I step into my bedroom and come to a dead stop. My mouth falls open, and I wonder if I'm imagining my baby doll lying across my bed wearing nothing except a pink bow wrapped around her gorgeous tits and the matching pink scrap of silk panties.

"I'm glad you finally got home." She stretches like a little kitten and smiles. "And I hope you don't mind that I used the key to break into your house."

"It isn't breaking in if you're invited." I'm not about to pass up this opportunity to make her mine forever. "And you have a lifelong standing invitation."

"Good to know." She smiles and adjusts the silky bow, and my mouth waters as her berry-pink nipple pops free.

"If I'd known you were waiting for me like this, I would've left work earlier." I kick my pants away and prowl over to the bed. Of all the scenarios I could imagine, and I have a very active imagination, this is the fucking best. "Make sure this is what you want." I give her one last opportunity to change her mind. "Because I'll never let you go once I make you mine."

"I can live with that." The determination shining in her warm, dark honey eyes tells me she's fucking serious.

"What changed your mind?" I have to know.

"I woke up and realized it was time for me to put some effort into this relationship." I'm one lucky motherfucker. "Now shut up and let me seduce

you.” Make that the luckiest.

I drop to my knees, pull her to the edge of the bed, and stare into her eyes, making sure she can read the sincerity in mine. “I’m all yours.”

I spread her silky legs, lean over to run my nose up the inside of her soft thigh, and a shiver runs through her luscious body as she moans my name.

“I need to tell you something,” she groans, and my heart stops in my chest. Fuck. I may never recover if she puts a halt to this right now. “I’ve never done this before.”

“Breaking and entering or seducing your man?” I smile and nip the soft skin where her thigh meets her hip.

“Remember, it isn’t a crime if you have a key,” she mumbles and squirms beneath my touch. “And I haven’t done any of this before.” I fucking knew it. She’s too goddamn pure and perfect. And all mine.

“I’ll take care of you,” I promise and kiss a circle around her naval. “I like this.” I run my tongue around the little silver belly button ring.

“It was an impulse decision,” she moans and wraps her soft leg around my back, using it to drag me closer. I kiss my way up her sweet body, leaving little nibbles along the way.

I unwrap my present and toss the bow aside before closing my lips around one of her berry-red nipples. I groan around her sensitive flesh when she digs her nails into the back of my head. I roll her other nipple between my thumb and forefinger before kissing a trail over to the other side.

Her silky neck calls to me, and I run my tongue around the vein pounding at the base of her throat before gently sucking on the spot right under her ear. “Are you marking me?” She rubs her wet core against my side and I almost come.

“I want everyone to know you’re all fucking mine.” My painfully hard cock presses against the front of my black boxer briefs, and I rip them off before they do permanent damage. Then I resume my efforts to blow my girl’s mind.

She reaches between us to wrap her soft hand around my erection, and my eyes roll back in my head while she rubs the sensitive head with her thumb. “Fuck,” I growl as a tremor runs through my body. “I could come from your touch alone.”

“Don’t do that this early in the game.” She breathes against the side of my throat before nipping me with her sharp little teeth while continuing to slide her hand up and down my cock.

I cover her hand with mine and squeeze. She catches on quickly and tightens her grip.

I let her stroke me until I feel my restraint slipping away, and then I pull out of her hold and slide off the end of the bed. “What?”

“Lie back and let me work.” I wink at her before wiggling my way between her spread thighs. I slide the silky bit of nothing panties down her legs and toss them over my shoulder.

When I run my tongue up her wet center, my girl arches her back and cries out my name.

I roll my tongue around her clit to distract her while I slide one finger knuckle-deep into her tight opening. Her inner muscles resist my intrusion at first, so I suck hard on her clit until they relax and allow my finger to slide a little deeper.

Once her inner walls relax enough for me to easily thrust it a little deeper, I press a second finger deep while devouring her clit.

My cock steadily drips cum onto the floor as I work my ass off to make sure

my cock doesn't hurt my girl.

Chapter 8

Jazzy



I FORGET ALL ABOUT MY FEAR WHILE HIS TALENTED FINGERS DRIVE ME OUT OF my mind. He curls his fingers and rubs my inner walls, causing fireworks to blast off behind my closed eyelids.

As the intense orgasm rolls through my body, he crawls up my trembling body. “I fucking need you,” he growls against the side of my throat before lining his erection up with my opening.

“I need you, too.” I almost let “I love you” slip past my lips, but I managed to

catch the words at the last minute. I know I'm hopelessly in love with my caveman, but I need time to adjust to the new circumstances before I share my feelings with him.

I dig my nails into his muscular shoulders as he presses slowly forward. He slowly rolls his hips to the side, and the slight sting slowly turns into a small spark of pleasure.

He kisses me while his hips pick up speed, and I hold on for the ride. When he slides his arm under my leg and lifts it high onto his shoulder, nearly bending me in half, I'm thankful for all the ballet lessons Gramma Liz insisted I take.

In this new position, he slides deeper with each thrust. Little sparks of electricity tease my spine, warning me of the massive orgasm ready to overtake me.

Before I come, I clench my inner muscles tight around his cock to make sure to drag him along with me. The room goes dark around me as pleasure flows through every molecule in my body.

Will thrusts two more times then stills above me. The veins in his neck stand out as his cock jerks deep inside my pussy. In this position, I can feel every tiny movement. The intimacy of the moment loosens my tongue, and I have a hard time holding back my declaration of love.

When he releases my leg and rolls over to pull me against him, I lay my head on his chest and swallow the words.

I have no doubt about what I'm feeling, but I'm not ready to share it yet.



THE NEXT MORNING, I MAKE THE LONG WALK OF SHAME FROM HIS HOUSE across the street to mine. Will offered to drive me over, but I refused. Like the neighbors would notice his fancy SUV any less than me walking across with my wild hair, rumpled t-shirt, and crop pants.

Halfway across the street, I see Letty's SUV driving toward the house and groan to myself, "Freaking perfect." More witnesses for my walk. When I planned my seduction, I didn't take into account what would happen the morning after my impulsive seduction.

With the holidays quickly approaching, I can't take the rest of the week off and neither can Will. For the first time, I realize how fortunate the close proximity of his store to Curvology is.

Letty pulls into the driveway and parks behind my little red compact car. She throws her door open as I walk by. "Good morning, big sister. I thought I'd drop by and see how things are going."

I call total BS. My sister hasn't "dropped by" unannounced since she moved in with Lex. "Uh-huh." I roll my eyes at her as she follows me through the front door.

"Good morning," Skye calls from the sofa, and I turn to find her wrapped in a fuzzy blanket with Roger draped across her lap. "Fun night?" I glare at her as she wiggles her eyebrows at me.

"It's too early in the morning to deal with you two," I grumble and continue my walk of shame toward the stairs. "I need a hot shower and coffee before the interrogation."

"I can't believe you didn't shower with McScroogie," Letty calls behind me.

"We didn't have time," I admit since they're going to get it out of me anyway. "He had an important meeting at seven-thirty, and I have to meet

The Santa Crew before we open the store.”

“I forgot they were coming to decorate this week.” Skye throws her head back against the sofa. “That means the official Christmas rush will be starting next week. We’re going to need extra patience and a ton of caffeine.”

“And to hire more help,” I mutter to myself. Our business is increasing to the point that we can’t handle it by ourselves. “Maybe a full-time employee this time.” Or two.

Chapter 9

Will



TOMORROW IS THE GOLDEN GOAL'S GRAND OPENING, AND MY BROTHERS ARE flying in to support me. Dare has two kids, seven-year-old Amelia and thirteen-month-old Henry, while Saint has spent the last several years trying to repopulate the entire world. He and Gina have five kids under eight.

To keep things under control at home, Gina and Payton decided to stay home with the kids. I'm a little disappointed I won't see my nieces and nephew, but I have plans to take Jazzy back to Riordan Cove this spring to meet everyone. If the store opening goes smoothly.

I have a surprise in store for my brothers. My curvy little soulmate.

We've spent the last three weeks attached at the hip. She rides to and from work with me and spends most nights in my bed. Life couldn't be any better. Well, it could, but I'm taking my time before I slide my ring on her finger.

The only issue we've had so far is the goddamn cat. I had to buy him expensive food and a fancy play tree to win him over. He still voices his displeasure when we ignore him too much, but he's warming up to living most of the time at my house. Which is a good thing since the monster fucker could suffocate me in my sleep.

I'm sitting on the edge of the bed scratching his head when the bathroom door opens.

"What time are you picking your brothers up from the airport?" Jazzy strolls out brushing her wet, silky, honey-colored hair. We took today off to prepare for my family to arrive. And by preparing, I mean I fucked her good and hard to make she's good and loved before our busy weekend.

"Three-fifteen." I walk over and wrap my arms around her sweet body. As her soft curves melt against me, I forget all about the store and my family.

I cover her lips with mine and run my tongue around the inside of her mouth. She clings to me until I pull back and place my forehead against hers. "Wow. You certainly know how to kiss, McScroogie." She shortened my original nickname, and I have the urge to spank her luscious ass every time she uses it.

"Are you trying to get me to whip your gorgeous ass?"

"Is it working?" She bites her bottom lip.

"Fuck me." I'm going to be late if I don't leave soon, but I can't resist my girl.

“No, fuck me,” she teases and steps back to pull her t-shirt over her head. “If you hurry, you won’t be late to pick up your brothers.” My cock turns to stone as she pushes her tight crop pants down her legs.

My asshole brothers can wait. I refuse to rush this.

I lift her against my body and walk over to drop her onto the bed before stepping back to rip away my clothes.

She squeaks when I roll her over onto her stomach and pull her up to her knees. “You asked for this,” I growl and rub my hand across her luscious ass.

Her gasp fills the room when I bring my hand down on each of her curvy ass cheeks. I soothe the slightly pink skin before giving her two more quick smacks on each side.

“You like this, don’t you?” I groan and slide my finger through the wetness dripping down the inside of her leg.

“Maybe.” Her elbows give out, and she drops her head down to the bed and stares back at me.

“Just maybe.” I lean over and bite down gently on her red skin. “Maybe you need another demonstration to know for sure.”

“It can’t hurt.” She agrees and I give a few more quick smacks. She moans my name as her silky legs tremble.

On the verge of coming before I even get inside her sweet pussy, I line my cock up with her tight opening and pause to admit, “I love you.”

Her curvy body stiffens, and I wonder if I’ve rushed things. I’m wondering how to fix my blunder when she looks over her shoulder at me and smiles. “I love you, too.” My heart settles into a normal rhythm for the first time since I met her as I drive forward into her wet pussy.

I dig my fingers into her soft hips and pull her back to meet my rapid thrusts. The sound of our ragged breathing fills the room as I make love to my girl. Twice.



I END UP ARRIVING AT THE HOUSTON AIRPORT AT THREE FORTY-FIVE TO FIND my brothers' flight is late. Then it takes an eternity for them to deplane and find their luggage. The entire time, I'm missing my baby doll like crazy. I should've fucking brought her with me.

"It's colder than a well-digger's ass," Saint complains as we walk through the parking garage. "Isn't it supposed to be warm in Texas?"

"Not year-round, dipshit," I grumble and click my key fob to unlock the SUV. "We get cold weather just like every other place." I leave the "duh" unsaid. "You fucking played hockey so you should be used to cold." Another "duh."

"Yeah, but I left my warm, inviting woman at home to spend a cold weekend with you two assholes." The humor in his eyes tells me my younger brother is just teasing me, but I'm not in the mood right now. I have a weird sensation piercing the center of my chest, and I have no idea what's causing it.

"What's eating you, asshole?" Dare hops in the back seat of my SUV and slams the door while Saint slides into the passenger seat.

"Nothing," I lie and stop to pay the parking attendant. It killed me to leave my soft, warm woman lying in bed while I drove to Houston to pick up these assholes. I should've let them rent a car and stayed in Silver Spoon Falls with Jazzy.

“Bullshit.” Saint calls me on my lie as soon as I pull away from the booth.

These fuckers aren’t going to let the subject die, and I’m all the fuck out of patience, so I blurt out, “I’m in love.”

Saint spins around to stare at me before looking over his shoulder at Dare. “You owe me fifty dollars, asshole.”

“Motherfucker,” Dare mumbles and throws a wad of money into Saint’s lap. “I can’t believe you hit that on the head.”

“What did you fuckers bet?” I’m not shocked. My brothers can’t resist a bet.

“We heard the stories about Silver Spoon Falls.” Dare smirks. “I bet it would take at least two months before some woman thawed your icy ass, but Saint said it would happen before the store’s grand opening.”

“Fuck off, both of you,” I grumble halfheartedly.

“We love you, too,” Saint tells me. “Now, take us to meet your girl.”

“Yeah,” Dare agrees. “Then we need food. I’m fucking starving.”

“You’re always starving.” My twin is known for his fucking hollow leg.

“What can I say? I’m a growing boy.”

“Lucky for you, I planned ahead and arranged for Jazzy to meet us at the best steakhouse in Texas.”

Chapter 10

Jazzy



ROGER LAYS ON WILL'S MASSIVE LEATHER SOFA, WATCHING AS I RACE through the house, making sure everything is ready for Will's two brothers. Every now and then, my spoiled cat licks his paw or swats imaginary toys floating in the air, unconcerned about my panic.

The butterflies zipping around in my stomach have butterflies in their stomachs as I glance at the clock and realize I'm running late. Really, really late.

I throw on my coat and give Roger a quick pet before heading out the door. Two steps off Will's front porch, I slide and almost fall on my rear-end. A light, icy mist is steadily falling, and the temperature must have dropped several degrees since I was outside last.

I look around and see a light coating of ice covering just about everything. After carefully making my way over to my car, I wonder if I should call and check on Will or even postpone our lunch.

I'm debating my options when I see the Andersons' minivan roar down the icy road. They don't seem to be having any problem navigating, so I decide to try my luck.

Two miles from home, I realize my mistake as my little car slips and slides along the icy road. Oh, man. I'm looking for a driveway to turn around in when I drive over a bridge and my car spins out of control.

Freaking heck. My heart seizes in my chest when I see an evergreen tree approaching at the speed of light and realize I'm about to nail it. Head on.



I BLINK UP AT THE BRIGHT LIGHT SHINING IN MY EYES AND GROAN, "PLEASE let me sleep." The headache pounding away behind my temples intensifies as the light switches from eye to eye.

"Ms. Matheson, I'm Dr. Fox." I don't really care right now. I'm hoping the comforting blackness pulls me away from all this pain. "Can you tell me what day it is?"

Take your pick. I force my groggy mind to function, hoping to shut him up.

“Friday,” I croak out. At least, I think it’s still Friday.

“Good,” he comments, and I breathe a sigh of relief until he questions me again. “Do you know where you are?”

This pain in my rear isn’t going to give up. “I’d assume a hospital.” I hope he hears the grumpiness in my voice.

“That’s right.” Then leave me alone and let me sleep. “Do you remember what happened to you?”

Urgh. This guy just won’t give up. “A tree attacked my car.”

“Close enough.” He pats my arm. “The nurse is going to give you a little medicine for pain.”

Thank God for small miracles.

Fading in and out, I get little snippets of what’s happening around me. A poke in my arm causes me to gasp as my eyes blink open momentarily. The blinding pain that reverberates through my skull is much worse than the little sting, so I squeeze my eyes closed and ignore the poking and prodding.

In my dreams, I hear a steady beeping and a flurry of activity and realize something is missing, but it hurts too much to force my brain to function, so I shut everything down and let blackness swallow me again.

“Jazzy?” Letty’s voice cuts through the darkness surrounding me. “Oh my God.”

A soft hand wraps around mine as lips flutter across my forehead. Since I already know how much the bright light hurts my throbbing head, I don’t attempt to open my eyes. Instead, I mumble, “I’m okay.”

“No, you aren’t,” Skye sobs from the other side of me.

“I will be if you let me sleep.” I can’t help that I’m a grouch from the pain.

“Sleep.” Letty rubs the back of my hand. “We’ll stay with you.”

Sounds like a plan to me. As I drift off to sleep, I realize something is missing, but I hurt too much to spend the brain power to try to figure out what.

Chapter 11

Will



A STEADY ICY DRIZZLE STARTS TO FALL ABOUT TWENTY MILES FROM SILVER Spoon Falls.

“Fuck. The roads are getting bad,” I grumble as the SUV slides a little. “I’m going to call Jazzy and tell her not to come out in this.”

“That sounds good to me,” Dare mumbles from the backseat. “I’m not crazy about us being out in this.”

I dial Jazzy’s number through the Bluetooth connection and wait as her

phone rings and rings. “Fuck.” She must be on the road already. Her older tin can on wheels doesn’t have Bluetooth, and she promised me she doesn’t answer while driving. “She must be on her way. We’ll stop by the steakhouse and pick her up.” We can go back for her car when the weather clears.

“Good idea.” Saint leans back in his seat and stares at the ice building up at the edge of the windshield. “Now, slow down so we arrive in one piece.”

“Shut up and let me drive.”

My cellphone rings, interrupting us, and I hit the button on my steering wheel to answer. “Hello.”

“Will.” My heart drops as Skye’s shriek echoes through the vehicle. “Jazzy’s been in an accident.”

Everything goes dark for a second as I forget to breathe. “Is she okay?” Saint asks for me.

“I don’t know. Sheriff Armstrong came by the store to tell us about the accident. He didn’t want us to drive so he offered to bring us. We’re on the way to the hospital now.”

“Put Dillon on,” I growl.

“Will, it’s Dillon.”

“Is she alive?” I have to know she’s alive. We can deal with anything else.

“She’s injured, but the EMTs thought she’d be okay.” His words don’t soothe me at all.

“How badly injured?” Fucking tell me something here. I want to reach through the phone line and shake the sheriff until he confirms my baby doll is okay.

“Pull over and let me drive.” Dare reaches up and pats my shoulder. “We don’t need another accident trying to get to the hospital.”

“Where are you?” Dillon asks.

“We just passed the welcome to Silver Spoon Falls sign,” I tell him as I pull over in the welcome center parking lot. “My brother is going to drive from here.

Dare jumps out, and Saint hops in the back seat so I can sit up front. “Are you in your black SUV?”

“Yes.” At least, I think we are. My mind shut down the instant I heard my baby doll was hurt, and I won’t be able to function until I see for myself she’s okay.

“Stay on the main road. I’ll have one of my deputies there in a shake to give you an escort to the hospital.”

“We appreciate it, Sheriff.” Dare takes over the conversation for me. Fear for Jazzy has my vocal cords frozen.

“We just arrived,” Dillon informs us. “I’m going to take the two girls up to see Jazzy. Call back if you have problems.” He hangs up as a patrol car with lights and sirens pulls onto the road in front of us.

We follow the deputy down the deserted roads, and I want to kick my own ass for not realizing a winter storm was approaching. I’ve been so busy with the store and our new relationship that I haven’t paid attention to anything else for weeks.

Dare pulls up in front of the main entrance, and I jump out before the vehicle comes to a complete stop.

As I jog through the lobby, Dillon races over to me. “Follow me.”

We step onto the elevator, and Dillon hits the third-floor button and tells me, “She’s in ICU.” Fuck me.

Tons of questions flash through my mind. I finally pull my shit together and ask, “Is she awake?”

“I don’t know. Letty and Skye went straight up to see her while I waited in the lobby for you.”

When the doors slide open, I follow the sheriff as he leads me to automatic doors at the end of the hall. The doors open for us, and he stops at the circular desk. “This is Jazzy Matheson’s fiancé.” He’s not wrong. If my girl survives this, I’m going to put a diamond on her finger and a baby in her belly. Then I’m never going to let her out of my sight again.

“Room four.” The nurse smiles at him. “I’ll have Dr. Fox meet you there.”

I glance around, looking for the room. When I see it to the right of the desk, I leave Dillon talking to the nurse and rush over to see my girl.

I stop outside the door and take a deep breath, telling myself we’ll deal with it. As long as she lives.

I push open the curtain and step into the darkened room. Both Skye and Letty glance up at me, and I notice they’ve both been crying.

My heart seizes in my chest as I take in my baby doll. She looks so tiny lying still in the large, white hospital bed. I swear under my breath when I see the dark purple bruises running across her soft cheek and over her nose. Both of her eyes have dark purple shadows all the way around them. She’s hooked to monitors and an IV but not any life support equipment.

Skye stands and lets me scoot next to the bed. I take Jazzy’s soft hand in mine and bring it to my lips for a kiss.

Her fingers tighten around mine, and I look up to see her gorgeous eyes half-opened staring into mine. “Sorry about lunch.” I have a hard time making out the words her voice is so scratchy, but I’m able to take a deep breath for the first time since I got the call from Skye.

“Fuck lunch,” I growl and lean over to whisper next to her ear, “I’m never letting your gorgeous little ass out of my sight again. And I’m going to spank you for giving me a heart attack.”

“That sounds good to me,” Jazzy whispers back. “But can I get a raincheck on the spanking? At least until I recover from the tree attacking me.”

I have no idea what she’s talking about, but I’m so happy she’s alive and whole, I’d agree to just about anything right now.

A few minutes later, the doctor sticks his head in the door and signals for me to follow him out into the hallway. “I’m Dr. Fox.” He holds out his hand to me.

On autopilot, I shake his hand and ask, “Is she going to be okay?”

“She should be fine.” He gives me a reassuring smile. “All of her scans and tests have come back okay.”

“Just okay?” This fucker needs to be more specific before I lose my goddamn mind.

He leads me over to a small sitting area and points at a chair. Once I’m sitting, he tells me, “She hit her head pretty hard on the side window and has a concussion, but there’s no sign of a brain bleed. All her vitals are good, and her mental state is appropriate for someone who smashed head-on into a tree.”

“Goddamn,” I mutter under my breath. I had no idea what happened in the accident. I was so focused on making sure she’s alive, I didn’t even think to

ask Dillon.

“I’m planning to keep her in the ICU through tomorrow, and then we’ll see about sending her to a regular room if she continues to progress the way I expect.”

I blow out my breath, relieved the situation isn’t any worse. “Thank you.”

“Of course.” He pats my shoulder. “Oh, one more thing. We’ll want her to have weekly doctor’s appointments with her obstetrician until they’re sure the accident didn’t hurt the baby.”

I grab the chair arm, trying to hold onto consciousness, but the shock is too much. I hear the doctor mutter, “Fuck,” as the room goes dark around me.

“Wake up asshole.” Saint’s voice cuts through the static buzzing in my ear. “They’re too busy taking care of your girl to cater to your pussy ass.”

I groan and sit up to find my two brothers standing in front of the chair and grinning down at me. “I can’t wait to tell everyone back home you passed out like a little girl.” Dare rubs his hands together.

The fog clears as the memory of the doctor’s words plays through my mind. Holy shit. “Jazzy is pregnant,” I mumble, attempting to accept the words.

“We know.” Saint sits on one side of me while Dare paces across the small room. “The whole hospital knows because of your overdramatic response.”

Chapter 12

Jazzy



THE NEXT MORNING, THE GROGGINESS FINALLY CLEARS, AND I'M ABLE TO SIT up slightly in bed. Last night, Will told my sisters to go home and he'd stay with me.

I tried to force myself to stay awake to talk to him, but the pain medicine and stress of the day overcame my efforts.

I glance over and find him slumped down in the uncomfortable hospital chair. "Hey," I croak out. Darn, my voice is scratchy. "Will," I try again.

He sits up straight and stares at me sleepily for a few seconds before smiling widely. “Good morning, baby doll.” He comes over and sits gently on the bed next to me.

When he hands me a hospital mug of ice water, I take it and drink until the sandpaper feel of my tongue lessens. “Thank you.”

“I’ll do anything for you.” He leans over and places a soft kiss on the tip of my nose.

I notice the time on the clock on the wall and gasp. “What about the store opening?”

“I postponed it.” He lightly brushes a strand of hair off my forehead. “I can’t imagine having the opening without you there.”

“I’m so sorry you had to push it back because of me.” I feel terrible after all the work he’s done over the last few weeks.

“I’d do anything for you.” He stares into my eyes.

“Did they tell you about the baby?” It wasn’t a complete shock to me. We haven’t exactly been having safe sex, and I’m a week late.

“They did.” As he smiles, relief flows through me at the happiness I see shining from his dark eyes. “And I couldn’t be happier.” He lifts my hand to his lips for a kiss, and I notice a huge freaking diamond ring shining on my finger.

“What?” My slightly groggy mind can’t comprehend what I’m seeing.

“I was going to ask you to marry me this weekend, but your accident accelerated my plans.” He smiles. “I already told you there’s no way I’d ever let you go.” He shrugs nonchalantly. “So, I made the executive decision that you’re going to marry me as soon as I can find a judge to do the deed for us.”

I love his way of thinking and have the perfect solution.

“I happen to know a judge who owes me a few favors.” I laugh. “Letty will force him to give us the family rate for his service.”

“As soon as I get you home, we’ll have a small ceremony at the courthouse.” Will leans back and frowns. “Unless you want a big, fancy wedding? We can do that, too.”

“I want a nice, small, hospital bedside ceremony. There’s no reason to delay, and I can’t wait to become Mrs. McScroogie.” I use the nickname, knowing it will earn me a spanking.

“I’m keeping track of all the spankings I owe you.” His deep voice sends electricity shooting down my spine. If my head didn’t feel like a lead balloon, I’d be ready to take him up on his offer right now.

“I look forward to them.”

While Will goes down to grab some breakfast, I call my sister. “Hello,” she answers on the first ring.

“It’s me.” I relax against the flat hospital pillow and smile to myself.

“Are you okay?” I hear Letty talking to someone in the background.

“I’m fine, just a little sore and very sad I murdered my car.” My sister showed me a picture of my poor little red car last night, and I couldn’t believe the amount of damage one tree did to it.

“Fuck your car.” My eyebrows shoot up. I don’t remember the last time I heard the F-word coming from Letty’s lips. “You’re what’s important.” Tears fill my eyes as she continues. “And the baby.” Since there’s no secrecy in this small town, I’m betting everyone knows by now.

“Speaking of the baby.” Now’s as good a time as any to ask for a favor. “Can

your husband help me out?”

“What do you need Lex to do?”

“I require his legal expertise. We need a judge to marry us.”

That gets some action. Within two hours, my sisters are at my bedside fussing over my hair while Will’s brothers get him prepared.

The doctor came in a few minutes ago and did a quick ultrasound to soothe my nerves. I almost cried from relief when he informed me our little one looks perfect.

“I can’t believe you’re going to have big ole raccoon eyes for your wedding pictures,” Skye groans and looks over my head at Letty. “At least, she let us work on the bad case of bedhead she has going.”

“Are you girls ready?” Lex sticks his head in the door. “I’m not going to be able to hold this asshole back much longer.”

“I think we’ve done as much damage control as we can.” Letty smiles back at her husband.

Lex pulls the curtain back all the way, and Will comes rushing over to the bed. He definitely looks much better than me.

He’s corralled his dark, slightly wet hair into place and is wearing a dark gray suit that emphasizes his muscular frame. His two brothers follow him in and stand across the bed from us.

“I love you.” He leans over and places a soft kiss on the only non-bruised spot on my forehead.

“I love you, too.”

I smile up at him as Lex clears his throat. “You can do all that mushy stuff

after I do my thing.”

“Then hurry up and get to your thing,” Will grumbles back.

It only takes a few minutes for Lex to do his trick and pronounce us man and wife. “Now, you can do your thing.” He smirks at Will as my caveman leans over and softly kisses my lips while everyone else quietly leaves the room.

“I love you, Mr. McScroogie.” I smile against Will’s warm lips.

“I love you, too, Mrs. McScroogie.” He gently sits next to me and wraps an arm around my shoulders. “Is this okay?”

“It’s perfect.” I lean against his hard body as happiness flows through me. It’s not how I always pictured my wedding, but I couldn’t have asked for a better day or a more perfect husband.

Epilogue

Will



FOUR YEARS LATER

I'M SITTING AT MY DESK WORKING ON NEXT MONTH'S SCHEDULE WHILE MY three employees staff the busy store. When my cell phone rings, I look down and see my wife's smiling face flash across the screen.

"Hello, baby doll."

“Don’t baby doll me.” Uh-oh. “This is all your fault.”

“What is Trace doing now?” I sit back and sigh. Our son started the terrible twos at sixteen months old and hasn’t outgrown it yet, a year and a half later.

Keeping him out of trouble is a full-time job, which is why we waited a full three years before trying for another child. For the last four months, I’ve been putting in overtime trying to knock her up, but it hasn’t happened so far.

“He’s been a little angel all day long.” I frown, trying to keep up with the crazy conversation.

“I think I’ve missed something.”

My wife sighs. “So have I.” I blink several times, attempting to decipher her meaning. “So come home and I can try out my brand-new pregnancy hormones on you before the puking starts in a few weeks.” Oh, hell fucking yes. I fist-pump the air. My swimmers finally did their jobs.

Anticipation cuts through me as visions of my gorgeous naked wife flash through my mind. “I’m turning off the computer now.”

“I love you, McScroogie.”

“I love you, too, baby doll.” I grab my keys off the desk while trying to come up with a valid excuse to tell my employees. “Go put the little tyrant down for a nap and I’ll be home in fifteen minutes.”

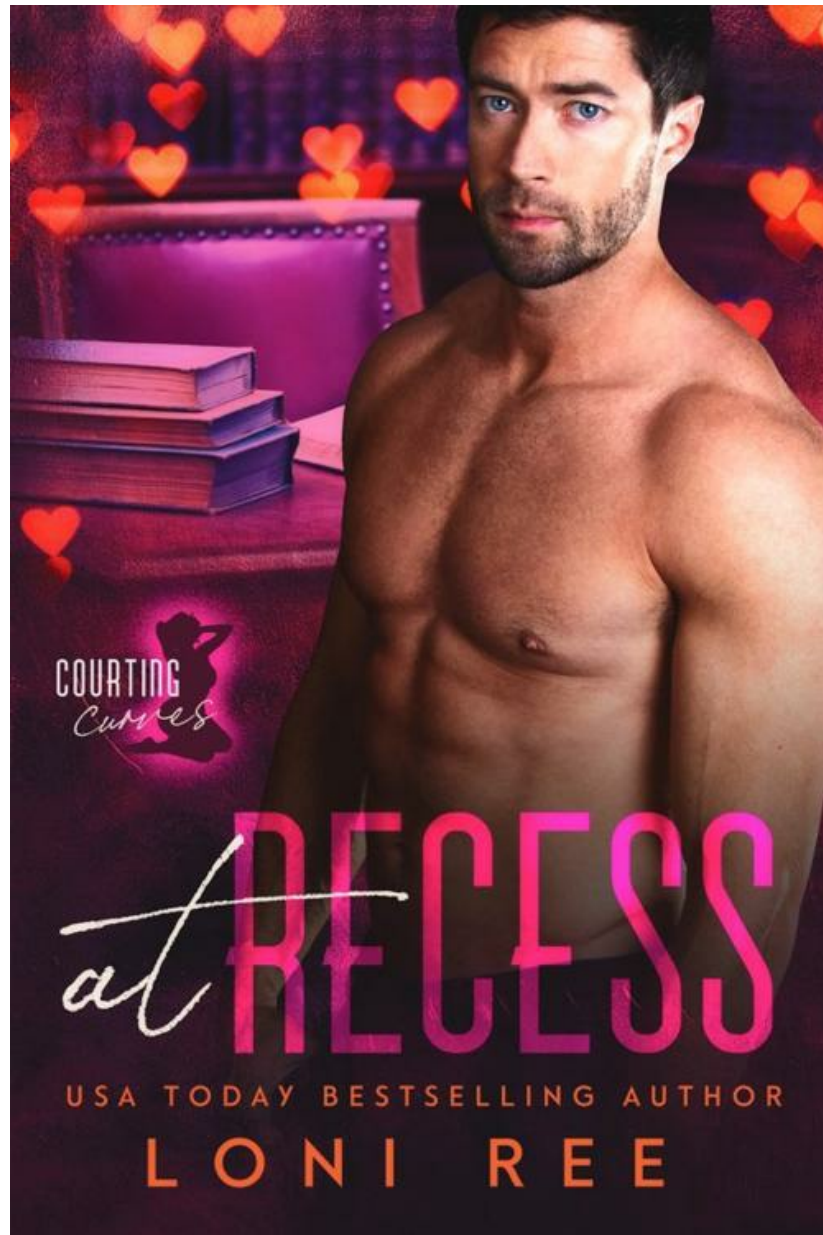
“I already did. Now, hurry up.”

She doesn’t have to ask me twice.

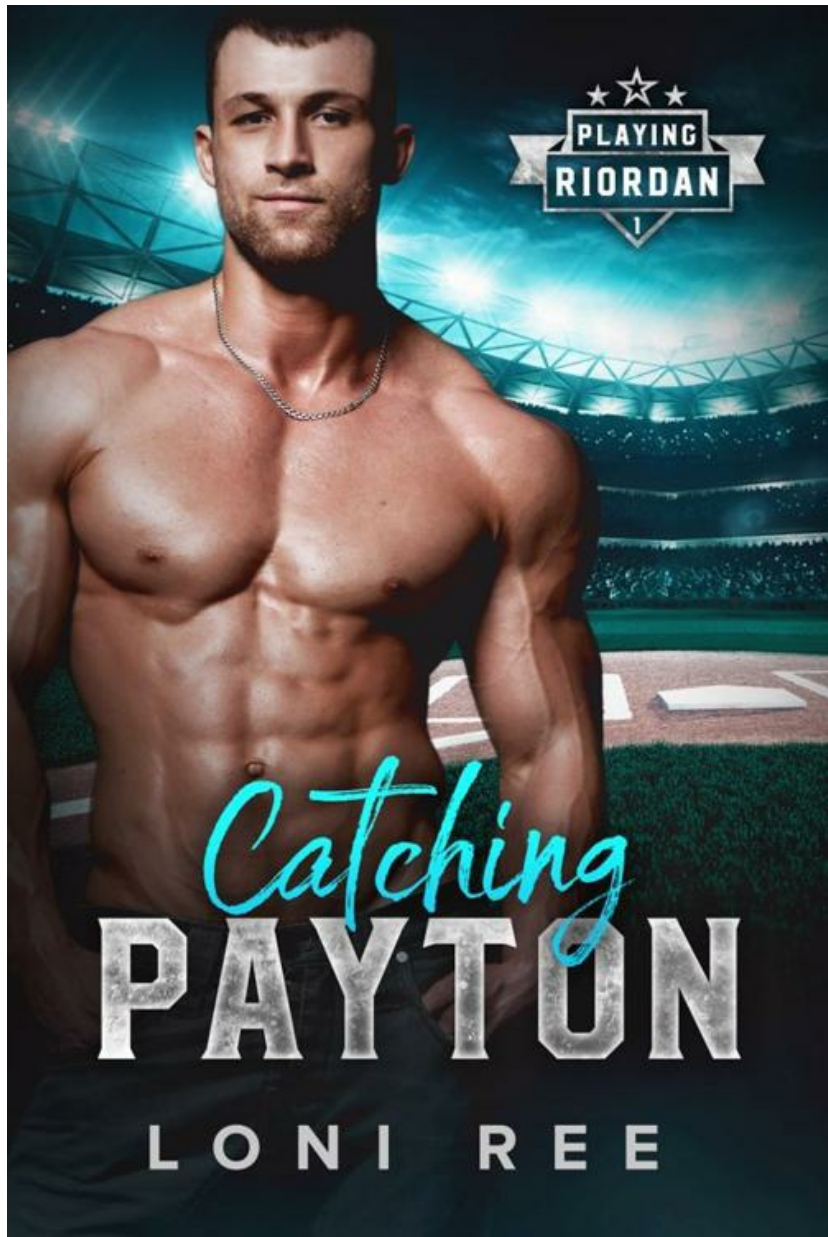
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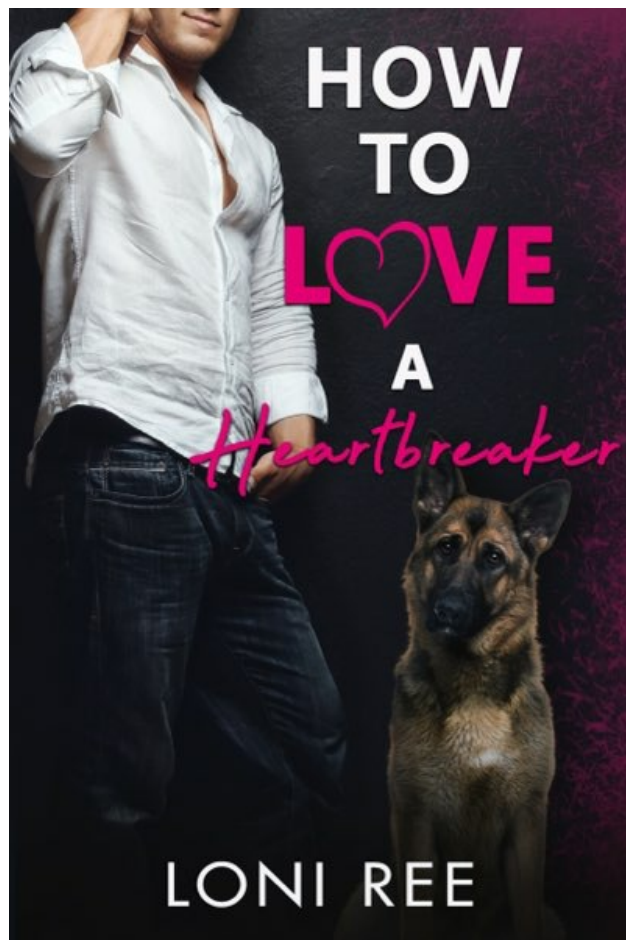
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About the Author



USA Today Bestselling Author

USA Today Bestselling Author Loni Ree is a busy mom of six who spends her free time writing steamy stories about over the top heroes who find the right curvy woman to tame them. Her stories are a little over the top because she believes reading should be an escape from real life.

She lives in the Midwest with her wonderful husband, the last child at home, and a zoo of animals, including Beau, her beloved French Bulldog.

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