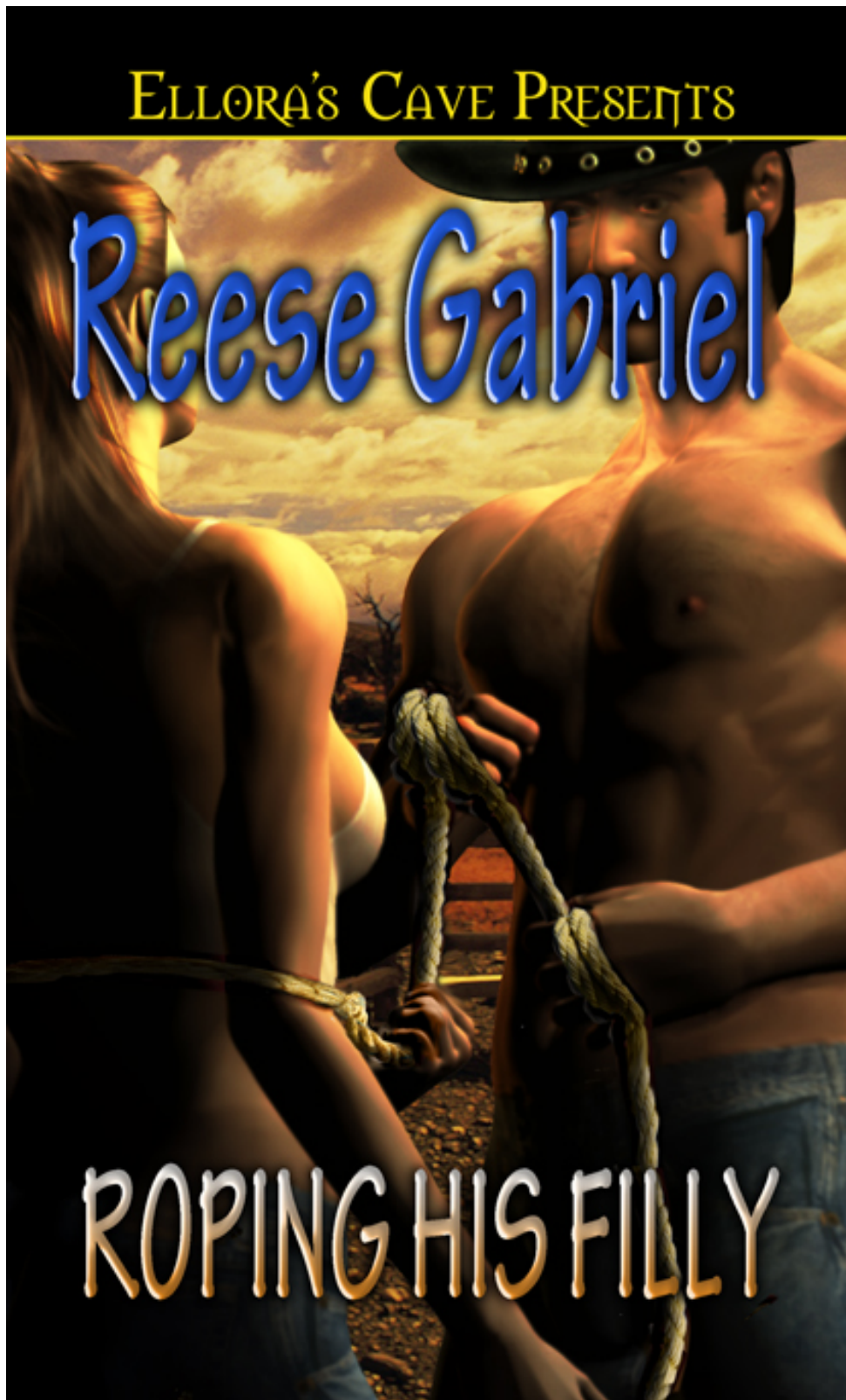


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

Reese Gabriel

ROPING HIS FILLY



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# **ROPING HIS FILLY**

**Reese Gabriel**

## **Chapter One**

He showed up well past midnight—typical—in the middle of a raging windstorm, blue eyes complicated and seductive as ever, his pearl button, western-style shirt open nearly down to his waist, revealing more than a little of his perfect pectorals and six pack abdomen. His angled, masculine face hadn't seen a razor in a week, and he smelled vaguely of whiskey, one or two shots, just enough to turn loose the sex drive and make him truly irresistible.

Jilly gritted her teeth from behind her screen door, the wood weathered and in need of fresh paint. She'd vowed to hold out against him this time, in both their interests, but it was proving a lot harder in the flesh. "I can't let you in, Jake. I'm seeing someone now."

He dropped his green canvas duffel bag on the floorboards of the porch and hooked his thumbs in his thick silver buckle, the one his grandfather had given him before he died. It had a steer on it, a prize longhorn. Jilly knew the feel of it all too well, every rise and crevice, cool and smooth. He liked her to run her fingers over it every now and then after they made love, and sometimes her tongue as a prelude to sucking him off. Other times he made her strip and held her close against him, the belt making its impression in her soft, feminine belly. He called it his brand and it would make him extra hard and extra long to see it on her body.

"Damned straight you're seeing someone," he drawled, as usual, the epitome of an arrogant male. "I'm right here in front of your eyes. Now let me in, woman. I'm tired and hungry and I ain't had a clean change of clothes since Tulsa, three days ago."

Jilly's panties, already moist, flooded at the tone of his voice, the sheer presumption. It wasn't enough that this man made Adonis look like a pimple-faced

geek or, if he wanted to, that he could make her come fifty times a night without batting an eyelash. No, he had to have the completely unfailing knack to dig under her tough-as-nails exterior and expose her very vulnerable underbelly.

The side of her that didn't want to be in control at all. The side of her that was tired of trying to work double shifts at the diner to pay her way through nursing school while also maintaining her grandfather's care at the nursing home in town. The side of her that was tired of having to tell her regular boyfriends how to be real men, that wanted to just let go and let a man care for her and tell her what to do. Up to and including sending her off to the kitchen or the bedroom with little swats to the ass, letting her know in no uncertain terms what was expected of her.

They were wicked fantasies, of course, totally politically incorrect and impractical and she aimed to put a stop to them, and to Jake via a new force in her life. A new man. One with a future.

"I don't mean *seeing* like that, Jake, I mean like I'm dating someone."

"He's not good enough for you," Jake said flatly.

"How would you know?" she asked exasperatedly. "You've never even met him."

He pushed the cowboy hat back on his head. It was a straw Stetson, well worn, broken in like his boots and jeans. Overall it made for a devastating package. The time he'd taken her to the rodeo up at the Taslow County Fair she'd had to beat the women off with a stick, hot little honeys, horny cowgirls, even mature women looking for a piece of Jake Waylon's action.

She gave the man credit for one thing, when he was on a date with her—every blue moon or so—he was with her and only her. Never mind if he was mentally categorizing the next fifty or so women he'd be fucking, he never showed that kind of disrespect to her face.

"I don't have to meet him to know he ain't no good," Jake reasoned, the wind howling in the distant canyon. "Cause if he was, he'd be here right now, kicking my ass for trying to get in."

Jilly hated his logic. Somehow it always ended up with her on her back, spreading her legs, letting the man have his way with her, in spite of all the times he'd come and gone from her life, never a goodbye, never so much as a promise of something for tomorrow.

"Shows what you know," she spat. "It just so happens Doug is home sleeping. He gets up early because he works a regular job, nine to five, something you would obviously know nothing about."

"No, you're right," he agreed, pushing the insult right back around. "That isn't something I would know about, because I ain't a corporate weasel or some dingleberry insurance salesman. Now are you gonna let me in or do I have to take my clothes off out here?"

Jilly blushed because it so happened that her new fiancé, or almost fiancé, actually was an insurance representative for Tristate Casualty and Life. At the moment though, she was more worried about Jake stripping on her front porch. The nearest neighbor was old man Sims, a half mile up the dirt road with his antique doublewide, but still, with her luck, someone would roll by, maybe even the sheriff's patrol.

"If I let you in, it's just for a quick shower and a meal, then you're right back off again. Promise?"

Jake winked, giving her that leer of his, the one that undercut her at the knees every damned time. "You're just itching for a spanking tonight, ain't you, girl?"

"I'm not a girl," she unhooked the latch on the screen door. "I'm a woman."

Jake moved in for the kill as soon as the door creaked wide on its rusty hinges. "That's right, Jilly, you're my woman. And you will stay my woman until I say otherwise."

His hands slid to her ass cheeks, parking themselves for the long haul. The man's calloused palms, large and dexterous, kneaded her supple flesh through the denim cutoffs. Fuck it, she didn't have a chance now. Her body had never been able to resist

him, not from the first night she'd laid eyes on him two years ago at the diner where she worked as a waitress while trying to put herself through school.

*"What can I get for you, cowboy?" she asked as he slid his long legs into the corner booth. "The hash is pretty good."*

*Grinning, he looked her up and down in her pink uniform dress, no shame whatsoever. "What I want probably ain't on the menu."*

*"I'll get you the hash." She turned up her nose. "And coffee."*

*Four hours later, after her shift, they were in bed together. He gave her the best orgasms of her life, though he made her earn them. It wasn't for nothing that he was a cowboy, and those ropes of his didn't just work on the four-legged kind of filly.*

*"I'm my own woman," she squirmed ineffectually. "Let me go!"*

Jake held her tight, enjoying the feel of her grinding against him.

Right about now, she was really wishing she'd worn something more than these obscene little cutoffs and black crop top. With what she was doing to get away, she might as well be rubbing herself up against him like an alley cat begging for sex.

*"I mean it," she warned, "I'll scream."*

His cock was rock hard against her. This was precisely the kind of shit that turned him on. "Go for it," he lowered himself to her mouth.

*Oh, shit, he was going to kiss her. "Jake, no —"*

His lips were like a branding iron, instantly searing her. She sagged against him, erect, braless nipples digging into his mostly opened shirt. Employing his tongue, he reminded her of the true pecking order. What was his was his, and what was hers, was his. Including every inch of her well-kept, twenty-seven-year-old body.

It was a unique, often hellish chemistry. No one, repeat, no one else had ever had this effect on Jilly Mae Cartwright. In school she'd beat up every girl and a good share

of the boys. Smart as a whip, she'd been pegged for college, but had to quit after high school to take care of her grandparents, the dear old couple who'd raised her after her parents' tragic death in a plane crash when she was five. Granny had gotten cancer and died the year before she met Jake. Gramps got Alzheimer's around the same time and was now living at the Crestview Nursing Home.

She hated that Jake could do this, but it felt like nothing she'd ever been able to find with another man. It was degrading, humiliating to take him back over and over, to beg for his attention, not knowing where he'd been or with whom, and yet there was something so goddamned exciting about being handled like this, by a real man, who didn't give a damn about the rules, who took just what he wanted, just because he could.

It was an ego boost in its own strange way. Because he was here under no obligations, no formal ties between them. He was the sexiest man in three counties, he could have anyone, but he wanted her, at least once in a while. That meant he found her attractive, desirable...maybe even beautiful.

He inspected her mouth with his tongue, ravishing every single corner. He was putting things back to how they'd been, clearing out foreign influences since his last possession of her. It was laughable how he could do this. No other man stood a chance. But Doug, he was different, stable, with a future. She was going to fight for him in her life, she was going to marry him and have kids and they'd live right here in her grandparents' old house and fix it all up or maybe move out to one of those new subdivisions on the outside of town.

"Does he kiss you?" Jake wanted to know.

Breathless, nearly panting, she nodded.

He ran a finger over her lips, tracing the hot, desperate lines. She wanted to suck but he wouldn't let her. "Is he any good?"

*Not like you, Jake.*

"He's...okay."



Jake smiled in satisfaction, reading her mind. "That's what I thought." Imperiously, like he had every right in the fucking world, he ran the finger down her neck, over to her left nipple. "What about here? Does he kiss you here?"

"S-sometimes," she managed.

"Your new boyfriend's a busy boy. What'd you say his name was?"

"Doug. Doug Bluefield."

"Bluefield?" He chuckled. "What the hell kind of name is that?"

Jilly whimpered as his fingers splayed over her belly. Eyes still riveted on hers, holding her fast like a deer in headlights, he opened the snap of her shorts. She sighed, utterly helpless as he opened the zipper and fingered his way under the waistband of her pink panties.

"What about here, Jilly? Does Dougy kiss you here?"

She shook her head, trying to keep her composure as his fingers grazed her sex. "We're not ready for that yet."

He arched a tawny brown brow "Not ready yet? You can bet your ass Doug's been ready. Any man gets within half a mile of a filly like you is gonna want to go all the way, Jilly. Sounds like you ought to call him blue balls, not Bluefield."

"He has morals, Jake. He won't be intimate with a woman till he's married."

*And that woman is going to be me,* she thought. Though Jake must never, ever know this until the ink on that marriage license is completely dry.

"Sounds like a total loser." Fingertips resting on her pulsing, puffy sex lips, he said, "But don't worry, I ain't going anywhere."

Jilly was trapped, on the verge of being finger-fucked. "But that's just it, Jake," she protested. "You're always going somewhere...never staying with me. What kind of relationship could that ever be?"

"The kind where the man makes his living the only way he can and his woman stands by him, that's what kind."

As usual there was a piece missing from the equation – on his end.

“That only applies if two people are faithful to each other, Jake. Are you faithful to me?”

“Touch my cock,” he ordered.

She kept her hands where they belonged, palms flat against his chest, trying to keep him at bay. “Jake, you’re not helping things.”

“Do it, Jilly.”

Jilly’s hand went to his denim-covered erection. He was hard, thick and pulsing.

“I don’t get this way for anyone else in the world. You do something to me, cowgirl, that no one else can touch.”

She melted, inside out. It was a Jake compliment, the sort of thing a woman let circle round her head till it drove her mad trying to read something deeper, something permanent and life changing.

“Now let’s see how wet you are.” He moved between her thighs, inserting his fingers and working her clitoris. “That’s right,” he enjoyed her sexual discomfort. “Tell me another man can do this to you.”

Jilly closed her eyes in complete concession.

“That’s what I thought.” He pulled his fingers from her sex and put them to her lips. She opened her mouth obediently to suck them clean. It was what Jake wanted, and what the man wanted, he got.

Jilly tried to picture Doug treating her like this. It was impossible. He was far too civilized. Too respectful, too timid...and too dull.

Damn, where had that last idea come from? Doug wasn’t dull, he was a gentleman, the sort of conventionally handsome, eminently practical and predictable beau every father would wish for his daughter.

“I have you trained well, don’t I?” he teased.

Jilly licked the last of her submission from the man's fingers, bittersweet, the fruit of his strong, uncompromising ways. It wasn't totally a joke, about him training her. Tasting and swallowing her own come was something he'd persuaded her to do over time, with a combination of rewards and punishments. The first time she'd resisted, she'd earned a spanking, and again each time she'd been hesitant or not enthusiastic enough.

"That's enough. Go and draw me a bath." Just like that his finger was gone and he was standing there, expecting her to get a move on.

When she opened her mouth to protest, he took her by the upper arm and pivoted her, casually, on the soles of her bare feet.

"No more stalling. You already have two strikes against you." He laid into her ass with a single wicked smack, enough to make her squeal for mercy.

"Ouch, Jake, I'm going already."

The thing was, it didn't hurt so much at all, just an aching kind of sting, the sort that made her want to sidle up for more, this time bare-assed.

Jake knew this about her, that she liked a man to be a little rough with her, softening her up for lovemaking. He took full advantage, too. It wouldn't have worked if he'd been a genuinely mean man or a bully. The domination and submission between them had its place, and underneath was her firm, firm knowledge that he would never harm her. And if anyone else ever tried, he would kill them.

It had nearly happened one time and it was an occasion neither one of them would ever forget. Call it a permanent bonding experience, it had established this in and out pattern, the tumbleweed, handsome-as-sin cowboy rolling in and out of her bed. And her life. Never taking full possession of her heart, but never leaving it alone either.

She couldn't live this way forever. He had to know that. For now, though, the man wanted a bath. Jake Waylon never took showers. It was because of those old cowboy movies, mostly, and the stories he'd heard growing up with his grandfather.

Cowpunchers didn't take showers. They sat in baths. With their hats on, smoking cigars and drinking whiskey from a bottle. Six-guns by their sides.

Like at the end of the *Maverick* remake, where the father and son are sitting in the bath together. He liked to make love while watching westerns sometimes, and he also liked to mess around in the bath. She let him have his whiskey and his tub, but she drew the line at the cigars. It was something her grandmother had never allowed, and Jilly wasn't going to change that now just because granny had passed on.

Jilly shed her shorts on the bathroom floor. Her pink panties were sopping. She'd take them off, too, but Jake liked her to keep them on. It made him extra horny seeing her barely covered like that, in a wisp of a garment he could – and often did – tear away in a single pull. It was the ultimate enticement to him, the red flag waved in front of the bull.

He liked her in sheer panties, or even thongs. The latter were nice for spankings or other rear activities. Kneeling beside the antique claw foot tub, Jilly turned on the water. Like a witch concocting a brew, she made the intricate adjustments, setting the temperature perfectly to her man's liking. She liked to be pleasing, it was in her nature, and if she wasn't pleasing enough, she secretly liked a man who wasn't afraid to be strict.

Doug was always so solicitous and no matter what she did, it was always his fault. She could be an absolute bitch to him and somehow he'd find a way to apologize. Jilly didn't want to be a doormat or a martyr, but just once she wished the he would stand up for himself and say, "No, Jilly, you can't have your way all the time."

What she got with Jake was hard to describe. And if she could really live with the man all the time if he ever stayed past a second night was hard to say. Maybe it would wear thin, the back and forth between them, the drama, the play.

Though they did have fun, too, didn't they? No one made her laugh like Jake. Like the time he'd put on her bra and one of granny's old wigs for a "tea party". She'd nearly

fallen on the floor and died laughing at the sight of him, buck naked, in that silly get up, his long cock flopping in the breeze as he shimmied his hips.

But Jilly was twenty-seven now and she had to be thinking ahead. Life was more than laughter and sporadic good sex, spattered with kink. Anyway, didn't he give her a dose of heartache for every good time he offered her?

"Jilly Mae, help me with these boots, woman."

She looked up, her belly clenching hotly at the sight of him in the doorway, bare-chested, his belt buckle undone, his jeans unzipped, revealing his white cotton covered crotch. She wanted to go to him on her hands and knees, begging to touch him...anywhere on his fine, sculpted body.

*Damn, she thought, this is going to be a long night.*

## **Chapter Two**

Jilly's sexual fever was temporarily abated, however, by the look on the man's face as he leaned against the doorjamb.

He was grimacing and that meant more pain, either from some new wound or an old one acting up. She didn't like that one little bit. He'd been showing his age lately, all of thirty-three, which was getting up there for a rodeo cowboy.

"You got hurt again, didn't you?" she accused, taking a wild guess as to which it was.

He walked stiffly to the tub and sat on the edge. The warm gurgling water continued to fill the tub, while outside the old house, dry thunder groaned endlessly over the plains, lamenting the lack of rain.

"I'm just fine, Jilly Mae, and don't you keep harping on it or you'll be giving me my bath with a nice gag in your mouth. Those panties of yours would work just fine."

She clenched her thighs, the implied bondage pushing her a step closer to the edge of sexual oblivion. "In your dreams, cowboy."

Actually, he would do it, and had. More than once. When it came to tying up or tying down a female, the man had more imagination than Stephen King did for horror stories.

"Just work on the boots," he growled, not very seriously. "And lose that shirt, too."

She sucked in her lower lip. It was pretty clear he wanted hanky panky, and fast. Was his body up for it tonight, though?

"Jake, maybe it's not such a good idea. Maybe you should relax, have another drink?"

If she could get him to pass out, she could look him over, apply some more of the physiological knowledge she was obtaining little by little in her nursing classes. She already knew to look for the broken ribs he sometimes tried to hide as well as how to pinpoint possibly dangerous internal injuries. There was no more dangerous work in the world than the rodeo, and few people outside the tight-knit, hell-raising little community realized the suffering, sweat and blood that lay behind each of those seven-second rides on a bull or bronco.

He licked his lips, a twinkle in his eye. "I thought I gave you an order, slave girl."

"I'm not a slave, Jake. I'm serious, I don't like how you're favoring that leg."

"Rodeo doc gave me pain pills. I'll be fine."

"You take any?"

"Bottle's in my bag," he inclined his head.

That would be a no.

"I'll go and get it."

"I don't think so. You got work here."

Jake opened his pants and pushed his underwear down enough to give her a view of his beautiful cock—tempting her with its full, luxuriant thickness. Velvet over steel. Smooth, white skin, a full shade paler than the rest of him. He looked full tonight, his balls nice and heavy, the purple veins sticking out visibly, all the way up to the circumcised top of him.

Jilly's mouth watered. Once again, the man was not playing fair. "I'm going to get that medicine," she said weakly, no strength in her limbs.

"Later. Right now you're taking off your shirt. And my boots."

Jilly Mae bared her breasts to her lover. It made her want to cry seeing how he looked at her, the sheer lust and desire. If only it could be something else, too.

"Play with them," he said, his voice raspy and full of sex.

Jilly's heartbeat quickened. It would be all about the passion now. She would do the man's bidding, follow his complicated commands, the whole world disappearing, with nothing mattering but their bodies. And their pleasure.

She sighed, putting her hands on her twin globes, gently cupping them. They were so full, so needy tonight.

"I missed you," she whispered. "I missed you, Jake."

Already, she could feel the difference. Her hands on her body, with his eyes on her, under his direction were not like when she played with herself. In fact, since Jake, she'd been robbed of the best part of masturbation. Half the time it just left her crying, frustrated.

Jake touched the side of her face, his hardened cowboy's hand the sweetest, most life-giving thing she'd ever felt. Next to his shaft.

"Jilly, you are so goddamn beautiful."

She whimpered as he tucked a few stray strands of her light brown hair behind her ear, refugees from her messy, around-the-house ponytail. "Did...did you miss me, too?"

So vulnerable, he made her so fucking vulnerable.

"You know the answer, Jilly."

She did, and it was complicated, full of provisos just like everything else concerning Jason Canard Waylon III. He did miss her, so much so that it was her face and body that filled his mind every time he was with another woman. Which meant that he thought of her quite a lot. It wouldn't do to say this, though, would it? Hardly the kind of thing you wrote on a greeting card.

"I need my bath," he reminded, snapping her from her reverie.

Jilly pulled at the heel of his left boot. Her position, on her knees, dressed in nothing but sheer, love-soaked panties, was sexy as hell. She was subservient now, in a way that compromised nothing of her integrity or beliefs in the equality of men and women.



Being equal, in her view, did not mean having to deprive herself of a desire to be feminine, and yielding to a man of her choice, and in a context of her own making.

When she was with Jake, caring for him, that was all that mattered, and that was all she focused on. Her mind, and her body were his. It was all so good. If only the parts leading up to this, and the parts following weren't so harrowing.

She yanked the boot free. He winced, but only slightly. "Sorry, baby."

"It's all right, Jilly."

She took off his thick sock and then moved to his other foot. It was the leg he was favoring. "I don't want to injure you."

"Just...pull." He helped, pushing with the back of his other foot.

Together, they got it off. Removing the second sock, she paused to soothe his tired foot. Resting it on her thigh, she ran her fingers up and down.

"That feels good," he murmured, anticipating all the pleasure to come from his sexy caretaker.

"How'd you do this time?" She looked up at him.

He shrugged. "Took home a third in the bulls. Nothing special."

"Baby, that's good," she encouraged.

He stood up so he could take off his jeans.

"Let me." Jilly put her hands on either side of him, pulling down his jeans and underwear together. His cock sprang completely free, unhampered, and close enough to kiss. In fact, that is precisely what she wanted to do.

"Not yet," he deprived her, reminding her who was in control.

The chastised Jilly finished the job with his pants. He was always doing this to her, toying with her, playing with her emotions, her desires, arousing her then making her wait. She felt like his poodle half the time, tongue out, grateful for his treats.

But damn if that didn't make her the wettest and readiest out of anything in her life. She took a look at the leg now, surreptitiously. He had a nasty bruise on his thigh, deep

down and greenish-blue. Must have taken a bad fall. She could see more on his arm. He'd been lucky, again. How many lucky breaks had that made in the man's life? Was there a limit to how much each cowboy was allowed? Superstition said there was, though she prayed his luck would hold till he finally smartened up enough to retire.

He let her help him into the tub, which was at just the right height with water.

"That's my cowgirl," he sighed, lowering himself with total satisfaction. "Temperature's right as rain."

The compliment made her glow. She turned the nozzles off now, giving him a full view of her breasts. The sight did not escape the man's attention.

"You have any idea how hard I'm gonna fuck you tonight, Jilly?"

"I could take a wild guess."

"You won't be walking straight tomorrow, that's for sure."

"Just so's I can wait tables by noon."

"Next year I'm gonna take home enough prizes so you won't have to work," he vowed.

She didn't have the heart to point out how he'd been saying that since the first morning after the first night he'd made love to her.

With some men a claim like that might be defined as stringing along, but Jake wasn't that way. If he was fooling anyone here, it was himself.

"Stop that," she giggled as he teased her nipples with his toes.

"Not till you start smiling. You're too pretty to be frowning."

"I'm not that pretty, Jake, you've just taken too many falls on your head."

"Pretty enough to make homecoming queen," he reminded.

"I was third runner up and the others got food poisoning at the award's banquet," she set the record straight, regretting ever having told him the story.

"You're gorgeous," he repeated stubbornly. "No matter what you say."

"Uh-huh." She scooted on her knees to the head of the tub, taking up her place beside him. "Just lean forward and let's get this over with."

He grinned, bending enough so she could reach his back, lean and corded, browned from thousands of hours in the sun digging fence posts and various other enterprises he engaged in to fill in the gaps when he wasn't on the rodeo circuit.

The loofah sponge was more than eager to soak itself full in her hands. She lifted it over his shoulder and squeezed lightly, letting the water sluice down his back, a thin stream over his spinal column.

He jolted slightly. "You teasing me, cowgirl?"

*Maybe.*

"Just getting you clean."

"What you're gonna get is hogtied on the bed."

"In that case, you can just do this yourself, like a big boy." She moved to stand up and this time she was definitely teasing.

Jake moved lightning fast, seizing her wrist. "That's strike three, cowgirl."

She felt hot and weak all over. His grip was firm, like steel.

"Forget the sponge," he said, pulling her close. "You're gonna do this hands on."

Jilly knew exactly what to do, lowering her head to his breast. Lightly, delicately, she touched his hard pectoral muscle with her trembling tongue. The side of her face was nearly in the water. Employing her free hand, she slid it down, down under the water.

He put his hands behind her head, pulling the elastic tie from her long hair. "I like your hair loose," he chided, running his fingers through the tangled mass of curls.

He was such a stark contrast to Doug, who saw her at her finest but never, ever gave any indication, one way or the other, what he liked. No matter what she did, it was always fine. She could die it purple or cut off the left half entirely and it would

probably still be “fine”. He meant well, but in her mind, it was like he didn’t care at all. Surely a man has preferences?

Jake had a long list of them. Things he liked her to wear or not wear, ways to do her hair, or even how he liked her to walk. For him it was a matter of her being hot or not, which wasn’t too discriminating, but he was a guy, a guy who desired her, not some namby-pamby fashion critic.

Of course it was a whole different story when it came to her going out in public. She received long lectures about any outfits he considered too risqué. Like he was with her long enough to care.

“Basically you’d be happy if I wore a burkah,” she exclaimed in exasperation one day.

“A burkah?” He’d scrunched up his adorable face. “What in Sam Hill is that?”

She’d explained what she’d learned in the multicultural class she was taking about the Muslim dress worn by women in public to hide every part of their bodies.

“Well, I don’t know much about Arabs.” Jake considered the matter. “But seems maybe they got one or two things right at least.”

Jake smoothed his hand over her hair and down her back. He used the other to manipulate her nipples, both gestures encouraging her to lick and kiss at his chest. “That’s it, baby,” he crooned. “Nobody can make me feel this way. You know that?”

She made both his nipples stiff with her mouth, sucking them greedily. The action made his cock stick straight up. The top of it was just above the water. She dove for it, not waiting for permission.

“You’re a naughty cowgirl,” he said, but he didn’t seem to mind her attentions.

Her hair fell about her, sopping up the water. She was over the edge of the tub, soapy and horny as hell.

"I wonder what I should do with you tonight," he mused, maximizing her submissive anticipation. "Maybe put you spread eagle on your back, let you simmer with the vibrator for a while."

She opened her mouth and went deeper, as she pictured herself tied down, helpless as he used the vibrator to torment her, keeping her on the brink of orgasm for hours. But, no, he was horny, too, and he'd want something quicker than that.

"You like that, don't you?" He reached out and smacked her naked ass.

Jilly came up for air, wanting a kiss.

"Well you're awfully anxious now, ain't you?" He lorded it over her. "A little while ago, I wasn't even good enough to come in your house anymore, cause I don't work nine-to-five."

"It's not that," she breathed. "I just need...stability."

He pinched her chin between thumb and forefinger, preventing her from reaching his face. "Seems to me you need a kiss a little more right now."

Jilly bit her lip, fearing the worst.

"Is that true?" He pressed. "Do you need a kiss?"

It was just as she'd feared — Jake was going to play one of his little mind games. The kind that drove her crazy.

"Yes," she said, as quietly as possible.

"I didn't quite hear you, cowgirl."

"I need a kiss, Jake."

"Is that right?" He took her nipple, holding it fast, enough to bring her to attention. "How bad?"

"R-real bad, Jake."

"Anything else you need?" He twisted his fingers, enough to mix the sweet pleasure with a twinge of pain.

"I need your cock, Jake." She said this hastily, not daring to stand on ceremony at this point.

"But you have a boyfriend," he reminded.

"I need you, Jake. I need your cock...inside me."

"You didn't even want to open the door, Jilly."

He had both her nipples. He was pinching them in that way he had that made her gyrate, thrusting her hips, pushing her belly and empty sex up and back, up and back, like he was already filling her, already using her for his pleasure.

"I was wrong, Jake. I didn't mean it."

The time for reasoning and arguing was past. The laughing, also. Now it was time for their sex games. The head games, and the body games.

"You were a bad girl, weren't you?"

"I was, Jake."

"What should I do about that?"

"You should punish me," she said.

"You need it, don't you?"

"Yes, Sir, I do...your hand...on me."

"A good spanking, Jilly."

"Oh, yes, Jake...oh, yes." It was like the man was fucking her already, his words in her, thrusting, digging, and pulsing like a sex organ unto themselves.

He twisted his fingers again, a direct line to her pussy. "What will a spanking teach you, cowgirl?"

"Respect, Sir...obedience."

"Hands behind your head, cowgirl."

She did so, the action further lifting her breasts and emphasizing her present captivity to the man.

"I'm easy on you, cowgirl," he served notice. "Too easy. And you know it. I let you lock me out. But you and I both know what you should really do when I knock."

"I should...submit," she whispered.

"Tell me, exactly. Arch your back, and tell me." He was playing her, owning her.

"I should crawl," she pushed her aching breasts out for his pleasure, "on my hands and knees..."

They'd been over it before, many times, it was their mutual fantasy – one they had yet to play out. She closed her eyes now, focusing through the sensations of his real-life fingers to some other reality, to some other visit by the man to her humble home.

*She was wearing a spring dress. She was naked underneath. She was at the sink washing dishes, or perhaps putting clothes in the dryer. He came to the screen door, and she heard him call her name. Instantly everything stopped. Her body froze up with electric anticipation – the complete overtaking of her system by a vague, excited panic, like when you're about to mount a roller coaster. He was here. Her man. Her Master. Hearing his voice, just knowing he was in her proximity, she knew she could no longer remain on her feet.*

"Coming, Sir," she called, already in the process of kneeling. Her legs too weak to hold her up, anyway.

"Your head is down as you crawl to let me in," Jake reminded her, contributing to the image in her head. "You look only at the floor."

"Yes...only at the floor."

Is this what he wanted in real life? Jilly wondered. How little she knew of his real likes and dislikes. He was forever the strong, silent, off-into-the-sunset hero, never letting his humanity show. Did he think he was the only one in the world with wants?

"I crawl to the door, my own door, and reach up, just long enough to undo the latch. And then I wait. Head down again."

"Like a good little filly. For me to give you a nice pat on the head. Or a treat."

"I might get to suck your cock," she whispered.

"Maybe. If I let you."

"I'd want to, Jake, very much," she said throatily. "I'd want to be...very pleasing."

"In that case, why don't we find out?" He released her nipples. The sudden return of blood made her wince, just for a second. "You're gonna crawl for me tonight, Jilly. All the way in to bed."

He was watching for reaction. She was, for the moment, lost in a variety of sensations. She had dreamed of this so long, in secret, but to have it made real now was almost cruel, and not in a sexual way.

"Take down your panties," he ordered. "And open your legs."

Jilly removed the pink underwear, baring her crotch.

Spreading her knees widely on the tile floor, she gave him the desired access to her dripping hole. One touch, and she feared she'd be off like a Roman candle.

"Wider," said Jake.

Her scent was heavy in the air now, mixing with his testosterone and musk. She was ready to be taken, right there on the floor, her soft, nude body a cushion for him on the cold tile. She would give him pleasure, letting him come inside just as fast or as slowly as he wanted, just as many times as he liked.

But then, she wasn't calling the shots, as he painfully reminded her once again by making her wait, exposed, subjugated...in heat while he finished his bath.

"Yes, indeed, cowgirl," he drawled in that lazy west Texas voice of his that she loved so well. "I think tonight is a perfect night for you to prove yourself."

"Yes, Jake."

"You may thank me ahead of time for being tough on you."

"Thank you, Jake."

"And for disciplining your wayward ass."

"And for disciplining my wayward ass." The words cut through her splayed pussy like a laser knife.



He glanced at her out of the corner of his eye. She felt hot and degraded and sexy as any real-life slave girl.

"It ain't fun being put off, is it?" he said pointedly.

"No, Sir." She thought of him out there on the porch, arguing with her to get in. "Sorry, Sir."

"You'll answer with your ass, don't worry."

"Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir."

It was the sex talking, she told herself, the spell of mutual desire. It always got this way. But she had to admit that it felt deeper tonight, more intense. She was into the submitting in a way she'd never felt before, and he was into the dominating.

"You'll make it all up, cowgirl. For making me wait, for dating another man. You'll get a good lesson as to whose brand you wear."

A fresh wave of need came over her. "Please, Sir, Jake, may I go to bed? May I wait for you in bed?"

"On your hands and knees," he specified. "Facing the wall. The first thing I want to see when I walk in is your unruly ass, twitching for correction."

"Yes, Sir, thank you, Sir." Jilly put her palms to the floor, remembering that he'd told her earlier to crawl to the bed.

She'd never subjugated herself like this for a man, let alone in her own house. Doug would probably be disgusted. He'd say it wasn't normal, that she should see a doctor, and maybe she should, because it sure wasn't doing her any good spending her time and youth with this man.

"You look good like that," he called to her as she shuffled to the door, head down. "Want me to take a picture for Doug?"

She made no response. She was on her way to punishment and to sexual usage. The floorboards creaked beneath her. In the hallway, her cat Jasper cocked his white and black head and gave an inquisitive meow.

"It's too hard to explain," she muttered, making her way down to the bedroom she'd occupied since she was a little girl. She supposed she could move to the master bedroom now, but it just didn't feel right, not while Grandpa was still alive. She had a big enough bed as it was, an enormous hand carved four-poster. A genuine antique, it was a gift from Jake.

Personally, she considered it more a gift to himself, because of all the possibilities it allowed for tying and tormenting her. He had ready-made straps for the corners, and other pre-measured pieces to bind her in creative ways between the back posts on her feet, or even with her hands overhead against a single post, her breasts and belly pushed against the wood, her back exposed for the flogger he liked to use on her sometimes.

The old-fashioned bed seemed surprisingly high from down here. How did the cat manage to jump so easily from the floor? Jilly rose up from her knees, climbing aboard the large, soft, king-sized mattress. Jasper hopped up with her, insisting on running himself around her legs a zillion or so times, purring loudly.

"Shoo, kitty," she said, to no avail.

Her marching orders having been pretty clear on the matter, she saw little option but to wait in this position, letting the cat have his way with her. His tail tickled the crap out of her breasts and when Jake came in he took the occasion to burst out laughing.

"I didn't realize I'd get two pussies for the price of one."

Jilly couldn't help but seize the moment. "And I sure hope you can figure out which one doesn't belong...*Sir*."

She would pay for the remark, but oh was it worth it.

### **Chapter Three**

Jake was still snickering as he picked up Jasper. The old tomcat made a deep, happy trilling noise. It was the darnedest thing, thought Jilly, of all the men she'd ever been involved with, he'd only ever tolerated Jake. Talk about a conspiracy.

"It's good to see you, too, old buddy," Jake answered him. "We'll catch up later. For now I need me some alone time with the little woman...man stuff...you know what I mean."

Jasper meowed, indicated he really did understand. A second later Jake was closing the door, Jasper on the other side of it, not fussing or scratching to get in.

Incredible.

"Now it's time to deal with you," he announced. "What do you mean by sassing me in front of Jasper?"

"He's a cat, Jake, what the heck are you talking about?"

He laid into her, a crisp smack. "Do you need me to get something out of your toy box for the occasion?" he menaced.

"They're your toys," she felt the rebellion well up. "Not mine."

The very idea that he made her keep such things around was outrageous. Monster dildos. Gags and handcuffs. A leather flogger. Even a butt plug, for heaven's sake. How many times had she gone to throw out that old trunk, the beat up one with all the stickers from all his different rodeos before he'd switched over to the canvas bag? A dozen times at least. But always she'd caved in, knowing full well it was all junk he'd use on her.

He flicked his finger over her swollen, traitorous clit. "What were you saying? I didn't quite catch that."

She moaned, transported immediately into dreamy surrender mode. "I said I'm sorry...for back-talking."

He applied a second finger, directly into her vaginal canal. "Whose pussy is this?"

"It's yours, Jake."

Damn it all to hell. Freaking, fucking damn it. Why did she say crap like this? Why did she lose track of reality with this man each and every time?

"Whose?" He fondled her a little more, canceling out every hope of resistance.

*Deeper*, she thought for the second time tonight, *we're going deeper*.

"It's your pussy, Jake...oh, god...please fuck it...fuck me..."

He smacked her ass, pushing her forward, the pleasure replaced so cunningly with pain as to make it nearly indistinguishable. "Punishment first," he reminded.

"Yes, Jake, punish me." She'd been tricked and she didn't even care. "Please, beat my ass, I've been a bad cowgirl."

"You didn't let me in."

Thwack.

"I should have...I should have come crawling to you."

"You've never done that, Jilly. Never."

Thwack.

She held for a moment to the tone of his voice, there amidst the swirl of sensations, pouring into her brain. What was it she'd heard...there just for a moment? Had he been...concerned? Unsure?

"Jake," she croaked. "I need you. Inside me. Oh, god, I need you all the time, I burn for you, into the night...I cry and cry."

*Too much... You're giving away too much*, she accused herself. But that was always the pattern—for every inch he gave, she ran a marathon.

Or was there something new here, something worth investigating? Could this whole Doug thing force him to make a decision...finally?

Thwack.

"You'll get it when I want to give it, Jilly, not before."

"Yes, Sir," she whimpered. "I just want to be good...I just want to please you."

If only she knew how. If only he knew what he wanted himself, outside of that endless chase for gold buckles and roaring crowds.

"This pussy was made for my cock, Jilly. It's time to remind you of that."

She pushed out her stinging ass. Lowering herself to her elbows, she made her final plea. "Put it in me, Jake, show me, put me in my place...let me be yours...truly yours."

"If I do that then you can't have anything to do with Doug or any other man. Ever."

She clenched her fists. Why? Fucking why was it so hard?

"Jake...what am I supposed to do...I can't live like this...I'm strong, you always tell me that. But I'm not that strong...I need a man who's here...I'm sorry, I do."

Jake moved directly behind her, his hands grasping her hips, his shaft poised for penetration. The motions were studied, expert, intense. This was what he did and he was the best. But this part-timing wasn't going to be enough anymore, not to erase her doubts, her needs.

"You will get rid of Doug," he declared, readying his famous enforcer. "And you'll do it tomorrow. Or else we will get you one of those chastity belts."

Jake entered her, slowly, triumphantly. But he was all wrong, because as good as this felt, he had no right to imply that she was dating Doug for sex. She wanted affection, love...and sex.

"Jake, please..."

Jake's erection found its way home to the depths of her sex, his cock pulsing—as perfect a fit as he'd promised, and twice as devastating.

"Say it, Jilly. You know it's true. You need me. I'm the one who's there for you. I'm the one who protected you from that sleazeball at the diner."

There it was...his secret weapon. It was true. He'd saved her, and she'd be eternally grateful, but that was then and this was now.

"No," she shook her head, gasping. "It's not that...simple..."

He grasped her damp hair, gathering it in his hands like a set of reins. "Sure it's simple. You're my filly..."

Jake was riding her now, setting up a slow and steady motion that had the dual effect of building her up ever higher while capping her off, just short of climax. It was a maddening kind of fuck, the sort that really could make a woman say or do anything.

"Oh god...ohmyfucking..." she cried helplessly. "I give up...I will dump him...I will be yours...only your pussy...forever."

"You'll tell him tomorrow?"

"Yessssss..."

Jake smacked her ass. "In that case, it's time to give it up for your man. I want to hear you scream, cowgirl."

"Oh...yeah...oh, fuck, yeah..." she hissed. "Give it to me. Pound me, cowboy. Break me like the nasty little filly I am."

"My pleasure."

He pulled out of her now, and for a second she thought he was going to tease her more. She'd have about died if he had.

"Get on your back," he growled lustfully instead, looking in no more of a mood to play games than she.

She obliged, landing with a bounce on her throbbing ass. Jake wasted no time taking her ankles and wrenching them apart. Looking like a starving man, he eyed her swollen sex.

"Gotta have a taste," he said.

With that he dropped down to tongue her sex lips, pushing them apart with a wriggling motion. She came the second he touched her clit, dabbing with the tip of his

sandpaper tongue. Jilly gave it all up, screaming just like he wanted, though this was just the beginning.

Pushing in a little deeper, he made her come two more times, like a bubbling fountain of pleasure that just kept pouring over and through her and into her. She could taste it and smell it and feel it—even wrap herself in it like a warm blanket.

She lay spent, beat, wiped out, and ready for sleep. But there was Jake's erection to deal with and he was never a man to come alone, no more than he was one to fuck alone. And who was she to deny him? One look at that red-hot, glistening shaft, still wet with her own liquid, was more than enough incentive to rouse herself.

"Take me," she managed to say from somewhere deep in her bone-weary body.

Lifting her legs over his shoulders, he did just that, taking his position, his tongue replaced with his bigger, far more imposing cock. With her body bent at the waist like this he was able to penetrate deep and fast. It was bone-to-bone, pelvis-to-pelvis, raw and hard. Her teeth jarred as he claimed her, marking her once and for all. She screamed again, a plaintive wail as he pulled back for another go at her. She was coming already, this time like waves rushing over an unprotected shore. She tried to keep the sequence clear, split second moves, another push deep into her, another wave. Another withdrawal, two more waves.

He was pistoning her, and the waves were lashing her. Jilly bit her hand. She bit his shoulder. She clawed. She came and begged to come again, and then begged to not have to come anymore. The orgasms had orgasms. His cock kept on swelling and swelling. Was he going to just blow up inside of her like a balloon? How much could a man endure, how long could he hold out?

"Jaaaake..." she moaned his name, giving all the validation a man could ever want. He was the best, most fantastic fucking lover in the history of the world. At least the little bit she knew.

"Jilly Mae...cowgirl...my filly..." He strung out every name he had for her.

"Yeah, yes," she encouraged, squeezing with her pussy muscles. "Come on, baby, give me your come, give it to me, I need it, hot, wet...fill me..."

"Oh...fuck...jeezus...fuck..." Low, guttural, and purely male. He was giving it to her – she could feel his cock spasm – giving her what she wanted.

He continued to release his pent-up orgasm, till at last he slowed and finally brought his magnificent body to a halt above her. The look on his face said it all.

"Jake, yes..." She held tightly to him, loving that at this moment he was supremely content.

He rolled onto his back beside her. "Jilly, I swear, you get better and better."

She nestled on his smooth, hairless chest. "You're the one who's good."

"Mmmm..." he sighed. "I could lie here forever."

*Could you, she wondered, really?*

She ran her finger over the familiar scars. She knew them all by heart. The gash in his right side where he'd been gored by a nasty, killer bull with the unlikely name of Tiny Tim. The grooves on his left side from a ruptured appendix – a gift from a virtually unrideable palomino named Suzy Q.

"I could, too, Jake. I really could."

"I'm gonna score big this circuit," he told her now, returning to his favorite subject. "I'll win us enough so we can go live on one of those islands. Jamaica or the Bahamas. I have pamphlets in my bag I'll show you."

Jake always had pamphlets from something. Islands, mountains, resorts, ski lodges, you name it. A million kinds of paradise, always a day late and a dollar short.

"That'd be great, Jake. Or we could stay here, too."

"Too land-locked." He shook his head. "I need to be on the move. Open air, sky, something."

It was true. Jake Waylon was a lot of things, but the settling down kind was not one of them. She felt the familiar sadness weighing down on her as the post-coital euphoria



wore off. They would only ever share this one thing. And no matter how good they might be at it, you couldn't live your life in a bed.

"Hush," she whispered, snuggling up against him, her head resting in the crook of his shoulder. "Let's just sleep...I'm so tired. I just want to enjoy this...just want to slip off peacefully..."

"Sure, Jilly." He stroked her head and back softly. "See you in the morning."

"Okay, Jake, sleep tight."

"You, too, Jilly."

*I love you...*this was the time when a normal couple said that to each other. First one partner and then the other. But they weren't a normal couple. They weren't a couple at all.

Closing her eyes tightly against whatever tears might be waiting to come, she worked on willing herself to sleep.

*It makes no sense, she thought. No fucking sense at all. I'm more alone with him than without, and I'm already missing him while he's still here.*

*Tomorrow, Jilly Mae told herself, I have to do it. I have to let this man go. Forever. No turning back, not even a tiny peek over my shoulder till the ink is safely dried on my marriage license with Doug Bluefield.*

## **Chapter Four**

Jake woke up feeling like he was a hundred years old. Cursing the name of every four-legged creature who'd ever thrown him, tossed him, kicked him or gored him, he sat up, swung his legs one by one over the edge of the bed and made his way to the bathroom.

His spit was pink in the sink. More blood from somewhere. Well, he'd run out sooner or later and that'd be the end of that problem. Looking in the mirror, he took stock. Nice bruises on his arm. Thigh too. Really wasn't much point giving out gold buckles in this business when the animals themselves gave you such nice trophies.

Then again, the losers would end up with the biggest ones of all if that was how it was done. He gave himself a nice grin and a wink. Still got my pretty face, though. Too bad I don't go in for men in that way, I'd appreciate myself a whole lot more.

Jake ran his tongue over his teeth. He could use a brushing. Jilly's toothbrush would do just fine. Everything about the little woman was just fine, from her pink frilly bathroom with all those towels no one was supposed to use, to the plastic bucket of round colored soaps. Also off limits. You had to love that. The girl, scratch that—the woman—was just so interestingly impractical, and yet so completely lovable.

And it all turned him on. The colored soap, the way the towels smelled, and her body, Jilly's glorious body, the closest thing to heaven he'd ever known or was ever likely to know. She was so damned pretty and so completely fine that she could be in a magazine or on TV. Though she wouldn't believe it no matter how many times he said so. Probably better off that way. If his little cowgirl really knew what she had going for her, their arrangement would be over right quick on account of her figuring out how much better she could do for herself.

Come to think of it, what in blazes had been going on last night? She'd never locked him out before. Sure, it made it that much more fun to get through her screen door with a little opposition—not to mention the extra challenge of getting in her pants—but he didn't like this talk of Doug Blue Bonnet or whatever the hell his name was.

She was bragging on him pretty good. He'd badgered her into breaking up with him, but that wasn't real sporting of him, given that he had her out of her mind and needing to climax at the time. Anyways, you couldn't hold a woman to that kind of promise. If there was something brewing with this nine-to-five blue boy, then it was going to play itself out, like it or not.

Best he could do was make her forget the man.

He was good at that. Making her forget, that is. She'd seen some hard times. Lost her folks really young, and recently her grandmother, who was like a second mother to her. Her grandfather was pretty near gone, on account of that disease he had that made him forget everything, including his own name.

Alzheimer's. That was it. Gave him the creeps, seeing all those vacant-eyed folks living in some dream world down there at the home. Jilly didn't know that he went down there to visit Old Man Cartwright every time he was in town. He didn't like to make a big deal about things like that. A woman like Jilly would make too much of it and get the wrong idea.

As far as he was concerned, he was watching out for an old time cowpoke, kinda like his own grandfather, who'd died of pneumonia when Jake was twelve. The staff at the home was always doting on him for coming to visit, saying how kind he was, but as far as Jake was concerned, it was those nurses who were the brave ones, working day in, day out with those old folks.

Personally he planned on dying nice and young, preferably with the horns of some fire-breathing Mexican bull sticking out of his chest. With every passing year, though, he pushed his luck by living. The bulls were doing him no favors, sparing him like they were.

"Don't kid yourself," his buddy Rosco, a retired rodeo clown turned promoter was always telling him. "You ain't near good enough to die young. Death's gonna wait on you, till you beg him to take you and then He'll give you a couple more years just for spite."

Rosco had three marriages under his belt and seven children in five states. As far as he was concerned, love was the biggest four-letter word in the world. One time Jake showed him Jilly's picture.

"She any good in the sack?" he'd wanted to know.

"Best I ever had," Jake had assured him.

"And she ain't pressuring you to marry her?"

"Nope," said Jake. "She and I have a perfect understanding."

He'd snorted and shaken his bald head. "Sure, kid. That's what every man thinks. Just don't say I didn't warn you. Stick to whores, you'll thank me one day."

Was that what this was about? Was Jilly trying to drop some kind of hint about wanting things more permanent? Weren't they stable now? Okay, so he was still sleeping around some, but it wasn't near what it used to be. Mostly it was out of habit now, or loneliness. Or Rosco making sure he didn't get himself too fixed on that "girl next door" whose picture he was always showing off.

"Jake, you see that little blonde making eyes at you?" or "Hey, Jake, have you met Kowalski's little sister Stacy, she's visiting a while and she's never met a rodeo star big as you before." Stuff like that.

He'd think of Jilly to get through it. The way they laughed and made love and played together. Damn, he'd never had anything close to that in his life.

She was a genuine friend, a companion and confidante. And yet there was no denying that she was a vibrant, sexy woman—one he could never get enough of. They fit so well together. Traditional. The female yielding and submissive. He needed that—he craved it.

Jilly wasn't afraid, she understood. If only he could talk to her more sometimes, tell her some of the things he was thinking, and how important she was to him. It's just that things got so bottled up, and he had to just keep it all in, like it or not.

He found Jilly sound asleep, on her side, arms and legs askew, her hair spread out wildly around her. She was so beautiful, especially when she wasn't making any particular effort. One look at her smooth, perfectly proportioned body made him want her. He was tempted to wake her with his stiff cock poking between her shapely legs, splitting that sweet cleft of hers. He'd come inside her just once last night, and that wasn't near enough.

Fucking her would be good for two reasons. For one thing, he'd ease more of the tension in his bones—bones that were getting a wee bit old to be playing with the bulls and broncos. For another, he'd help make his case for her ignoring every other man on the face of the planet, particularly Mr. Blue Bonnet.

On the other hand there was that little matter of employing underhanded tactics to influence Jilly into keeping herself hitched to his wagon train.

What if he made her breakfast in bed? Surely that would be above board?

Granted, he'd never made breakfast for her, or anyone else for that matter, but there had to be a first time for everything. She'd be game, he was sure of it. And if she wasn't, well, that's what all those chains in the toy box were for.

Choosing a nice selection, he returned to his little sleeping beauty. Luckily for him, and not so luckily for her, Jilly was a heavy sleeper. He lifted one ankle, delighting in the feel of her warm skin. She stirred only slightly as he placed the silver ankle cuff and clicked it shut. The steel looked good on her, even better because it was he who held the key.

Stretching the chain, he attached the other end to one of the straps on the nearest bedpost. She was now officially shackled. Indulging himself slightly, he ran a finger up the side of her leg. Reflexively, in a purely feminine move, she pointed her toes in her sleep, flexing her calves. His cock swelled in response.

As he reached her hip, she brushed idly with her hand, like a mosquito was biting her. Jake took her wrist, gently but firmly encircling it in steel. Effortlessly, he turned her, just enough to reach her other hand. Just like that, he had her handcuffed, hands behind her back, ankle tethered. What a fetching sight. Beautiful Jilly in chains, on her own bed, put into bondage in her sleep.

Gripping his cock, he began to stroke it slowly—long movements of his fingers, squeezing the vein underneath, all the way back to the shaft and up almost to the head. He wanted in her pussy so bad it hurt. Or would he rather be between those sleep-murmuring lips, red and full and female, made for kissing and caressing a man's pulsing erection? No one gave oral like Jilly—all that enthusiasm and sweet devotion, forever wanting to deep throat, always wanting to swallow.

She called it a gift when she got to love his cock with her lips and tongue, though he was careful not to make it too one-sided. He liked to give to her, too. Jilly was surprised in the beginning that a tough rodeo man wanted to go down on a woman, but he convinced her that it was a vital part of lovemaking and cowboys never did anything willy-nilly or half-assed.

He could come so easily, just like this, looking at her and imagining. A sudden ejaculation, however, was not the kind of breakfast he wanted to offer her. He was thinking more along the lines of eggs, bacon, pancakes, and toast.

Toast, now there was the place to start. How hard could it be to heat up bread?

## Chapter Five

Jilly woke up smelling smoke. Instinctively, she moved to get up and out of bed. It was then that she discovered she'd been chained up. She didn't need three guesses to figure out who was responsible. Hell, she didn't even need one guess.

"Jake!" she shouted at the top of her lungs. "What the hell is going on?"

The man was burning her house down. He'd gone nuts this time, she was sure of it.

"Well look who's awake," chortled Mr. Speak-of-the-Devil, standing in her doorway sporting nothing but an apron and a monstrous hard-on. "Glad you could join us in the land of the living."

Jilly was struggling to sit up, pulling at her chained ankle and thrashing on her ass. "That's right, Jake, and you know why I'm here in the land of the living? To personally deliver you up to the land of the dead!"

He was suppressing a smirk. "Cowgirl, you are full of piss and vinegar. Let's just get you set up here all nice."

Jake bent down and lifted her, light as a baby, repositioning her against the pillows, more or less upright.

"There, isn't that better?"

"No," she fumed. "It's not. Why is there smoke in my house?"

"There was a little...complication, with your breakfast."

"My *what*? Jake, you don't know how to cook."

He scratched his head. "You know I wish somebody'd told me that before I started."

"My kitchen," she wailed. "My poor innocent kitchen."

“Calm down, Jilly, everything’s just fine. I cleaned it all up. Now why don’t you just relax and I’ll bring it in to you.”

She was still pretty much half awake, stunned and overwhelmed when he pulled one of his famous “oh, by the ways” in the doorway. An “oh, by the way”, for those not familiar with Jake or men like him, is when a man gets you just to the point of thinking the worst is over before spilling the worst part about some domestic disaster he’s caused.

“Hey, Jilly, by the way, you know those little towels with the flowers on them you got hanging all over everywhere?”

Jilly braced herself. “You mean my grandmother’s set of decorative dish towels? What about them?”

“Well I was just wondering,” he shrugged. “Do you figure bacon grease will come out of them in the wash? Cause I put ‘em right in the dishwasher.”

Jilly could have screamed, but what would be the point? Whatever he’d done with the towels was history, along with her kitchen and her morning. The only way through now was to stomach this so-called breakfast, get herself unchained and throw the man out like she’d intended to do all along.

*He must have known, she thought, her suspicion bordering on paranoia. Somehow he knew today was the day he’d get his marching orders so he’s turned my house into a total disaster to distract me.*

The really frustrating part, well, one of the frustrating parts, was that she could still feel the man inside her. Every couple of minutes or so, there would be another ping, deep in her loins as her body remembered the loving it had received last night at the hands of its undisputed master, Jake Waylon. Lying there, naked and cuffed, her hands totally indisposed, she’d not missed the fact that he could easily put that stiff cock of his back inside of her and she’d not be able to do a darn thing about it.

Like she’d try and stop him giving her another round of sex that good. Jake returned with a tray, still sporting the apron and hard-on. She bit her tongue when she



saw the lace doily he'd spilled coffee on and the crystal wine glass he'd used for orange juice. It really was kind of cute in a way and she had to admit she was a little shocked to see him making this kind of effort. His usual idea of helping with breakfast was to poke her awake, grumbling about how hungry he was.

Bleary-eyed, she'd stumble off and put on some coffee. But now it was her turn. *So far it smelled good*, she thought, as he set the tray down on the night table. *What does he have over there? Bacon? Scrambled eggs?*

"No peeking," he said, putting the blindfold over her eyes.

It was the good kind, the one you couldn't peek out of from underneath.

"Jake, you're impossible," she pouted.

"Just trying to heighten the element of surprise."

She jolted as his hand settled on her thigh. There wasn't much surprise about what was going on here.

"Open," he slapped her flesh lightly. "It's feeding time."

"I don't eat with my pussy, Jake, I eat with my mouth."

"I know," he inserted the tiny battery operated dildo. "But I figure my cooking needs all the help it can get."

The pocket rocket went right to work, like a miniature, whirring demon, drilling straight to her pleasure center—a center she very much did not want to expose at the moment.

"You're a prick," she arched her back, more than a little frustrated at having him jazz her up like this, so casually and remotely. "And I swear, if you put anything near my mouth right now, I will bite off your fingers."

"You would, wouldn't you?"

"In a heartbeat."

Jake turned the pocket rocket up to full power. "In that case, we better take the wind out of those sails."

“Oh fuck,” she writhed. “Fucking fuck me.”

“What’s the matter?” He rubbed lightly over her bobbing nipples. “Running out of snappy comebacks?”

“Fuc...king...prick,” she hissed, the orgasm overtaking her quite against her will. She was fighting it, and it didn’t really satisfy anyway. It was like the taste of a potato chip on your tongue that leaves you wanting more, craving a second and a third and so on.

Jake continued his deceptively gentle approach—soft as butter touches, barely there kisses to her breasts and mouth. She was crying and whimpering—it was too damned lady-like, and half-assed.

Panting desperately, she tried for another orgasm. He obliged, suckling her breast deeply, passionately. But that only made her want his cock in there, in place of the little machine.

“Jake,” she sought to make peace. “Use me, please?”

“No. It’s time for breakfast.”

Jilly licked her lips, parting them. “Yes, Jake...”

He pulled out the pocket rocket. It had more than done its job, bringing her to a place of alert and ready obedience.

“This is warm, cowgirl, be careful,” he warned. Jake was touching a ceramic mug to her lips, giving her a little bit of coffee to sip on. It tasted sweet and full of milk, just how she liked it.

Unable to resist, she tried to swallow a little more than she could manage. The spillage went right down her chin and over her left breast.

“Whoops,” said Jake, his lips and tongue suddenly appearing everywhere the coffee had spilled.

“Oh, god,” she moaned. “You’re...you’re gonna dissolve me.”

“Hush,” he said, putting a small piece of salty meat to her lips.

Bacon! She chewed it eagerly, suddenly realizing how hungry she was.

"Slow down, cowgirl, you'll choke yourself."

She tried to chew the second one more slowly, but she ended up swallowing it just as fast if not faster.

This time she paid the price as Jake rolled her onto her stomach and gave her a series of five healthy swats with a rubber paddle on her bare behind. Shit, he was emptying the whole toy box out this morning.

"Slow down," he repeated, righting her again.

She sat there, lips trembling, tears in her eyes, her ass on fire as he fed her more bacon. This time she chewed it very, very carefully until finally he had to tell her to swallow to get ready for the next piece.

Really, her current ordeal aside, it was pretty good bacon. So the man could cook a little after all. Had he been holding out on her in other areas, too?

"Anybody ever tell you how adorable you look when you're mad, cowgirl?"

"No."

"Not even Dougy?"

He was needling her, trying to pick a fight, which under the circumstances was totally unfair. Why couldn't he just dominate her like they both knew he was capable of and be done with it? Why was there this pretense of give and take when he could reduce her to a moaning mass of femininity with a single touch?

It was ever so much worse, just imagining him without seeing him, having no idea of his next move.

"*Doug* doesn't make me mad, for your information."

"He doesn't?" She could hear the tinge of near laughter. He was making no attempt to hide his amusement. "And how does he manage that trick? Doesn't he ever have to breathe?"

"You're trying to make out that I'm unreasonable, Jake Waylon," she blurted, tired of the cat and mouse routine. "And I'm not. I get along with people just fine. Everybody but you, that is."

"That's because everyone else gives in to you. You're too beautiful and too smart. They're just deer in front of headlights."

See...there he went again, twisting everything all up again with a compliment when she was working so hard on her rage. Was it any wonder the man drove her nuts?

"But not you," she said sarcastically. "You are 'Mr. Exception To The Rule', God's gift to the population."

"I'm just the one who was meant to watch over you, Jilly. The one who has to stay one step ahead, and get your back at the same time. I'll never be half the person you are."

*Whoa...that was new.* He wasn't picking that up from his usual honky-tonk philosophy sources, like the ever-delightful Rosco with his penchant for spitting tobacco and ogling other people's dates. The one time she'd met him he'd managed not only to strip her with his eyes, but to mentally screw her six ways from Sunday as well. She'd had to take a long hot shower afterwards, just to wipe away all the innuendo.

"That's a nice theory, but it hardly fits with you chaining and beating me, does it?"

The statement was melodramatic and uncalled for and she regretted saying it at once. Jake took it in stride, though, proving once again that he was more than up for the job of handling her.

"Do you want me to go, Jilly?" he asked, not a trace of ill will in his voice.

She swallowed hard. The man was giving her a genuine choice. She would have to put up or shut up. "No," she said softly, wishing she could see the look on his face. "I want you to stay."

Her mind screamed *yes, yes, take your opportunity and tell him to leave and not come back*. But those words stuck in her throat. Later, she told herself, I will tell him goodbye later. Not now. Not in the middle of this.

Jake took off the blindfold. He shielded her eyes from the light, giving her a chance to adjust to it. "I want you to see the reality, Jilly. The reality of me. I'm not a company man, I don't even own a suit and you'll never see me at no fancy restaurant. I like to have fun and I like handcuffs, ropes and a little paddling here and there. I get the itch to move on after about three days, and...aw hell, you know what I'm trying to say."

She did, and she leaned toward him to give her answer, at least for now. A kiss, from her hot dry lips, her bound torso pressed forward, her breasts free and totally available. This wasn't solving anything, but it was sparing them misery they didn't need.

"If I didn't know better," he flashed a cockeyed grin, "I'd say you were trying to get out of eating the rest of my breakfast by distracting me with your considerable charms."

"Perish the thought," she gasped.

They laughed together, tidy and cozy. Jake undid the handcuffs, though he fed her just the same, tiny bites by mouth, plain but hearty, the eggs served on toast, lightly buttered. She could tell it had been scraped, which explained the earlier smoke she'd smelled. In spite of this, or maybe because of it, the toast was the best she'd ever had. The eggs, too, though they were a bit on the rubbery side. Coffee and bacon, these seemed to be his strong suits.

*Typical cowboy*, she thought.

When the food was gone—she'd surprised herself with how hungry she'd been—he had her lie back on the pillows, her hands over her head, palms up. As much as last night's coupling had been fast and ferocious, this one was slow and languid. She submitted in delicious degrees, tiny slivers of surrender shaved from the block of her will. When he entered her, he arched his back, giving full view of his god-like torso. Not an ounce of fat, not a bit of imperfection to mar the pure essence of his masculinity.

Intertwining his fingers with hers, pinning her in place as he entered, giving wings to her desire, breath to her passion. His shaft found its place immediately, settling itself to the base. She gloried in the feeling of him, from the push of his full balls to the tickling of her vaginal walls by his throbbing veins. With every fiber of her being, she offered welcome, even as she did the things she knew he liked, from nuzzling at the thick sinews of his neck to offering up her ripe nipples in subtle friction against his own.

It was the kind of lovemaking that required familiarity, hands that knew where to go without being told—hers draped over his back, and his under her ass for that extra little support she needed when it was time to give herself in orgasm. And lips to whisper, sighs with no real articulation except in the deepest of codes, primal, subliminal.

She pictured them, at times like these, as lying on a jungle floor, in lush, green undergrowth, the canopy of the rain forest high above, the branches teeming with life, the very air abuzz with invisible, living reality. And underneath it all, their two bodies, limbs intertwined, downed jungle creatures, waylaid by their own lusts, their own need to unify and drive away the loneliness. There was no mistaking the order in such primitive comings together, him on top, her supporting him, but she never felt stifled this way. Quite the contrary, it was an inexplicable freedom and release.

No words, of course, and yet each knew when the other was ready. Fingers clutched a little tighter, sexes vibrated and thrummed a little more feverishly, working to crescendo.

There is no climax like a shared one. No orgasm like one that is hand in glove, worn comfortably like an old shoe, borne in trust by two people with everything to lose and no one else to share any of this with.

The heat and pulse and magic generated and erupted, concentrated in waves focused on their centers. Her pussy exploded in pure ecstasy while his testicles surged with expended vitality. She ran her fingers through his hair, took nibbles of his ear.

They fell together once more into sleep, pure lover's sleep, unknown to all others. The minutes ticked by like hours, 'till at last Jilly realized the truth.

Not quite so profound as last night's, but crucial and defining nonetheless.

"I have to go to work," she said, squirming out from underneath him.

Jake turned over onto his back, looking dog-tired and already snoring. She covered him up, wishing for the millionth time he'd quit the rodeo. A stab of guilt pierced her heart as she thought of how she'd almost put the man out this morning.

Covering him with the spread, she bent to kiss his cheek, very softly. "Be happy," she whispered. "My restless cowboy."

With that she went to take her shower, more confused than ever.

## Chapter Six

Jilly was nearly halfway through with her shift at the diner when a pair of male hands slipped around her head to blindfold her. She was sitting in one of the empty booths in the back, rolling up silverware in linen napkins and refilling the saltshakers following the lunch rush.

She tensed for a moment, thinking it was *him*.

"Guess who?" queried the voice of Doug Bluefield.

Jilly relaxed, because it wasn't *him*, but then she tensed all over again, remembering that *he* was still in town, at her house, expecting her to break up with Doug, today, in fact.

"Hey, baby," she put on a smile, turning to greet him—the grinning, even-tempered insurance salesman. "What are you doing out of work so early?"

"Oh, no reason," shrugged the brown-eyed, dark-haired man in the blue slacks, blue tie and white business shirt, barely concealing a smirk. "I'm just celebrating being salesman of the month...two times this year, thank you very much."

Jilly leaped up, genuinely happy for the twenty-nine year old former high school wide receiver and all around, square-jawed good guy. "Oh, Doug, I'm so happy for you."

He embraced her tightly, warmly, with team-like enthusiasm. "You should be happy for us. You know what this means...for our future, I mean."

Her heart thudded in her chest, her breast pounding against his. Was this sounding like some kind of proposal? She pulled her head off his level shoulder to cast an inquiring glance.

"Douglas, what are you saying?"



He flushed red, backtracking as quick as lightning. "Oh, um, I meant for the future of the agency. Mr. Terwilliger feels we are in an excellent position to be the tops for Tristate this year in the region—in both life and auto."

"Oh, that's wonderful. For the agency," she nodded, thinking he'd been telling the truth the first time.

"Say, how about dinner tonight, after you get done? Something really fancy to celebrate? Jimmy's Steak House maybe?"

*Omigod, he has a ring. He's going to pop the question.*

"All right, yes," she nodded. "That would be nice."

*What's the matter with me, she critiqued herself. I should be thrilled. Nervous...excited, something.*

"Are you okay, Jilly, you look kind of pale?"

Doug was rubbing her bare arm below the short sleeve of her pink uniform dress, the same style she'd worn the whole time she'd worked there. Same as the day she'd met Jake. Pouring coffee for him until two in the morning because he'd wanted to take her home afterwards. She'd kept on saying no, right up until he swept her into his arms in the parking lot, gripping her back with those big hands of his.

*"You don't take no for an answer, do you?" she finally asked when he'd let her up for air.*

*"Not if I think there's a yes in there somewhere, waiting to come out."*

*He had her against the side of her car, in the dimly lit parking lot. His hat was tipped back, his skin was ruddy and he was just about the most beautiful man she'd ever seen in her life.*

*"I don't think you're gonna find any words under there," she quipped as he unbuttoned the front of her dress.*

*"It's worth a try."*

*She sighed as he kissed down the front of her neck. "You should go. My coworkers are waiting on me. We never let each other go till everybody's in their car."*

*"Suit yourself."*

*"Wait." He was taking his lips away and she didn't want that either. "I'll just... I'll tell them I'm okay."*

*"All right." He leaned against her car, sexy as sin, ankles crossed, and lit up a cigarette as she walked over to Minnie and Leo, who waited a discrete distance away at the door.*

*"I'm going to give this fella a whirl," she told them.*

*Rotund, kindly Minnie wasn't so sure, but Leo said he knew guys who knew Jake Waylon.*

*"He's a straight up guy," said the six-foot cook, an ex-Marine.*

*And that was that. She made her way back to Jake and drove him home. Of course what Leo hadn't told her, probably because he wasn't in a position to know, was that this "straight up guy" was the devil's own when it came to lovemaking. They were barely out of the parking lot when he was at her, working his hand between her legs.*

*"I'm trying to drive," she squealed.*

*"And I'm trying to seduce you," he retorted.*

*"Well you don't waste much time. Ever heard of working your way up slowly? Having a beer first or listening to some music?"*

*"I'm a bronco buster," he reminded. "I don't do anything half-assed."*

*The man had about ten hands, or so it seemed, trying to fend him off. Protecting one part of her body only left another open.*

*"You might as well save your energy," he advised. "You're gonna need it."*

*It was her first lesson in Jake Waylon logic. Half out of breath already, disheveled and aroused, she let him do what he wanted. Including exposing her breasts, and bringing her to orgasm on the knuckles of his well practiced fingers. He liked how she moved, the little writhing and bucking motions she made while she was driving.*

*"You're a real cowgirl, ain't you?" he complimented.*

*"You ever been tied down?" he breathed in her ear, kissing her silly as she pulled into the driveway.*

*"Have I ever been...what?"*

*He ran his hand over her breast, impelling her to lean her head back against the seat. "Have you ever been restrained for pleasure," he elaborated. "Given no choice but to feel, to enjoy...to submit."*

*She had never heard of such a thing, and it both terrified her and thrilled her to death. "We couldn't possibly. This is my grandparent's place."*

*At the time, it had been divided so that she had her own apartment, soundproof, so the argument was pretty silly. Anyway, she'd already been planning on regular sex, so what was the difference?*

*"We'll do it outside, then," he completely sideswiped her argument.*

*She laughed contemptuously, though inside she was feeling this hot, weak, glow. "You're crazy, Jake Waylon. Somebody would hear us."*

*"Not if I gag you."*

*"You wouldn't dare."*

*He smiled that famous smile, the one that said, "hell, yes, I would". "There ain't much a cowboy won't try...once at least."*

*"So you've never gagged a woman, then?"*

*"Not you."*

*"I think I'd better take you home," she said, not real convincingly.*

*He took his hands from her ripe body. "Okay."*

*"Okay?" Damn, he'd called her bluff.*

*Jake pushed his seat back and put his hat down over his eyes. "Wake me when we get there."*

*He looked so good like that, and she could see his hard-on under his jeans. The man filled them out perfectly, not to mention the simple white T-shirt he was wearing. The last thing she wanted to do was let this man, this body, go.*

*"But I don't even know where you live."*

*"I was born in Kilfield, Texas. Reckon that's my home."*

*"Texas? But that's two states away."*

*He shrugged. "You're the one made the offer."*

*She slid her lower lip between her teeth. She wanted to touch him so badly. "Maybe you could stay here after all," she offered.*

*"Not sure I want to anymore." He folded his arms, flexing totally awesome biceps. His face was still hidden under his hat, but she could picture those lips, so completely kissable. Just one kiss and she knew she'd be addicted.*

*"But...you wanted to a minute ago."*

*"I've reformed my ways. You made me realize I'm way too kinky for my own good."*

*"We don't know that, though, do we?" she pointed out. "I mean you haven't shown me...in detail. Maybe it's not that bad."*

*"Oh, it's bad, all right."*

*Shit. He was making her do all the work. For her own seduction. "Jake, I'm not a virgin. I won't wilt and die here."*

*He lifted the brim of his hat, tossing it in the back seat. "You got any rope? Some nice thin stuff? Utility cord?"*

*She thought for a moment. "In the utility room out back. Yea."*

*"And you're prepared to have it on your body? For real, no kiddie knots?"*

*Her pussy clenched. What was she getting herself into? "Yea, I am."*

*He studied her, like she still didn't get it. "I'm not talking cowboys and Indians when you were eight, Jilly. I will put you into grownup sexual positions, confine you and screw the hell out of you."*

*She let the images form in her mind—the stunning naked cowboy, looming over her helpless, nude form. "What positions, exactly?"*

*"Well, I can't spoil all my surprises, can I?" He winked. "But let's just say, for every position known to man, there's a way to put a woman into it so a man can enjoy her at his leisure."*

*"Leisure? What does that mean?"*

*Jake slid his hands between her legs. She gave him instant access, parting her thighs, instinctively, passionately.*

*"It means a man can take a break, go get a cup of coffee and know his woman will be there when he gets back."*

*She sighed, melting against his fingers. "She'd be helpless. She'd have to just lay there and wait...but that's so cruel."*

*"Cruel to be kind, isn't that the saying?" Jake leaned in for a kiss, like a hot desert wind followed by the searing touch of the sun. She moaned as he taught her who he was – making her hungry, starved for something she'd never known existed.*

*"Who are you?" she whispered, though maybe this would have been a better question for when they were back in the diner or in the parking lot.*

*"You'll have to find that out for yourself, Jilly." It wasn't a challenge, just a statement of fact. Jake wasn't the sort to brag, and he would be the first to tell you he wasn't every woman's cup of tea. Hell, there were plenty of them he wouldn't go near, no matter how good they looked, because he knew they weren't right for him.*

*Jilly was one of the lucky ones – the few, though not few enough, for her liking.*

*"I'd like to," she told him, angling for another kiss.*

*"Which is it gonna be?" Jake wanted to know. "Your bed, or out under the stars?"*

*"My bed," she said, trying to pull herself together enough to walk in the house. "I want you to tie me in my bed."*

*He had her take her clothes off once they were safely inside. She expected something maybe a little rougher, but the first thing he did was kiss her all over, every inch of her skin. Only then did he tie her limbs, one by one, following through on his pledge to secure her for his pleasure...and hers.*

*He tied her spread-eagle, parting her legs to bare her pussy. She was so sensitive, so overanxious for his touch that he was able to make her come and come, just from the lightest press of his finger on her swollen clit.*

*With her hands tied over her head, he had just as much chance to torment her breasts. Light nibbles to her nipples made her arch her back, grit her teeth and hiss for release. She pulled at her bonds with ferocious strength, knowing they would not yield, that this man, this cowboy was strong enough to devise bonds to keep her prisoner.*

*His prisoner. For sex. For as long as he wanted. How he wanted.*

*"This is how I saw you," he told her, sitting beside her sweat-soaked body. "The moment you came up to me at the diner. I knew I would have you. I knew you'd surrender. Like no one else."*

*After a while the orgasms had gotten to be painful, and maybe they were supposed to be, at least enough to make her beg him for his cock. Naturally she had, playing perfectly into his hands.*

*"This old thing?" he teased, giving Jilly her first look at his thick, pulsing cock, with its helmeted head and its luscious blood-filled veins. She wanted it in her mouth, her pussy, like she'd never desired anything else.*

*"Give it to me, cowboy. Let me have it."*

*He made her wait, spinning out a dirty monologue, full and filthy and more than a little fun for them both. Finally he rose above her like a dream and had his way, laying himself over her captive body. There was no way to count the orgasms. She became an orgasm, an orgasm in an orgasm, spiraling into the atmosphere, rocketing up to the sun, the moon and the stars, creating enough light to outshine them all.*

*Incredibly, miraculously, by some act of will, he held himself back. There was something else he wanted, a special treat that many women would not go for at all, including herself, had she not been in the heat of bondage, in the grip of powerful submissive desires.*

*"I'm going to come on your body, Jilly."*

*She gasped as he knelt, knees on either side of her belly. "Oh, god, yes, come on me, please."*

*"On your breasts, Jilly, and your face. I'm even gonna come in your hair."*

*"Do it," she was practically crying. "Mark me. I'm your tied up little cowgirl."*

*"Open your mouth," he said. "Stick out your tongue. I'm gonna shoot it there, too."*

*He was pumping his cock like crazy. The look in his eyes was driving her mad. He was consumed with what he was doing, consumed with her. Nothing else mattered, nothing existed, but this act.*

*"Come on me, Jake, make me your woman... I need it... I need it so bad." She was spasming, climaxing.*

*"Ohhh...baby," he murmured, music to her ears.*

*She lit with joy, never imagining it could feel like that to have this gorgeous man expel himself, masturbating to completion, on top of her. The semen was voluminous. It felt like a gallon of the stuff, a warm, sticky, x-rated rain, gobs of it, just like he'd predicted, on her heaving chest, even on her left nipple. And on her cheeks, and nose, her eyebrow and forehead, even a dab in her mouth to taste, and kindest of all, in her hair. So much come, so much of him.*

*"Jilly," he sighed, from so deep in his gut that it was like his last breath. From there, he just fell onto her tied body and held her, the come between them, on both their skins, his cheek to hers, his hand on her belly, his thigh to hers, protective and strong.*

*Later, sometime later, he let her go and they made love again, and then had come more of the ropes, and then...*

*The "cowgirl" nickname had stuck.*

*A lot of things had stuck that night.*

*"Jilly, hey Jilly, are you okay?" It was Doug, right in front of her.*

*"I'm fine," she smiled. How long had she been daydreaming? It was Jake—she had to get him out of her system. She had to ask him to leave today. Before tonight.*

*Tonight, oh god. If Doug came by and found her jealous cowboy there, it would ruin everything. She could try and get him to leave immediately, but Jake was so damned stubborn, and one more night of rest in a real house would be good for him before he got back on the road and got himself banged up all over again. Though guilt ate at her, she decided that tomorrow would be time enough to send him packing.*

"Say, Doug, why don't I meet you at Jimmy's. It's totally out of your way to come get me."

He frowned good-naturedly. "Jilly Mae Cartwright, I will hear of no such thing. A man always picks up and delivers his dates. You should know better."

Jilly tried to think desperately on her feet. "Well, yes...I know, it's just that I'm so slow. I always keep you waiting, right? I don't want to do that. And you know how you won't come inside and wait, on account of us not being officially engaged..."

It was true. Doug came from a very straight-laced upbringing. She'd been to a cookout at the family home to meet all the kinfolk, including his one-hundred-year-old great-grandmother who thought any woman who wore lipstick was a harlot and a whore. Their idea of a good time was to treat themselves to salt on their stew once a month.

"That's right," he nodded. "And that's why I wait in the car for you, no matter how long it takes. And I will keep doing that till things change. One way or the other."

"Oh..." She attempted another smile. "Well, I guess it's settled then."

He applied a chaste kiss on her lips, cold as the butter pats that came out of the big refrigerator in the kitchen. "I'll be in your driveway by nine. You won't miss me. I'll have on a red carnation," he teased.

Like you could miss the man's insurance company sedan parked on a desolate, dust field that once upon a time had grazed honest to goodness herds.

"See you then, Doug."

He gave a polite nod to Minnie and Shirlee on his way out. "Ladies."

Jilly stood there, wringing her hands. How had her life gotten this messy? Or was it just her? How come she couldn't be happy when she should be? Who wouldn't want a man like Doug willing to sit in an automobile all hours of the night while she fiddled with her makeup and changed her dresses? He was understanding and generous and totally chivalrous. Jake, on the other hand, wouldn't wait five minutes. He'd storm into



her bedroom, tell her she already looked gorgeous and she should stop her mussing around or he'd put her over his knee and tan her vain, over-primping little bottom.

That is if he actually deigned to take her out in the first place instead of expecting her to cook the steak dinner so she could run around, waiting on him hand and foot. All flustered, making sure he loved every little bite, and so fucking horny she'd beg him for sex halfway through.

"Ooo, Jilly, honey," said blonde-haired Shirlee, just recovering from her third husband. "You got yourself a goldmine, there. Cute, eligible, on his way to the top...and don't he just hang the moon on you, too."

Minnie wrinkled her forehead, knowing something was wrong. "Out with it, child," said the unofficial mother of the diner's crew, with her silver-black hair, perpetually up in a bun and her Brunhilda eyes and bosom. "Something's rotten in Denmark. And it's not Leo's danishes."

"Hey, I heard that," grouched the man, just now putting out two blue-plate specials onto the high ledge between the kitchen and the front counter space. "I got feelings you know."

"The only thing you feel is a slug in the wallet every time you bet on those moth-eaten Buffalos of yours."

"I'll take them over a bunch of slimy fish any day of the week," he countered, alluding to their long-time pro football rivalry.

"Come child, let us breathe civilized air." She turned up her nose, and escorted Jilly to her office. You'd never know from her down-to-earth ways that she was the owner, which was one of the things Jilly loved best about her. That and the fact that she had done so much to help her over the years, with her grandparents, with school, and with her near assault in the parking lot of this very restaurant.

Walking behind her aluminum desk, which was painted to resemble a school bus, thanks to the efforts of some local school kids, she reached in the drawer for a candle. Minnie felt nature's light improved everything, especially man troubles. Jilly liked the

candles because they reflected off the colorful walls, each with a different design representing a natural landscape, from the Sahara desert, complete with camels to a genuine tropical rain forest.

Plopping the candle on the desk, she sat herself in one of the comfy armchairs, face to face in what she called her “contemplation corner”.

“So, my young dear, what doth perplexeth thee?” she asked.

Jilly loved it when she talked that way, applying her Shakespeare and all the other books that inhabited her world. “In a hundred words or less?” she quipped. “Jake’s back.”

Minnie pursed her full lips. “Oh, dear.”

“Oh dear, is right. I need to get rid of him. It’s just...”

“It’s just...what?”

“Well, the man is so difficult, and...”

Minnie seemed skeptical. “You mean you asked him to leave and he refused? That doesn’t sound like the Jake I know.”

Jilly bit her lip, conveying what she needed with her eyes, woman to woman.

Minnie interpreted the sheepish reaction. “You didn’t ask him to leave did you?”

“Not in so many words.”

Minnie’s brow moved a bit, thoughtful. “In any words, then?”

“Well, not words, per se.”

The woman sighed. “So you conveyed by action?”

Jilly thought of herself, kneeling, crawling, bathing the man, spreading her legs, and fucking his brains out. “Oh, Minnie,” she buried her head in her hands. “I’m totally fucking my life up here. I have this chance with Doug and I’m blowing it.”

Minnie cleared her throat. “It seems to me —”

"I know," Jilly cut her off, "I know what you're going to say. You're going to say it comes down to whether I love Doug, and the answer is I do, but I'm not sure I'm in love with him. Does that make any sense?"

Minnie smiled, not unkindly. "It does, sweetie, but actually, what I was going to say was something entirely different."

"Oh...sorry," Jilly said. She tended to get carried away at times like these. "Jake says my brain is always galloping, and it ought to try just a nice trot every once in a while. Not that I care about his opinion," she added hastily.

"It's all right, dear." Minnie leaned forward to take her hand. Minnie's hand was warm and full, the flesh pink and soft. She wore six rings in all, to match her dress of the day, a long flowing cotton affair, which could most accurately be described as multi-colored zebra.

A lot of people thought she was too flamboyant for the flat, monochromatic plains mentality, but she'd had the good fortune to marry the wealthiest rancher in four counties, now deceased, which made her, officially, richer than God.

Running the diner was a hobby. An outlet. Helping people was her passion.

"All I was going to say is that it seems to me fate keeps connecting you and Jake for some reason. You are meant to learn something from each other and until you do, well, I don't think either one of you will be able to go on with your lives."

"So you don't think we're meant to be together?"

"Who, dear?"

Jilly frowned. It was getting all muddled up. "Me and...Jake, I guess, though I have to know about Doug, too."

"The one you have to know about is you. Look in your heart, not anyone else's."

Jilly squeezed her hands tightly. "You want to know something I never told anyone?"

"What's that, Jilly?"

"That night, when I thought that man was going to...to rape me? For that split second when I thought it was all over, well the person I thought of was you. You were the one I was sorry I couldn't say goodbye to. Not anyone else."

Minnie held out her stubby arms. "Hug," she ordered.

The two women stood and embraced. Then they wept and embraced some more. Finally Leo pounded on the door.

"If you two are done filming your little Oprah show in there, we got customers out here who'd actually like someone to take their orders."

"Hold your buffalo, you old grouch, we're coming."

Leo liked to think he got away with so much on account of his cooking, but actually it was Minnie's kindness that let him be so smart with her. That and the fact that the two had been a sexual, if not a romantic item ever since her husband's unfortunate heart attack a decade ago.

"Shall we?" said Minnie.

"But I still don't know what to do," Jilly protested.

"Of course you do." She patted the younger woman's chest. "It's in here. The really big answers always are."

"I was afraid you'd say that," she muttered.

"You know us old folks, never a straight answer," teased the woman who was in reality only forty-seven despite her wisdom.

"Jake must be old as the hills, then, cause he never gives me a straight answer about anything."

She shook her head, solemnly. "Oh, no, honey. Jake's not old. He's a cowboy. And that's a *whole* different story."

Jilly was beginning to believe her. The question was, could she survive her cowboy for much longer?

"Doug's taking me to dinner," Jilly decided. "I think...I think he may tell me something important. I have to hear him. I have to concentrate on that. If Jake wants to say or do something different, well, the ball's in his court."

"Sounds like a good plan to me."

"Yea," said Jilly. "It is."

Now if only she could convince herself of that.

## **Chapter Seven**

Jake woke up to thunder. He sat bolt upright, in a cold sweat. The first few seconds were hell as he relived some of the worst pain of his life. It went like that sometimes, well, a lot of times, which is why it was good he was by himself. The smell of Jilly on the sheets and pillowcases saved him. Sweet, sweet Jilly, crawling into bed, nuzzling him with that hair, that body. Dear Jilly, fighting with him, prodding him and reminding him he was alive.

On shaky feet he made it to the front door. The rain was coming down in sheets, pelting the dry earth. The tension for this storm had been building for days. After this it would get quiet again, things would start to grow and he would need to move on.

Jake Waylon wasn't the man everybody saw, or even the man he saw himself. With Jilly gone—she'd been off working for hours by now—he wasn't anything other than a ghost, a shadow under a shadow, not even a shaved, clean ghost, but a shady, layered one.

Once upon a time he would go to his grandfather's house. The old man would teach him the lariat and the shotgun. Six years old, getting kicked back by the teeth of that old weapon, picking himself up off the ground, getting tougher and tougher.

"Let him shoot," the old man grumbled when everyone—his mother included—argued about the virtues of a little boy wielding that kind of power.

No one argued with his grandfather. He was the meanest old cuss in the county. As a young man, he and his brother had gotten into an honest to goodness gunfight with his wife's brother and father. It was in the middle of the Texas winter, frost on the dry gulch. The other two were coming through a pass in the fence with some lumber.

That's what it was about—lumber. Words went back and forth. The father on the wagon pulled a shotgun. Jake's grandfather's brother got him first with his Colt,

whipped gunslinger style out of his belt. Meanwhile the son drew his own pistol, shot the grandfather's brother and jumped off the wagon. So Jake's grandfather shot him in the back with his Winchester. Last man standing. Had to spend the next twenty years in Louisiana till they could work out a deal with the law, and put together enough money to buy a witness to say he'd shot in self-defense.

No one turned cartwheels to see him come home either. He set right into beating anyone he could get his hands on and drinking nonstop. The only one he ever really seemed to love, for some reason, was Jake. It wasn't the kind of honor a man looked for, that was for sure.

At any rate, Jake's young eyes saw things. Family violence made the stuff in the movies look tame. So when the chance came to run away to the rodeo you could be damned sure he did. Mostly he kept ahead of the ghosts. So long as he stayed a moving target. Riding bulls was a good way to shake them off. So was spending time with Jilly.

Jake grabbed the whiskey bottle, took a swig. He hated himself like this. Hated how he was when he came to Jilly's door, needy and desperate. He hated how he was without her, and it was scary to think how he was a different man with her. As much of a headache as it gave him, figuring her out and trying to keep her happy, it was a whole hell of a lot better than the black hole he fell into otherwise.

The first time he'd ever seen her, he knew there was something different about her. She wasn't just pretty and sexy, she was sassy and smart and she had spunk. She was worth his time, like no one else. He wanted to tie her down, wanted to make her squeal and show her the wonders of her own body. After that first night, it had been so explosive between them he'd right nearly given consideration to changing his life for her sake.

But it was his own demons that made him move on. He couldn't do that to her. Couldn't saddle her with that kind of history, that kind of bad seed. Hell, what if she wanted to have children? They'd turn out mass murderers. She wasn't too happy to see

him go. Women were like that—a whole lot more up front about their disappointment. Well, he was, too. But that's how it had to be.

It wasn't three weeks later he'd had to go back. He debated, back and forth, round and round, sitting the whole day in his truck across from the diner. Should he go in or shouldn't he. He'd slammed the door on her, basically, so why should she let him open it? Then again, he was pretty sure she'd give him another chance. It wasn't marriage he wanted, mind you, just an ongoing affair. How much trouble could that be to arrange?

To this day he'd never forgive himself for not noticing the man in the black cowboy hat. Looking back, he recalled seeing him go in, then back out, hanging around in the parking lot, before finally walking off at half past one, shortly before the waitresses were set to leave.

Jilly was already at her car. The man had been waiting in the shadows. She'd never even seen him coming. It was her scream that woke him from his brooding. At that point, Jake had gone into automatic mode. It had been like when he was twelve and he saw his father hitting on his mother with a frying pan. He flew out the door of the truck, taking only two or three strides to cross the street. The son of a bitch had his hand on her arm.

He'd touched Jilly. Touched her arm.

Jake had locked his arm around the man's neck. He was taller but Jake had the fury of a thousand stallions on his side. And he was strong. He was strong as a whip with pure muscle from a life of working with his hands. The man didn't even get his hands up to his face before Jake had slammed his head down on the hood of Jilly's car.

Another heartbeat and Jake had pulled him back up by the back of his long scraggly hair. He was holding his nose, gushing blood, crying for mercy. Jake had felt none, just a cold hard desire to finish the job. To smash his skull in with his fist over and over till he was down. And dead.

"Jake, no!" It was Jilly who had saved her assailant's life, pulling at Jake from behind. He'd heard her voice and he'd listened. No one else, no one on the whole planet



could have stopped him at that moment. Still shaking with rage, he'd released the man's hair, letting him fall to his knees.

"You're going to jail," said Jake. "And if you ever get out you better pray you never see me again, cause I won't stop till I hear your sorry neck snap in my hands."

Minnie and Leo had come rushing out by then, horrified they hadn't seen the man either. Leo was as anxious as Jake to kill him, but Minnie had read him the riot act. A few minutes later the police came and he was taken away. Jilly had just trembled in his arms like a leaf for the next half hour. He'd taken her home and they'd lain in bed, so tight against each other, clutching and making love till dawn, coming and crying out and moaning with mutual passion and fear and need.

The agreement was ironed out shortly thereafter. Unofficial, unsigned. He'd be given room and board whenever he passed through in exchange for duties performed. She'd play nursemaid, surrogate wife, in whatever doses required and he'd fill in the gaps. Then there were the things he'd kept to himself. Little repairs he'd made, and the times he'd gone to visit her grandfather in the nursing home.

Jake checked the clock. The rain wasn't letting up. Jilly would be coming home soon. She never had an umbrella in the car. He found a small folding umbrella in the hall closet, pink with flowers. It made him smile, it was so Jilly. Putting on his white boxers, he waited by the door for her to come home. When finally he saw her beat up blue car, he walked out barefoot to bring her the umbrella. The rain pelted him to the bone, but he didn't care. Jilly would stay dry. And that's what mattered.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jilly saw him standing there at the top of the long dirt driveway waiting for her. She couldn't believe it. Jake had actually come outside in the middle of a torrential downpour to bring her an umbrella. The silly, sentimental fool—he didn't even have it

open. One minute he was so totally oblivious to her feelings and the next so full of compassion it made her heart ache.

Not to mention her loins. Licking her lips, she checked him, sopping wet and practically naked. The rain poured over his well-formed chest and down his ribbed abdomen. The wet cloth of his underwear clung tightly to his cock and balls, outlining them deliciously. Even his hair looked good like this, wild, rain-soaked, brushed straight back. She wanted to do things with him. She wanted to do things to him.

"Jake, are you crazy?" She rolled down her window. "You'll catch pneumonia out here."

"It's not cold out, Jilly." He made a face. "It's perfectly nice out here."

"You're not even dressed," she complained, trying to keep her mind focused on her date with Doug. "What if someone saw you?"

"Always such a worry wart, aren't you Jilly. When are you ever gonna live a little more?"

"When you start living a little less," she retorted.

Jake propped the umbrella against the side of the car and grinned, his hands reaching for the waistband of his underwear.

"No, don't you even think about it, Jake Waylon!"

Too late. He was pulling the material down over his cock, over his balls and on down his legs. She breathed a sigh of anticipation as she beheld him in all his naked glory. What would he do next? Jilly wanted to know.

Masturbation. Yes, that was always a good thing. Resting the magnificent length of his flaccid cock in his palm, he worked a little magic to wake it up. She watched, mesmerized. He was like some wild beast-man, some kind of western Tarzan. In just a few strokes he was hard as a rock. Hard enough for fucking.

"Play with yourself, Jilly." He didn't want her to get out of the car. He wanted her where she was, warm and safe and dry.

At this point, there was no denying him. Jilly was wet and ready for something, anything between her legs. Lifting her hips and pulling up the hem of her little waitress dress, she made short order of her panties. Down over one ankle, then the other they went. She was free now, free to explore.

Jake continued his show, standing right outside her window, working his calloused palm up and down that magnificent, rock-hard length of his. She was greedy today, wanting to feel that full, invasive presence. Pressing her thumb to her palm, gathering the tips of her fingers, she formed a plowing instrument, just right for shoving hard into her pelvic opening. She cried out at the contact, but her pussy accepted it, sucking the hand in to the knuckles.

Jake was at the window, watching, absorbing the sight. Wanting to tease, she rolled the window up, leaving it open an inch or so and put her seat back, splaying her legs. That gorgeous cock was just on the other side of the glass now, only inches away and yet completely untouchable. It was the same for him—his eyes riveted to a pussy he couldn't get at. She took advantage, feeling extra naughty as she writhed on the worn out, taped over seat of the old car that used to belong to her grandfather.

Oh, yes, this was hot. What a way to end a workday. Having a beautiful stud giving a private show. Pulling apart her pussy lips, pushing her clit for that extra special jolt, she asked herself, could this possibly get any better?

Well, yes, it could. If she could manage to get the upper hand. Sneaking her finger to the door button, she pushed it shut. With the window open only an inch or so, this meant he wouldn't be able to get at her unless she wanted him to.

"Say, Jake," she teased, pulling the dress right up over her head. "Wanna play another game?"

"What's that, Jilly?"

"It's called do what Jilly says and maybe she'll open the door and let you play with her."

"You're assuming I want in there that bad."

"Don't you, Jake?" She turned to her side, flashing her buttock cheek and pussy. "I kind of thought you did, but maybe not."

Her heart beat wickedly. This was a totally irresponsible thing to do given she had a date with Doug tonight, but how many chances did she get for revenge over the big man for all the times he had her down for the count? Overall, she liked him on top in the relationship, sure, but if she could bring him up short, just to spice things up a little, why not?

With a dramatic sigh, she prepared to lay it on thick.

"I suppose I could find someone else who might want this ass." She gave it a healthy smack. "If I drive around town and ask nice."

He arched a brow, looking none too pleased with that possibility. "So what is it exactly you'd like me to do," he asked cautiously, "assuming I'm interested?"

She suppressed a smirk. Like stealing candy from a baby. "Well," she wrinkled her brow. "I suppose I'd want you to show me what a good little cowboy you are. And how ready you are to please me."

"I certainly do want you happy, Jilly," he admitted.

"In that case you can start by kneeling for me."

"Right now?"

"That's right, cowboy. You can get down on your knees," she continued to stroke her pussy. "Right here in the mud. Naked."

Her pulse was racing. Would he really do it? Would this paragon of masculinity cave in to her sudden fantasy of female domination?

Jake's hand was still on his cock. He didn't hate this, that was for sure. "I guess I don't have a choice, do I?" he drawled. "You know how I get when I need to make love to you. I can't even think straight."

"Is that right?" she inquired innocently, as if she didn't know.

"That's right," he said and just like that, he went down, on one knee and then the other. In perfect subjugation.

"Hands behind your head," she ordered, striking while the iron was hot.

He did as he was told, advertising his biceps, not to mention his pectorals and tight waistline. Boy, did he ever get better looking day after day. More ruddy and weathered, leaner and fitter, his increasing age doing nothing to diminish his natural charms. And at the moment, all of it was hers for the taking. *What a rush it was*, she thought, *to be the one in control*.

"Think I should beat your ass now, *slave*?"

He gave no response. His face was stoic, the raindrops dripping off the end of his nose and down his cleft chin. Would she really have the nerve to lay into this magnificent specimen with a belt or strap, or even her hand?

"Or should I have you crawl, on your hands and knees, around the car?"

"You're in charge," he replied. "It's your call."

"No," she decided. "I know you're injured. I don't want you to hurt yourself."

"I can handle it," he shrugged.

He probably could, but it wasn't pain or suffering she had in mind, just a little harmless humiliation. "How about if you crawl over here instead, and beg to lick my pussy?"

He did so, hands behind his head, his cock and balls swinging as he moved, his powerful thighs conveying him across the ever deepening mud.

"Put your nose to the glass," she said.

He did, his breath fogging the rain splattered surface.

"Now lick it." She unhooked her bra and mashed a bare breast against her side of the glass. "How's it taste?"

Now there was a devious tease if ever she saw one. "Rub your nipples, make them nice and rosy hard for me."

He placed a fingertip on each, obediently hardening the little nubs. They were more than ready for kissing and nibbling. She rocked against her own fingertip in response. One thing she'd failed to take into account with this little idea of hers and that was how much she'd be teasing herself, too. Peeking out the window, she looked longingly at his cock, the tip of it pressed to the metal of the car door. It was tempting to just let him at her now, but she was determined to see the little scene through to its conclusion.

"I want you to beg to lick my pussy," she instructed, fully intending to give in to the prompted demands in due course.

"Please, Jilly, let me lick your pussy." His face was lost in pleasure, the masculine edges softening just a bit. But there was nothing effeminate about the way his body was poised, back arched, belly tight, neck back, like a panther, sinewy, tense and ready to spring.

"My gorgeous, perfect pussy, which you are unworthy of."

Okay, she was pushing her luck, but then, like she said, this was a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Jake recited the words, faithfully and with inflection. His voice soothed her and primed her at the same time. Was there nothing about him that didn't turn her on?

"And my toes," she leaned back in the seat, deciding to enjoy her splendid isolation just a little longer. "Beg to lick my toes," she closed her eyes. "Beg to grovel at my feet and clean them with your unworthy male tongue. Beg to worship me like the goddess I am. Beg to wear my collar and scoot about my house on your hands and knees, an obedient little pet, grateful for my least touch, thankful even if I'm mean, or if I ignore you like the bitch goddess I am..."

"Jilly..."

"Don't interrupt me, slave," she sighed, hunkering down in her seat. "Your mistress is relishing her omniscience."

"Your what?"

"That means I'm all-knowing," she informed him, defining two of the most recent words of the day from Minnie's special calendar, the one she had them all using to broaden their vocabulary. At the start of the day, she'd give out the definition and the first to use it in a sentence during the normal day's conversation got a quarter from the till. It sounded silly, but it was really a blast and it made the time fly.

"Oh," said Jake. "Well in that case, how come you didn't know your passenger door was unlocked?"

She opened her eyes at the sound of his voice so close, and saw him, grinning ear-to-ear, sitting next to her like it was the most normal thing in the world. "But...how did you...?"

"Cowboys are sneaky," he informed her. "Now what was it you were saying again? About me groveling?"

She backed against the driver's door, all too aware of his hands. They were sitting casually on his lap at the moment, but they could quickly spring into action. "I think you misheard me. I meant gardening...that was it. Wouldn't you like to try some gardening?"

"Not especially. I might give your ass a little working over, though."

She moved her hand to the door handle. Waiting till she'd slipped her shoes off her feet, she made her move. "Gotta catch me first," she cried, not without a certain measure of glee.

Jilly burst out of the car, buck-naked. The rain felt wonderful and electric on her aroused skin. The sheer adrenalin propelled her bare feet through the mud. Buckets of water landed on her head and face, dousing her head-to-toe. Laughing like a teenager, she leaped for the wooden porch stairs.

Home free.

Nope. Not so fast. At the last second, just as she was about to mount the first step, Jake's arm came out of nowhere, circling her at the waist. He lifted her clean off the ground, holding her in midair. "Let me go," she cried, trying very hard not to laugh.

"No," said Jake. "I don't think so."

He managed to scoop her up, cradling her in his powerful arms.

She kicked at him till he ordered her to settle down.

"What are you going to do with me?" she pouted, secretly thrilled to have been outdone by the man yet again.

"Whatever I damned well please." With that he turned from the house and began walking out into the center of the ever-expanding mud pool beside the driveway.

"We're not going in the house?" she asked, though the answer was rather obvious.

"No, Jilly, we are not. For this evening, we will be enjoying the great outdoors."

Oh, god, they were going to fuck in the rain. "But Jake honey, it's not dark yet and..."

She was going to mention how she'd been allowed to leave early today to have more time to get ready for her date with Doug, but that would hardly do. More to the point was the fact that despite all his teasing threats, he'd never once made her do this for him.

"The car will block anyone's view. Not that anyone will come by here. They never do." He set her on her feet. "Give me your lips, Jilly."

"Jake..."

"Jilly."

She gave him her lips and he promptly kissed away her free will. Again. "Feel my cock, baby," he crooned. "That's what you do to me."

"Oh, honey," she whispered. "You feel so, so good."

He ran his tongue along the side of her neck. The rain had slowed down to a plinking trickle. Drip, drip, drip, on her shoulders, down her back and off the slope of her ass. Drip, drip, drip, on his chest, and hers.

So good, her toes squishing in the mud, his hand on her hip. *I'm his*, she thought. *I'll always be his. One touch, one word and he'll have me...always, anytime.*



“I want you in the ass, Jilly. Right here in the mud.”

Her knees turned to rubber. She pushed her lips up to his—eager, hungry like a little bird.

“Do I have you?” he breathed, in between pecks and licks and nibbles, tongue to tongue and teeth to teeth.

“Yesss...” she hissed, her hands at the back of his neck, her eyes looking up to his. “Jake, yes...fucking...yes...”

“Get on all fours, then, baby. Get down for me. Show me that beautiful ass, all ready for my cock.”

Ass fucking was special, rare, never the same twice, but always it came with the result of bringing them tighter together. Jilly would be gentle, doe-eyed, serene and Jake would seem so much calmer, almost at peace. It was like he came close to exorcising his demons this way, putting them at bay for a little while, at least.

He wasn’t gentle with her ass. But that wasn’t the point. She never wanted for orgasms or soft, rose petal experiences. But this was part of it, too, for both of them. And now it was happening out here. No safety of the bedroom to contain things. What did it mean? Would he be even more of an animal?

He helped her to kneel. Her knees sank into the soft, wet silt. He held her hand till she was settled. She smiled up at him determinedly, and he let her go down onto her palms. Into the suppliant position. The small female, the vulnerable, wet little she-beast.

“Mmm...” she sighed as he rubbed his hand over her back, collecting the moisture to slip inside her anal canal. He never took her dry. Ever.

“Jake?”

“What is it, Jilly?”

She wanted to tell him something new, profound. But she couldn’t, not as complicated as things were. Taking it for what it was, she offered her pledge, for the moment, for the duration of the act. “I submit to you. My body is yours.”

He stroked her hair. "Cowgirl...I..." He trailed off. Strange, she'd never known him to not finish a sentence, not even in his sleep.

"Thank you," he whispered at last. "I treasure the gift. I treasure you."

What the fuck was he going to say? I can't? I won't? I...love you?

"You are so fucking incredible, cowgirl." He was behind her, his thigh pushed up against hers. She could feel his hardness, naturally poking her, the way it seemed born to do. She gasped, small quick breaths overtaking her as she imagined the pressure, the sensations to come. No other man had ever possessed her this way. Nor could she imagine giving herself like this to any other. Of all the sexual acts possible between a man and a woman, this was to Jilly, the most intimate. Jake had set a standard, raised the bar to a place none could follow. He understood, instinctively, how to do this for her and with her, how to make her feel just dirty and wicked enough, but not really degrading her, how to take her to the edge of kinky sensation without pushing over the edge into panic or pain.

"Open for me," he crooned. "Let me in."

"Oh, yes," she sighed, feeling that wave of calm that always preceded penetration.

"It'll be even better like this...exposed...the mud underneath you, the smells of the earth, the open air. The darkening sky. Just let yourself go, cowgirl."

"Oh, Jake, I want to. Please, tell me...tell me what this does for you."

"It drives me out of my mind," he said, knowing just what to say. "Having a beautiful woman, taking you down like this...on your hands and knees...making you take it." His hand snaked into her pussy, signaling the start.

"Oh, Jake, are you going to...?"

He answered by pushing himself into her puckered hole, just far enough to answer her question.

"Oh, baby, that's it," she encouraged.

His hands were on her hips. Slowly he moved in, inch by inch, seizing the yielded territory. "Jilly, I want you to know something."

She felt the fullness, aching and overpowering. Jake's essence in every crevice of her body, over her, through her and with her. "Yes?"

Anything, tell me anything...

"There isn't anyone else for this. What we're doing now? You're the only one."

It was too ironic, so very Jake. A new definition of faithfulness. He was passing himself off as monogamous because she was the only one he fucked in the ass.

What should a woman do with something like that? Laugh or cry?

"Just take me, Jake. Finish it...finish me."

Jake grunted, bearing down. His cock was like a bullet sliding into a chamber, sliding home, until it was in blasting position. He worked on her pussy at the same time, making sure the pressure she felt was matched by ecstasy. Even now, even in this moment of supreme claiming of her body, he was considerate, never oblivious to her needs.

"Nnn..." he grunted, finding his way home.

Oh, fuck, she was taking him so far inside, she felt so good, so right. "Do it to me...do me, Jake."

"Mine," said Jake, pushing just a little further to make her cry out.

And then he pulled out, positioning himself for another thrust. "My ass-fucked little cowgirl," he said.

Boom, in he slammed. Hard, teeth-jarring.

"Fuck, fuck, ye—" She had this coming, she wanted it. It was the one thing to set her straight.

"Oh, yea," he breathed. "Tell me, whose ass?"

"Yours, Jake," she wiggled, "your ass, to spank and fuck and have."

He went at her like a piston, his hand smacking her ass hard. "Move it, cowgirl. Make it good."

"Yes, Sir, oh, Sir, yes." Like a good little cowgirl she pushed her ass out against him, making it hot and explosive so her lover would come inside her, growling, pumping a million miles an hour.

"Jilly, oh, Jilly..." He was there and so was she. Her filled her anal canal with his semen, as powerfully as the rain from the sky and just as naturally. Thunder and lightning, a recap of the storm that had just cleared, the rushing waters opened from the heavens, clenching and unclenching in her pussy, her belly, her ass, and in his belly, too, pressed to hers, and his chest, and in the sound of his voice, breathing, in, out, in, out, up the waterfall and down, the crazy lover's spiral till at last they are both too exhausted to move, to think, to spasm.

"Jake...thank you..." Jilly collapsed to her side as he withdrew, pulling his magnificent, spent cock from her receptive, ravished hole.

The man lay down next to her, spooning her, holding her waist, nuzzling her shoulder, protecting her in a bed of beautiful mud.

Jilly concentrated on her breathing and his. His cock between her buttock cheeks...just resting affectionately. Soon she would be oozing out his issue. The gift of male seed pushed deep into her, body and soul.

Such an odd pairing they were, she mused, such a quaint little haven they'd made together, another temporary respite from the bigger questions of their lives.

Bigger questions. Oh, my goodness. She'd nearly forgotten. Her date with Doug. What a fine impression that would make to find her naked, covered in mud with another man. He'd be sure to pop the question on the spot seeing her like this.

Not.

"Jake, I have to get up."

"Stay here, and get me up again instead."

"I'm serious," she wriggled. "I have to get up. I have a...date."

He stiffened. "Oh?"

She took advantage of the opportunity to climb to her feet. "I do, yes, Jake."

"It's with him, isn't it?"

"I'm sorry." She tried to keep her voice steady. "I know you and I talked, last night, but there's business between Doug and I...I can't just end things like this, I mean..."

Oh, fuck, I'm making a shambles of everything, she lamented to herself. Why can't you be decisive, Jilly? It's your fucking life here and all you care about is which man you're going to hurt more.

Jake was on his feet, trying to look reasonably dignified under the circumstances. "Jilly, I owe you an apology." He took her hand. "I tried to get you to break up with Doug, taking advantage of you during sex. That was wrong. You have to make up your mind. I have the right to present my own case and that's it."

Jilly tried to keep a straight face but she couldn't help it, the man had mud all over him, his cheeks, his face, and his hair.

Jake's brow knitted, scrunching up the mud along the worry lines. "Woman, what on earth could you possibly find so funny about this? I happen to be pouring my heart out here."

"I know," she tried to control herself. "Oh, god, I know...it's just that you look like...you look like one of those lagoon monsters from the movies."

"Is that right? Well for your information, you don't exactly look like Cindy Crawford at the moment."

"Better than you," she taunted, taking off like a shot. "Mud monster."

He was on her tail, though he let her win, giving her a chance to get to the porch first. She was ready when he got there. With the hose.

"You better hope I don't meet this Doug," he warned as she doused him. "Because I will tell him what you are really like, and I promise that I will send him packing quicker than you can say mud man."

"That's why you're not going to meet him," she said, though a part of her wished he would. Not to intimidate him or anything, but just to set him straight.

Or would it be the other way around?

Either way, she'd just sit there on the couch, dainty as could be, while the two men sorted things out. Deciding who she belonged with.

I'm pathetic, she decided. I've faced all these things in my life, I'm working to be a nurse so I can care for people like my grandparents, I overcame a blow in my early life that would have crippled a lot of people, so why I am such a wimp when it comes to my own love life?

"Turn around," she said, making sure to get his ass. Slick, wet, muscular, and perfect.

What if she could put the two men together? Jake's body and Doug's dependability. Jake's sense of humor and Doug's 401 K plan. Jake's compassion and Doug's...new car? Fuck. She needed to flip a freaking coin.

Or become a nun.

St. Jilly, Patron Saint of Indecisiveness.

Didn't that just have a lovely ring to it?

Ring. Bad choice of words.

"All right, cowpoke, do me." She handed him the hose.

"I just did, remember?"

She suppressed her smile. "Stop being so fucking funny and cute," she snapped. "I don't want to like you tonight."

"Sorry, I'll work on being a dick."

"If you wouldn't mind," she held her arms out for him to spray her. "I would be ever so appreciative."

Finishing her makeshift shower, she went back inside to take a real one. So she could get ready for her date. And become engaged. To a dependable man with a 401 K and a new car.

Or not.

She could always toss a coin. Heads or tails. All the mud baths she could stand, or a secure future with a white picket fence and a trip to Europe every year.

*I am so fucked, thought Jilly. I don't even know where to begin.*

## **Chapter Eight**

Okay, cowboy, keep your cool. So she's dating this Little Boy Bluefield again tonight. It doesn't mean a thing, Jake told himself. She'd never be snowed by a dude like that. Nine to five, fancy suits, that wasn't her style, not his Jilly. Jilly liked rolling in the dust and the mud. She liked rodeos and handcuffs and getting swatted on the ass.

Didn't she?

He wasn't missing anything, was he?

She was perfect for him. They were perfect together. Look how much better he'd felt since they'd been together. It was like night and day. That kind of sex, that kind of mind-blowing passion, totally new and different had been just what he needed.

Jake took a swig from the whiskey bottle. He was wearing his jeans, lying on her bed, waiting for her to come out of the bathroom. He had just a little while before Prince Charming got here. Just enough time to make sure his interests would be protected tonight.

Nothing heavy-handed. He'd play fair. She had a right to choose. Hell, she could marry this guy. Maybe she should, if he was that great. All he wanted was action on the side. They could do that even after she was married.

He didn't want to marry her. No way.

Just keep it light, cowboy. Roll the wit off that tongue. Dart in and out of the heavy stuff. Like Roscoe. Like a good rodeo clown, drawing off the deadly danger, keeping the riders from getting gored. Let her know it's no big deal. You'll take a smaller role in her life. Play a little hard to get, even, and then she'll chase you a little bit. That was another good Roscoe trick.

Outsmart 'em. Let them use their emotions. You be the brains.



Yes, sir, it was all clear in Jake's head.

Until Jilly came out of the bathroom, that is.

Jumping Spitfire, she was breathtaking. Where was she going – to meet the Queen of Sheba? Hell, the Queen herself didn't look half this good. Where had she gotten that black dress? It was like there were little stars sewn into it. It was so short, too, up above her knee. Why did he have to see her legs? And her shoulders. What kind of straps were that thin? You could probably look right down that vee on her chest and see everything.

She had her hair all up, too, like it was some fancy ball. She'd never done that to go out with him anywhere.

"How do I look?" she wanted to know.

Jake clenched his left fist and wrapped the right around the neck of the bottle tight enough to pretty near snap it off.

*You look like you're not setting foot out of this house, he growled to himself, that's how.*

"Must be a pretty fancy dinner," he said thinly.

"Just steak. Could you help me with these pearls?"

"Pearls, too? Well, this is an occasion."

She eyed him. "Look, Jake, you're not making this any easier."

"I'm not? Oh, well, hell, let's change that in a hurry, shall we? Why, of course, I'll help with your pearls, and after that, let's do our nails, and when you come back from boffing this other guy's brains out we can put our hair in curlers."

"Women don't use curlers anymore, Jake, and what happened to 'Mr. Easygoing I'm Not Going To Stand In The Way'?"

"There's not standing in the way, Jilly, and then there's rolling over like a road-baked armadillo."

She cringed slightly. "Your expressions are just always so...earthy, aren't they?"

"Turn around," he frowned. "Let's put your pearls on."

Jilly exposed her neck. Her sudden vulnerability, the quiet, soft trust of the woman even in the midst of debate touched him deeper than he could have realized. That combined with the smell of her perfume, fresh honeysuckle and morning dew, made him want to love her all over again. The thought of letting her go to anyone else, especially someone named Doug Blue Bonnet was almost more than he could bear.

*I have to be there with her, he thought. If not in person, then in spirit. I have to get inside her now, in a way that she won't be able to get me out of her mind. In fact, the harder she tries, I'll only dig in deeper, because I know her that well, all her weak spots and her sweet spots and her G-spots.*

"You're gorgeous tonight," he whispered, taking his time with the clasp. "You knew that already, though, didn't you?"

She tensed a little, sensing a trap. She didn't want to seem vain or insecure, on the other hand she didn't want to admit she cared all that much about his opinion either. "Another set of eyes never hurts."

"And another set of hands." He grazed her neck, making her shiver.

"Jake, don't start."

He bent to nibble at her ear. She leaned back, giving every indication she had no will to escape him.

"Why not, Jilly? Are you afraid of what will happen if I do?"

"No, I just don't want to keep him waiting. He's out there now. I saw his headlights through the bathroom window."

"You weren't hurrying though, were you?" He reached around and cupped her breasts. "Truth."

"No... I wasn't."

"He lets you get away with that, doesn't he?"

She nodded her head yes. He felt her nipples tighten under the black dress, with the push up bra.

"I wouldn't let you do that, would I?"

"No, Jake." Her breathing was fast. He could smell her heat. That's how little it took for him to arouse this woman.

"What would I do to you if you kept me waiting?"

"You... You wouldn't put up with it." She was pushing her ass against him, horny, like an alley cat. "You'd punish me."

"How?"

"A spanking..."

"Should I give you one now?" He cupped her ass. "In Dougy's place?"

"Oh, god," she cried, tormented. "I deserve it."

"Yes," he agreed. "You do. Go to the bed, Jilly, lift your dress, take down your panties and bend over, palms on the bedspread."

"Yes, Jake."

He watched her move unsteadily on her high heels, wiggling slightly as she got into position. Everything about her was so precious, the way she obeyed him, the way it made her so hot even when a part of her was mad, and another part of her perplexed.

He took his time, letting her stay in place several minutes before going to her. She had the black silk panties down to her knees. Her sweet, swollen sex lips stuck out deliciously, advertising her hot availability. He was dying to fuck her again but part of his strategy was to leave her thinking about what he'd do to her when she got home.

"Maybe I should have Dougy come in," Jake speculated. "Let him see how a filly like you needs to be handled." He ran his hand over her ass, light as a feather. "You do need to be handled, don't you?"

She came to attention, arched beautifully, femininely – open, ready and primed for a spanking, a fuck, or anything else he might wish to do. "Yes, sir," said Jilly, her voice, her body down deep in that place they went to sometimes, the one they'd plumbed most profoundly last night.

"You'll be riding in Dougy's car with a sore ass, Jilly. That's the price you pay for keeping him waiting."

"Yes, Sir."

Jake laid into her hard, a punishing blow, not a love tap. "I'll be waiting for you when you get home."

"Yes, Jake."

He admired the red spot, then added a second. Jilly winced. He was going to take her through the wall this time, that barrier where punishment started to feel good. He'd seen it in other women, submissive women like Jilly, who needed strong men and discipline. If he were with her more, he would show her more of what was inside her. More of what she was capable of expressing with the right man.

"I'll expect you to come to me on your knees. You'll take out my cock, and you'll suck it. Nice and deep and slow. How's that for an image while you're eating dinner?"

"Yes, Sir," she croaked.

He reared back, applying his hand, once, twice, three times more, loud cracks that left her whimpering.

"Please, Sir, may I stay with you? I'll accept your punishment all night."

The emotions raged like a sudden tornado. It was a terrifying wakeup call. What was he doing here? This wasn't playing it cool. This was messing with the woman's head. This was waging all out war on her feelings for Doug. This was a cattle rustling, messing with a filly with another's brand. What right did he have?

But this wasn't fake, and it wasn't ill will and he didn't want to destroy or hurt anyone. He was hard and he was hurting and damn it, he did want to keep her in tonight.

"No, Jilly. You have a date. This isn't fair to Doug."

"I'm sorry," she said pitifully. "I am so sorry."

He was holding it together, just barely. Instinct told him the way forward. That, and his deep, intimate knowledge of this woman.

“Take your punishment, Jilly. Surrender to it.”

“Yes... Yes, Sir.”

Five more followed.

Clean contacts, the skin of his palm impacting deeply and sweetly on Jilly’s smooth, heart-shaped ass. The ass to end all asses. The one that kept him up nights on the road. Not to mention the rest of the woman.

At five she was spasming, trying desperately to hold herself together, for Doug’s sake. Jake didn’t stop even as her body began to shake and shudder. She was orgasming, from the punishment, from his domination. He left his hand on her ass for a while afterwards, centering her, focusing her. Incredible. He’d only ever seen this one other time from a female—a very experienced masochist. Jilly was brand new to this, and neither one of them were even in a proper mindset to achieve the best results.

Damn, she was still red-hot to the touch.

“Listen closely, Jilly, I am giving you your instructions.” He was firm with her, deliberately so. “You will pull up your panties and get this little butt of yours in gear. I’m giving you two, exactly two minutes, to be out there in his car, from the time I take away my hand. Got it?”

“Yes, Sir,” she sighed happily. “Thank you, Sir.”

Jake released her. “I’ll be waiting,” he reiterated. “Save your appetite. For my cock.”

“I’ll come to you,” she vowed. “On my knees.”

She was looking at him with so much passion and devotion, like she’d stand there a hundred years if need be.

“Two minutes,” he reminded, setting her back into motion.

Jilly scrambled for her purse, adding one or two things more, whatever it was women found so vital for their evenings out. She was about to run out of the room when she skidded to a halt on her high heels.

"See you later, Jake," she came back to give him a peck on the cheek.

He watched her departing ass, lusting for it and missing it like hell already. Throwing himself back on the bed, he reached for the whiskey bottle. *What I've just done, he thought, is either the best thing in my life. Or the worst.*

Being that he was a cowboy, a group notorious for handling everything well on four legs and nothing on two, he was pretty damned sure it was the latter.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Hey, Jilly, what's the hurry?" Doug laughed as his date dive-bombed into the car, plopping her tender posterior on his immaculate imitation leather seat.

"Oh, I just was...hungry," she attempted to cover up for the fact that she was being secretly timed by an arrogant and sadistic cowboy lurking in her bedroom.

*Ow! Fucking ow!*

Her ass hurt this time. Jake had never before hit her that hard. She should have screamed, fought him or something. Anything other than coming for him, ass in the air, like a degraded little wench. She'd no idea her body could do that. Actually, she didn't know anyone's body could do that. What kind of pervert did that make her?

"Time to hit the road," Doug beamed, spinning the steering wheel around to back out of the long, muddy drive. His tires spun out a couple of times and she was afraid they'd get stuck.

Wouldn't Jake just find that hilarious back there, with his smug attitude and his smug smile? How could she have gotten so under the man's spell like that...again?

"I'm glad you're hungry," Doug announced as they reached the main road.

It was an innocent remark but it made her cringe internally as she thought of Jake's remark.

*Save your appetite. For my cock.*

And how had she replied? *I'll come to you...on my knees.* Like hell she would. She had half a mind to stay out all night with Doug. Except Doug wouldn't do that kind of thing. He was too frigging gentlemanly.

*I really do need my head examined, she thought. Who else but me would be upset at dating such a nice man?*

Doug continued in his gentility. Keeping his hands to himself in the car on the way to the restaurant, explaining the differences between whole and term life insurance. With Jake she was forever being pawed. A ride anywhere was an excuse to play with her poor captive body, especially below the waist where no one could see what was going on. Rare was the excursion that she wasn't required to vacate her panties and open up shop for his curious fingers. Any delays on her part and he'd be especially devious, putting her underwear over the rearview mirror.

Doug would never do such a thing. Their trips were quiet, like being on a sedative. She could picture being like that with him for the next fifty years. The same—day in, day out. Only their own aging process would mark the passing of the years, that and the inevitable growth of their children.

What a fine grandfather Doug would be. Thoughtful, always there with a kind word and candies and silver dollars to give out. Scratch that. He'd hand out savings bonds, for birthdays and holidays, just like clockwork.

Compare that to Jake. He'd take them riding too young. He'd show them a foal being born or a coyote's tracks in the hills. He'd make them laugh and they'd adore him, though their parents would be completely exasperated.

Jake wouldn't have any grandkids, though, or kids either. He was too immature, too irresponsible and self-absorbed. You name it.

"Jilly, I think the waiter is ready to take your order."

Jilly blinked. She was in the restaurant. She barely remembered getting there. What a nice table, too, in the corner, with a red tablecloth and a white candle and white ceramic dishes. Doug must have chosen everything special. This wasn't the main room of the steakhouse, it was the reservations area, where the upper crust folks went.

"My order, of course..." Jake liked to order for her. She always got mad about it, most especially because he really did know what she was in the mood for, even when she didn't know herself. Sometimes she would order something else just to show her independence, but now she realized she liked having that guidance over her life.

Just so long as she could keep fighting with Jake non-stop while he exercised it. Strange how the mind works.

"I think I'll have the prime rib," she decided. "With mashed potatoes and string beans."

She had to pick a salad, too. In order to avoid yet another choice, this time involving dressing, she opted for the Caesar.

"Jilly, I don't mind telling you," said Doug when the wine arrived, "how absolutely wonderful you look tonight."

"Thank you, Doug."

"I swear I must be the luckiest man in the world right now." His cheeks were glowing, his eyes sparkled.

*My god, she thought, he's really in love with me, head over heels. Is that how I look to him? I certainly don't feel that way.*

"Stop, Doug, you're making me blush."

She'd wanted to tell him back how lucky she felt. Certainly she was grateful for all he'd done and she felt affection for him. But love, that was something else again. What she felt for Jake, by contrast, was always exploding, always fresh, though it hurt too much to bear for very long.

"And that only makes you prettier." He raised his glass. "To the future."



"The future," she mumbled, seeing none at all for herself.

Other than returning home and crawling to the cowboy. On her knees, ready to show her appetite for his cock. He'd make her take him deep, he'd moan, softly, completely in control. Putting her in total submission.

And she'd feel at home, at peace, strangely free.

"Are you sure you're all right, Jilly?" he wanted to know, picking up on her mood. "You seem distant today."

"Oh, Doug, I'm sorry," she took his hand. She hated that he was caught in the middle of this. He deserved better, really he did. "It isn't you, I promise."

His brow was wrinkled. He'd changed suits, into a very sporty Italian one he'd bought at an import store at the mall. He'd gotten it specifically for his first date with her. They'd first met in the diner. He lived in the next town over and was in for lunch, having just had a meeting with some prospective clients. He'd lavished lots of attention on her and his smile was infectious. Jake was, well, gone as usual. There was no reason not to accept his invitation to dinner. Things had happened quickly from there. She hadn't said no to anything so far, though she had a funny feeling she was going to be dealing with a rather big proposition tonight, one she was by no means ready for.

Doug waited for the soup and salad. He refilled her glass strategically and then cleared his throat. *He's even going to propose perfectly, she thought. Jake would probably come up with some completely haphazard way, like putting a ring for her in a bucket of popcorn at the rodeo. Assuming he'd ever propose at all, which was about as likely as Leo taking up interior decorating.*

"Jilly, I know it hasn't been all that long we've been together, but in some ways I feel I've always known you. You are such a pleasure to get to know and I think we have a lot in common, I really do."

"Sure we do, Doug."

He was probably prepared to list them, too. He probably had a prospectus with some charts and graphs about how great they would be together and how their relationship would amortize so much.

"I wish I had the words to say it all, you are such a great gal. I know my mom thinks the world of you. Heck, my whole family does."

Wow. There was a selling point if ever she'd heard one.

He took a deep breath. "This is harder than I thought," he laughed nervously. "I should probably get down on my knees, huh?"

"Really, Doug, that's okay."

"Okay, Jilly, I'll just go for it." He fumbled in his pocket. Out came the black velvet box.

He was doing it. He was really proposing.

"Jillian Mae Cartwright, will you do me the honor..." He flipped open the box to reveal a sparkling white gold ring with a cluster of diamonds. "...of being my wedded wife, until death do us part?"

"Oh, Doug," she choked. "It's so beautiful."

He took her slender finger. "It should fit. I took the liberty of sneaking one of your rings at the picnic. I'll bet you never noticed."

A tremble passed up her arm. The ring slid on like it was made for her. It couldn't have been any lovelier. But something was wrong. She couldn't go through with it.

"Doug..."

"It's okay," he put his other hand over hers. "I don't even want you to give me your answer now. It's so much pressure on a woman, I know. It's not like a hundred years ago, where everything was all arranged. Just tell me you'll sleep on it."

"I...I will, Doug."

What a prince the man was. He was even leaving her a graceful out should she need it. *He must really, really love me, she thought. He seems to anticipate everything I need and then he goes out of his way to give it to me.*

*Except Jake. That I manage to get for myself,* she thought sardonically.

He turned the conversation very pleasantly to his cousin's trip to Greece, just as the main course arrived.

"I received another postcard from him just today," said Doug rather pleasantly. "From Corfu."

"That's a very pretty island, from what I've heard," she replied, feeling very much like half of an old married couple.

Except that there was quite another part of her, consumed with thoughts of Jake and what he might have planned. Knowing him, he would not merely want his cock sucked. He'd have other ideas of things to do to her. Her mind boggled at the man's imagination, all the ways he found to torment her, to play with her body. Was she in for a night of bondage? Would she have to pleasure him while hogtied like a roped calf? Or would he want to punish her more? He might want an account of the evening so he could evaluate if she'd shown any disrespect to Doug.

She felt an odd kind of electricity in the air, almost like Jake was there, watching, evaluating. Doug was soft, easygoing, Jake had rules, and if she didn't follow them, there were consequences. The thing was, he was right, they always saw eye-to-eye. If only the man could just...well, be there more often to keep her on track.

Not that she wouldn't give him a run for his money, no, sir, she would. Every single day.

"Corfu would be a lovely spot for a honeymoon, according to my cousin, but I told him to stop badgering. You know how family gets."

She laughed, feeling a little uneasy. Her sore ass didn't help. Every little motion, every breath made her think of *him*, putting his hands on her body. *Jake acts like he owns*

*me, she thought, from the moment he rescued me, and even before that, from his very first touch, his first look into my eyes. "Sure, families are such a mixed blessing."*

Once again, she was reminded of how this marriage could be a done deal. One little word from her, yes, and everything would be set in motion. The wedding, of course, would be ideal, unforgettable, as would the honeymoon, wherever they went. She'd be a fool to turn the offer down.

So why did she have this awful feeling in her gut that she would?

"Personally, I would want my bride to choose the locale. Something she'd be comfortable in. Something breathtaking, and, well, a little feminine. I don't mind that, being in touch with my feminine side."

*Contrast that to Jake's ideal honeymoon, she mused. He'd take her on some rodeo tour probably. As for comfortable touches, all he'd care about would be the bed – which he would be trying out with her non-stop. If she were really lucky, he might give her a say so in the position. Hog-tied, spread-eagled, there were so many possibilities.*

"More men should be like you," she said diplomatically.

They discussed Corfu a while longer and then they drifted off into a discussion about annuity funds. As far as personal topics, the rest of the dinner went without a hitch. He got her all the way back to her driveway without the subject of the ring coming up again. Her body was all flushed by now as she thought of Jake waiting for her inside. By this point she could hardly think straight. She tried to imagine what he was doing right that moment. Was he in bed, was he sitting in a chair? Or was he waiting for her right there inside the door?

Her mouth went dry as she thought of his cock. No matter where he was, it would likely be hard and pulsing in anticipation. Jake had ordered her to service him and he was prepared to make her obey. That lesson had already been driven home once tonight.

Meanwhile, Doug, bless his heart, was still hesitant to kiss her open-mouthed. Closed mouth was all she had gotten so far, according to his moral timetable. Accepting

his ring would get her further. Especially if she applied her feminine wiles. Hell, she could seduce the man entirely if she wanted, getting him to screw her brains out in a heartbeat. It wasn't that she was any kind of sex siren, it's just that all men were inherently easy.

Doug would be a mind-blowing lover, she was sure of it. He'd back up all his actions so far with generous, female-oriented sex. She was curious, of course, as well she should be, but she had no intention of staying with him.

She was going inside to Jake. The choice wasn't logical, to be a virtual sex slave in her own house rather than stay out here and discover the ways of true, free love with this man. In many ways, it was self-destructive to her heart and soul. So why was she rejecting a chance with Doug tonight?

*It's because I don't love him. I never have and I never will.*

"I had a wonderful evening, Jilly."

"I did, too." She looked down at her fingers, one of which bore an expensive ring that should not be hers. "Doug, there's something I need to tell you."

He put his finger to her lips, sparing her any awkwardness. "Hush, sweetheart. I know you need time, and I really, really want you to have it. If your answer is no, I still have had such a wonderful time with you, and at least you will know that you looked deeply into your heart and saw what you wanted. We can't lose. We'll both grow, no matter what you decide."

She smiled through her tears. "Doug, you're an amazing man."

They embraced. She drew strength from it. Chaste strength, almost sisterly. *I am not going to marry this man, she thought, but tonight is not the time to tell him. He wants to finish this night off, just as it is.*

"Not half as amazing as you. Now scoot. Off to bed with you. It's late and tomorrow's a weekday."

"Okay, Doug...and thank you. For everything."

He delivered a kiss to her cheek and opened her door. "I didn't do anything any other man wouldn't have done in my place."

*Except for Jake Waylon*, she thought, her insides a mix of hot desire and growing unhappiness with their current arrangement.

*Tonight*, she thought, *things are going to change*.

## Chapter Nine

Jilly turned the key in the lock, her body electric with expectation. It was her lock, her door and her house, but she felt like a stranger, better still a barefoot peasant about to enter the presence of a mighty lord, one who would strip her virginity as part of his feudal rights.

The door creaked, opening to a silent domain. He wasn't waiting at the threshold for her, that was for sure. She poked her head in. The lights were off. Could it be he'd left? It wouldn't be the first time.

The snoring in the living room answered her question. She found him in the recliner, the empty whiskey bottle in his hand. So, he had passed out. No confrontations tonight, no passion either. She was relieved, but also disappointed, just a little. By morning she might weaken her resolve and be back to square one.

And there was her other problem. The fire between her legs. She looked at him sprawled, one leg over the arm of the chair. His cock was clearly outlined in his jeans. He was bare-chested and barefoot. His lips were moving very slightly in his sleep. One arm was draped behind him, the other on his thigh. His cock was half erect already. One touch, one little whisper of her lips and he'd be at full mast.

*I should go to my knees,* said the submissive voice in her head. *I should give him pleasure, like he told me to. Awake or not, he gave me orders.* A sensual shudder passed through her body as she rubbed her hands over her ass. That was the living evidence that Jake knew how to enforce his demands. He would have what he wanted from her sexually and otherwise—and he wanted a lot. She liked that. She liked it a lot. But the thing was, it was part-time and her body needed this full-time or not at all.

It was cruel to come and go, to fire her blood and then throw cold water over her flames. To tell her one moment that he wanted her more than anything in the world, and then to pick up and leave, his belly full, his cock serviced.

Jilly fought the urge to be obedient, the urge to get sucked back in. *He drank himself to sleep*, she thought, *and he'll stay that way. Serves him right.* She went to get a blanket, because she didn't want him catching a chill. One of these days he'd catch pneumonia and then where would he be? No insurance and no savings.

That or a broken leg or back, something to leave him stranded in some tumbleweed town, all alone. She took one of her grandmother's quilts and gently laid it over him. Tears flooded her eyes as she tucked the edges in and gave him a little peck on the cheek. *I'm putting him to bed again*, she thought. *He's more tired this time than last. His age is really showing.*

*So is mine, come to think of it. Off to bed with me. No reprieve till morning.* She tossed her purse on the bed and started to take her shoes off. She was working on the second one when she heard his voice.

"Jilly, is that you?"

She froze. *Fuck.*

"Yea, Jake."

"What you doing back there?"

"I'm...um...slipping into something a little more comfortable."

"Is that right? I thought you were supposed to do something else, right when you got home? Or did I just manage to sleep through a blow job?"

"I just wanted to change first..."

"Did I say to change first?"

"No, Jake." She looked down at her finger. *Fuck, the ring.* She was still wearing Doug's engagement ring.

"I think you better get over here, Jilly. Now."



It was his no-nonsense voice. The one that usually got her punished or tied down in a hurry. "Coming, Jake."

Fighting back the panic, she grabbed at the ring, yanking it painfully over her knuckle. Part of her wanted to just tell him she was engaged and be done with it, but she couldn't do that to him, not now.

Instead she tossed it in her purse and slid it under the bed. It was a mess she'd deal with later. For now, she had a feeling she'd be real busy on top of the bed.

A moment later she was presenting herself for inspection.

"What am I supposed to do with you, Jilly?" Jake inquired, still leaning back in the chair.

Jilly's panties provided the answer, in the form of a fresh flood of welcoming liquid. This was the supreme moment between them, that point when he would wield his power as the man. Sexually speaking, at least.

"I only just got home, Jake," she pointed out.

He noted the quilt, which was now tossed onto the sofa. "You covered me up for the night. You weren't planning on coming back out, were you?"

She lowered her eyes. Her nipples were tiny little rocks. She was going to catch it good tonight. "No, Jake, I wasn't."

"So you lied to me, when you said you were just changing first."

"Yes, Jake."

"Take your clothes off, Jilly."

She unzipped the back of her dress and pulled it over her head, laying it on the couch with the quilt. There was no questioning Jake now. Whatever else was to follow between them, it would occur with her disrobed. The air brushed her bared nipples, cool and tingling as she unhooked her bra and lowered the cups off the globes of her breasts. She let the garment flutter to the floor.

"Panties, too, Jake?" she asked softly.

"I said take your clothes off, Jilly. That means all of them."

Reprimanded, she skinned down her underwear, and stepped from them. He must mean business if he wanted her stripped so quickly.

"Stand at attention," he ordered. "Thrust out your breasts. Pinch your nipples."

Jilly hated it when he made her do this to herself. The urge was always there to go easy, but she hated disappointing him. As a result she invariably did it harder than he did.

"We're going to try new things tonight, Jilly. You're going to suffer for me in brand new ways. Cause we learned tonight you're into it. You orgasmed from a spanking. Know what that makes you?"

*A sitting duck*, she thought glumly.

"No, Jake, I don't."

"They call a woman like that a pain slut, though I don't personally care for the word slut too much. Demeans a woman, in my opinion. But between you and me, we like that kind of thing, don't we? Finding ways to degrade you?"

She rolled her nipples, making herself wince.

"Tell me how much you like the pain, Jilly."

"I-I do like it...the pain."

His eyes had that deep, sharp, predatory look. To gaze into them now was to be hypnotized, utterly lost and caught up in his world. "So how far did Doug get tonight?" he wanted to know.

For a moment she thought he knew about the ring somehow. "H-how far?" she repeated.

"That's right. Did he touch your breasts? Did he get under your clothes?"

"No." She breathed an internal sigh of relief. "All he did was kiss me."

"Did you tease him?"

"Why would you ask me that, Jake?"

The answer was clear, of course. He wanted to play with her head. Set up a case where she was damned if she did and damned if she didn't. He hated her going out with the man, but now she was going to get raked over the coals for leaving him unsatisfied.

"Why do you think?" He ordered her to smack her own ass. Hard.

She cracked her hand against her tender flesh, repeating the reward for answering a question with a question. "You asked me 'cause you wanted an answer," she supplied, returning her hand to her nipple. "And the answer is, I tried not to be a tease."

"Did you make him hard tonight?"

"I-I think when we hugged goodbye, yes."

"And what did you do about it?"

"I...nothing, Jake. I was coming in to see you."

"Coming in to go to bed, you mean."

"Yes, Jake..."

"Spank your ass again."

She did so, releasing a slight moan.

"Does that turn you on?"

As if he didn't know the answer.

"Yes, Jake, it does."

"Too bad you can't have relief then, isn't it?"

"Yes, Jake."

"Put your hand in your pussy, tell me how wet you are."

"I'm wet, Jake." She writhed at her own touch. Just a few minutes of masturbation and she'd be right there, at orgasm.

"Play with yourself with one hand, use the other to smack yourself."

Jilly whimpered. "Jake, please..."

"You'll do as you're told, Jilly or I will call Doug over here to get the attention from you he deserves."

She pressed her fingers to her sopping sex lips. "Jake, I don't want to please another man, and I know you don't want me to either...I just want to please you."

"I don't hear any spanking noises," he pointed out.

Jilly thwacked her ass. "Jake," she grimaced. "Jake..."

"Should have taken care of business when you got home, shouldn't you?"

"Y-yes..."

"What should you have done? When you got home?" He had his hands behind his head, letting her know he had all the time in the world, and that he was in control of the situation. In control of her. And yet she could stop, walk away at any point.

What kept her attached? Enthralled?

"I should have started sucking your cock, Jake. Even if you were asleep."

"That's correct, cowgirl, and you're paying the price. You're about ready to come, aren't you?"

She moaned, thrashing her head in a simulation of yes. Her ass was exploding with the impact of her palm, red over red, nasty over nasty, each blow forcing her pussy against her hand, the fingers sucked in ever deeper. Like a pain slut. That dirty, dirty word that even Jake didn't like.

"Well you can't, cowgirl. Not till I say so. *If* I say so." He unzipped his fly, casually removing his half-erect penis. The man had willpower, that was for sure. "You about ready to get on your knees?"

Jilly's mind raced. She wanted to climax, she wanted to be fucked, she wanted to be punished, embarrassed and humiliated. She wanted to slap him in the face...and a million more things — shadows and shapes too hard to read.

"Oh, god, Jake," she moaned. "Let me kneel, let me suck you..."

"We'll see, cowgirl. You'll have to earn the right to satisfy old Jake, Jr. Remember we're making up for leaving Dougy high and dry."

"Oh, yes...yes, Sir. Let me earn my place," she begged.

"Take your hand out of your pussy, cowgirl. Stop spanking yourself and crawl to me."

Jilly fell to her hands and knees. She went to his feet and knelt, her hands on the armrests. He didn't bother to sit up or take off his pants. She would suck him as he was. His cock stuck straight up, thicker than she'd ever seen it before, and taller, if that was possible.

"You like what you see, cowgirl?"

"Yes, Sir...I'm ready for it, Sir."

"Put it between your breasts. Wrap your tits around it."

Jilly pushed her naked body into place, taking his throbbing cock against her bosom. She had the breasts to do this, and she was more than pleased to service him this way. Jake was a breast man, though there was hardly any part of her he didn't care for or lavish attention on in due course.

"Rub it, Jilly. Fuck your tits."

"Yes, Jake."

She moved herself up and down, giving him the friction to put a smile on his face. It was wicked and kinky, rich and sultry, pleasuring him this way. She felt so close to him, to the rhythms of his body and masculine heat. He didn't tell her to stop and as she felt him swell and moan, she thought perhaps he'd changed his mind and was intending to come this way. In that case, she would take his come on her chest and on her chin. A warm fountain to soak her superheated skin.

"That's enough," he ordered.

Jilly sat back on her heels instantly, every fiber of her being attuned to his next desire. She tensed, on the brink of erotic collapse, as he leaned forward and took her hair in his hand. "Lick me, Jilly."

She closed her eyes and put out her tongue as he pulled her head into place, beginning with the tip. Her nostrils were filled with the commanding scent of his manhood. Her pussy thrummed with heat as she surrendered, offering docile, female motions to appease his wolfish arousal. More than just a blowjob, this was an act of subjugation.

She wasn't just pleasuring his cock—she was worshipping it. Despite her slavish cooperation, he did not relinquish his hold on her hair. "All of it, Jilly, lick all of it."

Jilly swirled her tongue at the tiny opening, then broadened her swirls, just like ice cream, taking full delight in the flavor of her man. From there he helped her move to the underside, bathing the thick pulsing vein in a thin covering of her saliva.

"I have a few surprises for you," he informed her as she stretched her body to reach the top of his shaft. "They're on the kitchen table."

Jilly sighed as he moved to rub himself over her face. He was so big, so imposing.

"I think you'll like them." He took her face decisively, guiding it over the end of his cock.

She enveloped him quickly. Hungrily.

"There are clamps there," he told her. "And a pretty little collar. And some candles. Do you remember what I told you a man can use candles for with a woman?"

Oh, she remembered all right. He'd given a tiny demonstration once that she'd never forgotten. It had been the subject of masturbatory sessions by the score, though she would never admit it. Luckily the question was rhetorical since she could manage nothing at the moment but a receptive gurgle.

"After tonight you will be mine in yet another new way," he told her. "I guarantee this is something old Dougy Blue Velvet wouldn't be able to dream up in his worst nightmare."

Jilly relaxed her jaw, taking the man as deep as she could. She needed him badly, his forceful control, his sexy, dastardly way of taking over her whole body and mind. He always knew just how to do it, and just when she needed it most.

He also seemed to know how to up the ante when necessary to keep her dependent on him, like now when she'd just come home with an engagement ring that she had no idea what to do with.

Jake tasted of power and possibility. He was never the same to her twice, not ever in all their times together. Closing her eyes, she would always try to imagine where he'd been and what he'd learned since their last time together. She had to fight the images of other women, women who in all likelihood pleased this heavenly rod just as she did.

"That's my cowgirl," he sighed. "Damn, but you are the ever living dream. I could finish off right now, shoot off down your throat and die a lucky man. But I can't cheat us both of what we've got coming."

Gently but firmly he pulled her off of his cock. "Run along and see what I got you, angel. In fact, why don't you put them on for me? I'll be in the kitchen in a minute and we can play."

"Yes, Jake." Her mouth ached already from the emptiness.

Only with the greatest of willpower could she drag herself away from that glistening shaft and off to the mischief awaiting her. A collar and clamps...surely he wasn't serious?

She found them on the table just as he'd said. Her heart skipped a beat at the sight of the gadgets. The collar was slim and black, studded with artificial stones, with a tiny metal ring in front. A leash was attached, leaving no mistake that it was for a dog. Jilly felt a little electric charge as she ran her fingers over the surface. He expected her to put

this on, to make herself his pet for the night. And the clamps, she was to wear these as well.

They were bright red plastic alligator clips with rubber pads. She tested one on her finger. It smarted. She couldn't imagine it on a place as sensitive as her nipple. Where had Jake bought them? What made a man want to do this to a woman he supposedly cared about? But it was all part of his possessiveness. Part of what made him so damned irresistibly sexy.

She put the collar to her slender throat, thinking of Doug's ring. Now there was a band to do a woman proud. Except his gold and diamonds left her cold, whereas this object made her blood run hot. It wasn't fair, being wired as she was to respond so submissively. A surge of rebellion reared its head, but she fought it back. Buckling the dog collar, letting the leash fall between her breasts, she looked at the clamps.

And the candles. White candles, simple round ones. He was going to drip the wax on her, just as he had that one night last year. It had been only a few drops then, at the conclusion of a candlelit dinner she'd made for him. He'd thanked her heartily, promising to return the favor. She had laughed, teasing that if he cooked her a dinner it would be more along the lines of a punishment. This had led to a happy game of barefoot chase around the house, her shorts-clad behind staying just a step ahead as she darted out the back door.

He'd scooped her up at last, putting her over his shoulder. She had squealed good-naturedly as he'd brought her back into the kitchen. Putting her over his lap and skinning down her shorts and underpants, he'd given her hide a nice tanning.

For good measure, he'd taken the candle and held it over her squirming flesh.

"This is going to hurt you more than it hurts me," he'd quipped.

That's when he'd let a drip of the wax fall on her skin. She'd cried out, not just from the sudden, sharp sting of pain but also from the finger he'd put up into her pussy. Just one more drip of wax and she'd come like a demoness all over his hand.



At that time he'd told her there was a whole world of sensation to be had here, as a woman's helpless body could literally be coated in the quick hardening, skin hugging liquid.

Was that what he intended to do now? She'd find out soon enough. Picking up one of the little clamps, she held it against her nipple. The tiny nub reacted, swelling treacherously against the plastic. It was aching for the experience, the pain. Sucking in a breath, watching her own chest rise and fall, she opened the clamp.

Jilly's nipples had always been full. Men liked that about her. They were good for sucking and chewing. And apparently, for clamping. The pain was exquisite. Rich and vibrant. She moaned, pushing a hand between her legs. *I'm collared*, she thought, *and under sexual torture, and this is only the beginning. I've another one...another one to go.*

She leaned her hip against the kitchen table, masturbating, the liquid of her sex dripping copiously. She was going to come just from the pressure. *One more to go*, she told herself.

"Need a hand?" Jake was behind her, murmuring in her ear.

She leaned back against him, letting him have her hurt, her surrender. "I...yes..." she croaked.

He ran his hands over her belly and circled her waist. He was naked. She could feel his cock poking her from behind. "You're so fucking beautiful, Jilly. I don't deserve you, I never have."

*You do*, she wanted to scream, *if you'd just stake your claim for real.*

"Tell me," he said, "tell me what it feels like." He took the second clamp and placed it on her, expertly pinching it into place.

She swooned, letting him hold her up. "It's like...redemption," she said.

It was one of Minnie's words and she wasn't even sure Jake knew what it meant.

"You don't need forgiveness," he said, indicating that he did understand after all.

Jilly turned for a frontal embrace. Her anguished breasts pressed to his chest, the nipping, gnawing pain dulling to something deep and bone pleasing. He was getting inside her, he was reaching something he hadn't touched before.

"I could hold you like this, forever," he said, with such tenderness it made her soul weep.

Her cowboy was showing emotion after all, one new one after another.

"The wax," she reminded him, not wanting to cheat him of his desired experience. "Tell me how you will use it."

"You'll lie over the table," he said. "I'll pour it on you that way. But you have to tell me if it's too much."

"I will, I promise," she smiled, knowing he would never hurt her except as something that led to mutual sexual pleasure.

Jake put her on the table on her back. She was small enough so that he could tie her limbs to the table legs underneath the top. Proving his thoughtfulness again, he put a small pillow under her neck and a thinner one under her ass.

"Try and get free," he said, when he had her roped in place.

She pulled at her bonds. "I can't," she said, watching him with complete and naked desire. Was there any chance he could dispense with the formalities and just climb up on the table with her to screw her brains out?

"Show me. Struggle for me."

She did so, feeling her pussy spasm as she wriggled her nude body. He was stroking himself as he watched, running his hand along the very shaft she'd been licking just a few moments ago.

"Tell me again, cowgirl...how you can't move."

"I can't Jake," she whispered throatily, knowing how it turned him on. "I'm your prisoner. I'm helpless."

"Every time I see you, cowgirl, I want to tie you like this. I want you bound up. It's in my blood, cowgirl, like roping fillies and breaking broncos..."

"I want that, Jake, I want to be in your blood."

He licked his lips. "You know what it does to me? When I think of another man near you?"

"I don't want to hurt you," she shook her head. "Ever."

"I believe you, cowgirl, you're the most honest woman I've ever met. Why the hell you ain't married by now I will never figure."

"The right man hasn't asked me," she choked.

"Well...I guess that's my good fortune...in the meantime..."

"Yeah...in the meantime..."

Jake lit one of the candles. "Only ever use white for this," he told her, like she was apt to repeat this on someone else. "Cause the colored ones have dyes, and they burn a lot hotter."

"Done this a lot, have you?" she couldn't resist asking.

"A little here and there. Up to now it ain't been on the right woman, though."

"I suppose I should be flattered."

"Suit yourself."

Jilly arched her back, the dull ache of the nipple clamps receding in favor of a newfound boldness, a will to experience still more, enough even to shock Jake. "I'm waiting, cowboy, mark me. Cover me in your wicked wax."

"I think your belly'd be a good place to start." He touched her stomach. She clenched her fists, she couldn't stop him. He could touch, even molest her as he wished.

Jake let a drop fall in her belly button. She cried out from the burning heat, discrete, intense and short. Gone was her bravado in one fell swoop.

"Jake, I'm scared..."

He seared her mouth with a kiss. She opened for him, ready, willing.

"Take it," he said, giving her his tongue, and at the same time, more of the wax.

Her belly trembled as the wax plinked, drip-by-drip. "A whole candle," he said, "I'm going to melt a whole candle."

"Yes, Jake," she breathed into his mouth. "Use me, use my body."

He angled the candle over her left breast, pouring a tiny stream down the peak of the clamped nipple. At the same time he moved his thumb over her clitoris.

"Come for me, Jilly."

She came instantly, abused and in bondage. "Jake," she called his name again and again as she strained at the ropes. "Hold me."

He brought her slowly down then started building her up again. "You don't need to be held, Jilly, you need discipline. Running around on me with other men—that ain't gonna fly. You know there's no other man can handle you. Why do you fight it?"

"Because," she said through gritted teeth, fighting him even now. "I need a man to be equal with me, one who will be just as faithful as I am."

"Who are you kidding?" He pooled enough of the wax on her stomach to stick the candle itself in place over her belly button. "You want to feel owned, possessed. Your belly burns for it. You want a man who is so fiercely jealous he guards your every little move, watches your back and your front and isn't afraid to put you under female discipline."

"There's no such thing," she protested, though in her heart she'd suspected for a long time that there was, assuming you could find the right man to administer it.

"Seems to me we've been perfecting it," he countered.

"You can claim possession, Jake, but you're an absentee landlord and we both know it."

"The arrangement suits us both. You're as scared of commitment as I am."

"Like hell, Jake." The wax was pouring down the candle, freely over her belly. It felt like a kind of truth serum. She'd just objected to the man, but what if he was right?

"Work on this a while, it'll clear your head." Jake put a dildo between her captive legs. It was the big one with the realistic textured balls at the end.

"I'm not fucking this cock for your amusement," she insisted, but they both knew she would.

"It's your call." He thrust it inside her sex and removed it. A quick, thrusting tease.

"I hate you," she moaned, having gotten more attached already to the sensation. "Put it back, please?"

She was burning for it. She was craving it. How did he do this to her, over and over? In an endless variety of new guises, too.

"How bad do you want it, cowgirl?"

"Very much, I want it very much."

"If I give it to you, you'll submit to it totally, you'll come on command."

"Yes...please let me service it...let me be...a pain slut."

Jake slid the dildo in deep. "Orgasm," he ordered, wasting no time.

Jilly exploded around the plastic cock, a mass of moaning sweat and twisted roped flesh.

"Stop," he said, stifling the feelings in her pussy with his voice.

She panted, turned off like a faucet. Owned. It was incredible, like he was in her brain and not only in her pussy.

"Jake," she sighed, amazed, broken open, "You have me. Totally."

"Move, cowgirl." He slid the dildo forward, against her clit.

She lifted her ass from the pillow, achieving the friction he wanted for her. She was ready to come again at once, but this time he held her back.

"Wait for my command."

"Yes, Sir...I'm waiting, Sir."

He made her whimper, forcing her to delay the natural conclusion of her pent-up desires. At last he issued the command, sending her into an explosion of satisfaction, like lasers slicing at every part of her, a million instantly cauterized wounds—beyond words, beyond pleasure and pain. She was dimly aware of losing consciousness, but perhaps not entirely because she remembered being untied and lifted from the table, cradled in his strong arms. He took her to the bed and laid her down.

“This will hurt, cowgirl,” he sat beside her, “just for a second.”

He was going to take off the nipple clamps. As he removed the first she did indeed feel a sudden burst of pain as the blood rushed back into the tightly restricted area. Likewise with the second. He had some lotion now, something he used for his own ailments, she assumed, which he rubbed over her gingerly.

The contrast of his current tenderness with the harshness of his earlier actions was a tremendous sexual thrill. It underscored his complex masculinity, his overwhelming ability to be consumed with her, Jillian Anne Cartwright.

“I want you, baby,” she told him. “Inside me.”

He gripped her hand tightly. As always, he was going at his own pace. She moaned in delight as he dipped his tongue between her thighs. He found her hotspot, working her to fever pitch. Light laps over her clitoris accompanied by short, stabbing probes.

“Cowboy,” she pleaded, “don’t make me wait.”

He gave her the reward she’d been wanting, rising above her to slide his cock deep inside. “Come on, angel,” he crooned, “show me how beautiful you really are.”

Jilly ignited for him, a halo of fulfilled desire, skyrocketing, blossoming flowers, and energy pulsing through her body. She tried to show him by the look on her face, the way she clung to him, the way her body tensed and soared and then plunged into a bottomless valley. No other man could begin to approach this with her. Hell, most women probably never got this in their entire lifetimes, even with one man. Moments later he followed her, then settled down to draw her close.

He smiled back at her, serene, from deep within. It was as relaxed and fulfilling an orgasm as she'd ever seen him have. Not frantic or furious, just...bonded, tight and close with her. They wrapped their arms around each other and Jilly forgot her soreness. It was like the sex was bathing them, in a cleansing spring rain, crystal clear waters, delicious to the touch, sweet to the taste. He tasted pretty good, too, the salt on his skin adding the tiniest flavor to his pungent masculinity. She reveled in it, the flexed, browned muscles, the tendons, the bristly hair, the warm breath from his nostrils.

It was like the first time as she sought greedily to imprint each part of him—specific details to impress on her brain—like a teenager, feeling she'd never have this again, never love this way again.

Eventually, when they were done with their post-coital nibbling and giggling, they lay side by side, just communicating through their heartbeats.

It went better this way. Without the words that inevitably put them at odds. Not to mention the inevitable passage of time that would send him rolling away once more, tumbleweed that he was.

At some point both of them fell asleep and Jilly could honestly say she was happier at that moment than she had ever been in her life.

## Chapter Ten

Jake hadn't intended to find it. Lord knows, he was the farthest thing in the world from a snoop. Unfortunately, he had literally tripped over the thing. Jilly's purse was under the bed, with the handle sticking out. He'd caught his foot on it and sent the contents scattering.

There it was, along with a pretty box to fit. Jake had never seen so many diamonds in one place in his life. It pretty near outshone the moonlight when he held it up to the window next to the still sleeping Jilly. There wasn't any mistaking where this had come from. It was from Dougy. Did he give it to her just tonight or had she been carrying it around for some time? She wasn't wearing it, which was strange.

There was only one reason he could think of for a beautiful woman to not be wearing a beautiful ring like that, and that was because there was some other man who still had his hooks in her. In this case, he was that other man.

Jake clenched the ring in his fist. Finding this particular piece of engagement hardware in Jilly's possession was like receiving a swift kick in the stomach from an angry mule. Although it sure did explain a whole lot. Everything from her not wanting him in her house when he'd arrived to all those powerful hints she'd been dropping about not feeling fulfilled.

Jilly was in love with this other man. She wanted to marry him and she'd been asked. The only thing stopping her was his presence in her life.

*I gotta give her up, thought Jake.*

It was an idea he did not particularly relish. No more than if he woke up missing a leg and had to give up rodeo. Actually this was worse, because Jilly was deep down in his life, into everything. Even rodeo was more fun because of her.



*But look at her, he thought, lying there like that, all peaceful and innocent. She needs a stable man, she said so herself. You knew this couldn't last, Waylon. You knew you had to keep playing it smart, like Rosco said. And look at how much fun you've had. You gave her the best of you and you didn't poison her with that bad luck, ornery, gun toting, Waylon blood. Let her have some little Blue Bonnet children – they'd turn out to be fine, good, happy, tax-paying citizens.*

So what should he do? Wake her up and say goodbye, it's been nice to know ya, like the cook in that great old Gordon Lightfoot song, the *Wreck of The Edmund Fitzgerald*? Or maybe he could get one of those computers, and send it to her by that electronic mail Jilly was always pestering him to get?

Or maybe he needn't say anything at all. After all, it wasn't like he hadn't just ridden off into the sunset, or sunrise before, no forwarding address or plans for a return visit. Except this time he wasn't coming back. And he meant it, too. When a cowboy said something, you could set your clock or compass by it.

Which is why your best cowboys make sure not to say too much so as not to turn out to be hypocrites.

Jake gathered his clothes and dressed in the light of the half moon. The sky was clear now, he'd be able to head west in his old truck and be at the state border by dawn. He gave some thought to what he'd put in the note. He wasn't exactly a man of letters, unless they were the ones spelling out his favorite brand of whiskey or smokes.

Jilly had some nice girlie notepaper, lilac, with a thin purple pen. It smelled like flowers, a little like her perfume. *Best do this quick, he told himself, before I get too sentimental.*

*Dear Jilly,*

*I found the ring and –*

Jake crumpled the paper and shoved it in his pocket. That wouldn't do at all. He couldn't let her know the real reason behind what he was doing. She had to think he was doing this on his own, so she wouldn't feel any sense of guilt or responsibility hanging over her head. He thought for a minute and then it came to him, quick and clean. He jotted it off before he could forget.

*Dear Jilly,*

*I think it's time we both moved on with our lives, just like you said. I know I will always remember you fondly and no one will ever take your place. I know you'll do just fine, and I will, too.*

*Regards,*

*Jake*

He crossed off regards and wrote fondly, because it sounded a little more heartfelt. Folding the paper and putting it in one of the small lilac envelopes, he collected his things in his duffel bag, including the empty liquor bottle, collar and nipple clamps and zipped it shut.

Jilly had looked so incredible last night, wearing these things. When he'd snuck up on her in the kitchen and taken hold of her from behind, it was like he'd grabbed a piece of heaven. No one would understand that, especially not Rosco, but it was true. Jilly was heaven on earth. Doug was a lucky man. One thing was certain, he had better treat her right, cause if it ever got back to him that the man was doing her wrong, there would be hell to pay. Maybe Leo or Minnie would give him reports from time to time.

He'd miss Jilly's grandfather, but he couldn't afford to come through town anymore. It would be too hard to keep away from Jilly...Jilly Bluefield.

He felt a lump in his throat. He'd didn't overly like the sound of that, but this wasn't his life. It's what she wanted. She had it waiting for her, the minute she put that pretty ring on her finger where it belonged.

Putting the ring carefully back in the bag to cover his tracks, he made for the door. *Goodbye, house, he mused. Goodbye to the happiest times of my life. Now or ever.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Jilly called for Jake from the bed. She'd awoken feeling lazy and ready for a slow morning fuck.

"Jake? Where are you?"

She didn't hear him in the bathroom. Maybe he'd gone out on the porch to brood. Brooding was his only real hobby, other than her. Personally, she didn't think it suited him all that well but he said it was a cowboy thing and she knew better than to interfere in any of his sacred cowboy rituals. The best she could manage was to roll her eyes every now and again.

He wasn't on the porch either. Her heart started beating just a little quicker. This was feeling familiar. She was on her way to look in the backyard when she passed the note on the counter, right next to the coffee maker, where he knew she'd go first. He was always teasing her about her wake up caffeine fixes.

A note. Now that was really odd. The only thing she'd ever seen Jake write was a grocery list. She fingered the envelope. Her personal stationary.

*This isn't good, girlfriend, not at all.*

Slowly she opened it, carefully removing the folded paper. The handwriting was unmistakably Jake's—bold, clear, concise. As for the contents...she had to lean against the counter.

He was breaking up with her. He was saying goodbye, forever. And he was saying it was her idea? Had she told him that? Jilly sucked in her lower lip. *I will not cry*, she told herself. A moment later her self-pity turned to anger. Who the hell did he think he was, just brushing her off like this? Didn't he have the decency to tell her in person?

And what kind of man puts it all off on the woman, making her responsible for everything?

Talk about showing true colors. After all this time. Doug Bluefield wasn't looking so bad after all. In fact, she saw now that she had allowed her misplaced loyalty for Jake to blind her to all of Doug's good qualities, not to mention all the ways she clicked with him. They had a relationship, she and Doug, and the proof was in that beautiful diamond. What a fool she'd been to let Jake string her along to the point of nearly missing such a hope, such a real future.

"You don't even matter, Jake Waylon," she muttered, balling up the note and tossing it into the trash. "You are history, totally gone and forgotten."

With that she went to the phone.

"I'd like to meet you, Doug, for breakfast, this morning if you can make it."

"Name the time and place," he said somberly. "And I'll be there."

"I know you will, Doug. Thank you."

And therein lay the difference, as well as the key to explaining the diverging paths her life and Jake's were about to take. She was following a reliable man to marriage, while Jake would continue to meander, like rolling tumbleweed, a whirling lariat.

Until his last breath. Which she was quite sure he would take alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Doug was fingering his coffee mug, glaring down into the dark contents. Jilly was getting more than a little impatient with him as their impromptu brunch wore on.

"Douglas, honestly, you would think you were unhappy to have me accept your proposal of marriage."

"Oh, no, sweetie." His eyes were moist, and more than a little sad. He looked up at her, more handsome than ever in his brown suit and blue shirt. It was a nice compliment to his eyes, in her opinion. "I want nothing more. It's just that..."

"It's just what, Doug? Out with it. You know how terrible you are at being the strong, silent type."

Jilly winced internally. She hadn't meant that to come out the way it had. Doug was strong—strong enough to be building a career and strong enough to want to start a family. That was the bravest thing in the world for any man to face, in her opinion, even more than staring down killer bulls.

"Oh, Doug, I'm sorry."

"It's okay, Jilly. Really. The thing is...well, I ran into a friend of yours this morning. I was in the diner real early, you see, on the way to a meeting in Silver Creek. He wasn't there to see me, obviously, but he heard Leo call my name, so...he introduced himself."

Jilly felt the blood drain from her face. He'd met Jake. It had to be. "Doug, I can explain..."

"There's nothing to explain. He was a perfect gentleman. He said he was a friend, nothing more, and that he wanted to wish us both well."

"And..." Jilly knew the man, there had to be another shoe waiting to drop.

"And that was it, Jilly. He shook my hand and he left. It was what he didn't say, though, that got me."

Jilly could imagine. "Doug, his bark is worse than his bite, he would never hurt a fly, unless someone really had it coming."

"Oh, I know that, Jilly. It isn't that. It's just that when I looked in his eyes as he talked about you, I saw something very familiar, something I see when I look in the mirror. Jake Waylon's in love with you, Jilly."

She laughed, more in shock than anything else. "That isn't possible, Doug. Jake doesn't love humans, not like we do. He loves...horses, gold buckles, things like that."

He shook his head, speaking with an authority he'd never shown before. "No, Jilly, that's where you're wrong. This man would lay down his life for you. Trust me."

Jilly fought down a tempest of emotions. It couldn't be true, and if it was, why hadn't he told her? Why just walk away? Jake was no coward, he'd never backed down from anything in his life.

"I'm telling you this for one reason, Jilly. And that's to find out where you stand. You see that look that Jake and I have for you—you don't have it for me. The question is, do you have it for him?"

She took his hand between hers. "Doug, I care for you so much, you are kind and warm and funny and you have given me so much."

"But that's not the same as loving a person, is it?"

Jilly frowned, folding her arms. "I will never so much as speak to Jake Waylon again. You are wasting your breath thinking about him or talking about him."

Doug took her hand, gently extending her fingers. "Jilly, I'd like to keep this a while, if you don't mind?"

She felt her heart in her throat. He was taking back his ring. The tears welled. She felt so horribly empty. "Doug, please don't..."

"It's okay, sweetie. This is best. We have time. If it's right between us, it still will be a month from now. True enough? After all we are talking about a lifetime commitment."

"I suppose," she sniffled. "I just...I don't want to be alone."

He touched her cheek. "Me, neither, Jilly. But that's not a good reason for marriage."

Doug was right. You couldn't base a relationship on fear. It wasn't fair to either party. There had to be love there. Unfortunately the one man she felt that kind of passion for would never live with her. *Maybe part of her wanted it that way, she thought. Maybe at some level Jake was safe to love because he would never love her back.*

Could it be that Jake was right, that maybe Jilly, too, had a fear of true, deep commitment from the heart?

"I need time to think," she agreed.

"That's the spirit." He returned to his eggs. "Now let's get finished up and back to work, shall we?"

"Yes, that's a good idea," she smiled, though she felt numb all over.

Like a part of her had just died.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jake was sitting with Rosco at a corner table, drowning with him in a bottle of whiskey. It was for medicinal purposes, to soothe his latest bruises from tonight's rodeo, as well as to drown his sorrows over Jilly. It had been Rosco's idea to come to this particular bar—too rundown to qualify as an actual dive. In his view this was a midlife crisis for Jake, one he would skid happily and drunkenly on through into sleazy and decrepit middle age.

To this end, any and all references to Jilly had been strictly forbidden for the night.

"A woman like that is the cowboy's curse, Jake, mark my words. She's the one too pretty, too smart to ever be real. She'll eat at you all your days, making you regret you didn't grab her when you had the chance."

Jake had pointed out that it was Rosco who kept telling him not to make a commitment to the woman because that would only lead to an unhappy marriage.

Rosco wiped his thick, cracked, dry lips. The man had a twice-broken nose, crossed eyes and a crack clean through his skull that most folks swore would open one of these times and leak his brains out. At five-foot-three, with a bull neck and stubby fingers, he was probably the ugliest cuss in the universe, but he was all the family that Jake had in the world.

"A cowboy has to choose his sorrow, boy. Otherwise we'd have nothing to sing about around the campfires."

The man appeared out of nowhere. Either he was very sneaky or he and Rosco were getting drunk.

"Jake," said Doug, "I've been looking for you all over. Thank goodness I found you."

He blinked a couple of times to see if it was really Jilly's fiancé staring at him.

"May I sit down? Just for a minute?"

"Sure," slurred Jake. "Why the hell not. Rosco, this is Doug. Jilly's Doug."

Rosco raised a caterpillar eyebrow. "Is that right? So you're the one who got the angel, huh? Funny, you don't look like no saint."

"Just ignore him," Jake advised. "He'll pass out eventually."

"Not till I drink you pups under the table. Doug, what you having?"

Doug shook his head. "If you don't mind, I'd like to get to the point. I didn't come five hundred miles for my health, as you can probably guess. I came to tell you something."

Jake felt his anxiety rise. "What's this all about, Doug?"

"It's about Jilly not loving me, Jake."

"Sure she loves you. You're just right for her. You're practical, good-looking, you got a future."

"Jeezus," guffawed Rosco. "Why don't you marry him if you're that keen on him."

"Jake, she loves you," Doug insisted. "Just like you love her. I'll admit, I didn't want to see it at first, but I care too much for Jilly not to tell the truth."

Jake's fists clenched on the wooden table. "Doug, I think you should leave."

Rosco put a heavy hand on Jake's shoulder. "Simmer down, kid."

"It's all right," Doug said. "I won't stay. I just wanted to leave you the message...and if you want, I'll take one back for Jilly."



"No," Rosco said. "A cowboy does his own talking."

Doug pursed his lips. "You're right. That was stupid of me to say." He rose to his feet. "I apologize."

"No offense taken," Rosco spoke for them both. "And for what it's worth, you did a real stand-up thing, coming here tonight. Whether or not you ever get near a branding iron or a bronco, that makes you a cowboy where it counts, in your heart."

"Thank you." He put out his hand for both men to shake.

They were quiet for a while after Doug left. Nursing their shots, they listened to the wailing on the jukebox, some old song about love at the crossroads.

"I'm going back for her," said Jake eventually.

"Yea, I figured."

"May not be back on the circuit this year, Rosco," he added, a couple of minutes later.

"Yea," rasped Rosco, "I figured that, too."

They finished off the bottle so Jake could go to sleep. Early the next morning, before sunrise, he was on the road. Heading for Jilly.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jilly had been hell to work with, and the general orders from Minnie were to steer clear of her. There was no special order that wasn't likely to set her off, nor was there any way to keep her from her daylong funks and pouts.

Only Minnie was allowed to state the truth. That she was missing Jake. Jilly didn't want to hear that. Especially since the man was out of her life, forever. What was the point of dwelling on what she could never have? Anyway, she was better off. He'd driven her crazy most of the time. He'd done her a huge favor and it didn't matter if there was no man to take his place.

*I'll die an old maid*, she thought, *if that's what it takes to prove to the man I can exist without him*. It wasn't the greatest logic, but it didn't matter because he wasn't exactly clamoring to get back in her life in the first place.

Or so she thought.

The morning Minnie told her she had a visitor she thought they were all daft. There was Leo standing in the doorway to the storage room, and Shirlee and about half a dozen of the customers who'd been let back into the private area just for the occasion.

Jilly, who'd been getting fresh napkin packs off the supply shelves, turned and glared at them. "What on earth has gotten into you? You'd think the pope was here. And even if he was, I wouldn't want to see him."

"Well, it ain't the pope, but if you want to, you can hear my confession."

Jilly froze. It was *him*. There was no mistaking that voice. That overconfident drawl, that bemused tone. The hat was a giveaway, too, the Stetson at the rear of the small crowd.

"Come on," Minnie shepherded them, "let's get a move on and leave these two alone."

"No," exclaimed Jilly. "No one is leaving me alone with this man, do you hear me?"

"Jilly, calm yourself," said Minnie.

"I don't want to be calm. I want him to go away."

Minnie put her hands on her hips. "He is not going away," she insisted. "He drove a very long way to see you and you need to hear him out. If not for yourself, then for us, because you've made all our lives miserable since the man left."

Jilly narrowed her gaze. "I'll give him two minutes, and that's all."

"That's all I need," said Jake.

Minnie just shook her head and walked on out of the room. "Why is love always such a mess?" she lamented.

"It's not love," Jilly called.

Jake approached her and went to one knee. "It is for me, Jilly. I am here to tell you that. This whole way, I've been thinking it over. Hell, ever since I found that ring, I been thinking."

"You...found the ring?"

Jake scowled at himself. "I hadn't meant for that to come out. But, yes, I did. I saw it and I knew you'd be better off with Doug."

She blinked back the tears. "Did you ever think to ask me, you damned fool?"

"It just seemed so clear to me."

"Jake Waylon, you're a man. Emotions have not, nor will they ever, be clear to you."

"But you're wrong, I know my feelings. I know I'm crazy for you. All this time, I have loved you. I just took it for granted. I thought you were just filling in the gaps in my life, but now I see you are the glue that's been holding it together. Without you...without you none of the rest matters."

"Those are things you might have told me," she accused. "They might have made a difference. Instead you kept trying to make decisions for me. I am old enough to choose, cowboy. I run my own life."

"You were better off with Doug, in a lot of ways."

She shrugged. "In some ways, yea. But I don't love him. I can't be happy with him. You're the one I want, the one I need."

"I know," he owned up. "And you tried to tell me that. You gave me a chance to open up and bring things into the open."

She ran her fingers over his chest. He was wearing a blue T-shirt and a pair of tight black jeans. "Don't take this all on your own shoulders, cowboy, cause you're not playing martyr here. I let things go on just as long as you did. I guess I wanted it both ways, too."

Jake's nipples hardened at her caress. She moistened in response. Could they get away with fucking in the storeroom?

"You're distracting me," he chided. "I wasn't done with my speech."

He had the ring in his pocket, wrapped in tissue paper. "This ain't fourteen carat gold, Jilly Mae, I'll be right honest with you. I can't afford nothing like Doug can, but a woman helped me pick this out, she works down at the flea market outside of town."

Jilly recognized the Claddagh ring at once. It was a symbol of love and affection, the heart and hands and crown made famous for centuries in Ireland. She'd loved the design for as long as she could remember.

"Oh, Jake, it's perfect."

He slid it over her finger, like she was born to wear it. "It looks good on you, real good. In fact, I was hoping it could double as a wedding ring. I got me one, too. We could go to the courthouse, anytime you like."

"Soon as we get the license, baby." She was all tears and smiles.

He held her chastely, his hands on her lower back, though he wasn't letting go anytime soon.

"That's not how you hold your future wife," she teased, moving his hands lower.

He took hold of her ass cheeks. "I missed this, Jilly. I missed you, like you wouldn't believe."

She pressed her needy body to his. "I missed you, too, Jake. My heart missed you, my soul...my body."

It was the last one that he showed the keenest interest in at the moment. "Your body missed me, huh?"

She ground her pelvis against a huge erection. "Uh-huh."

"What exactly did your body miss?"

"Being kept in line," she said hotly.

"I'll admit I have a hankering to punish you, but I need a good excuse. I ain't been around you enough to have one lately."

"Well...I've been a real bitch," she offered cheerfully. "No one can stand being around me since you left."

"I do believe we have something to go on there," he said.

"Really, Jake?" she purred. "You're not just teasing me, are you?"

"Turn around and grab that shelf, just over your head," he challenged, "and we'll find out."

"Yes, Sir," she crooned.

Squeezing with both hands, she pushed her body against the shelves of napkins and condiments. Jake wasted no time moving in and lifting up the skirt of her uniform.

"Once we get married, this'll happen a lot," he said. "I don't plan on going back to the rodeo all year. Figure I'll get a job on a local ranch instead."

She shuddered at the touch of his hand on her panty-covered ass. Of course she wanted him home, but rodeo was his dream. "Would you really be happy with that?"

"I'll be happy with this," he caressed her bottom in preparation for a firm spanking.

"Oh, honey," she pushed out her posterior. "So will I...and you know, I could travel, too. Be a rodeo wife."

"We'll see. You'd need a lot more discipline for that."

"Oh, yes," she cried as he smacked her hard. "Oh, yes, Sir."

He gave her ten crisp smacks, enough to make her little pussy twinge for penetration. "Fuck me," she begged. "Please, Jake, take me from behind."

"Demanding little thing, ain't you?"

She giggled as he grasped her waist, tugging down the elastic of her underwear. He lowered the panties just shy of the top of her thighs. "You ain't pink enough," he informed her. "You want my cock, you gotta take it harder."

Jilly was dripping between her legs. If she didn't get it soon she was going to melt down in agony. "Spank me, then, give it to me on my naked ass."

He probed her pussy with his finger. "Beg for it."

"Beat my ass," she groaned, "please."

Jake obliged, slapping his palm against the soft flesh of his cowgirl.

"I'm yours," she moaned softly. "All yours."

"Mine," he growled, delivering a second blow.

"Again, hit me again."

He did so, with aplomb.

Twice more, till she was spasming, her pussy muscles clenching thin air, craving the fullness of his cock, the dynamic explosiveness of his manhood.

"Every hour," he groaned, unzipping himself, "of every day, I've dreamed of doing this."

"Oh, Jake, I need it, honey."

"How about a little more spanking first?"

He was smacking her again, this time with his cock. She cried out in pleasure, feeling his blood-engorged organ slapping at her hot, tingling ass cheeks.

Incredible. He was beating her with his own shaft.

"Please..." she encouraged.

Jake kept at her, until he could hold back no longer.

She felt him at the entrance to her sex. "Yes, Jake, shove it in me, give it to me hard, fucking hard..."

He obliged, with a single thrust to the hilt. His body against hers, holding her in place. He had her waist, keeping her motions in line with his, keeping the angle of penetration perfect. She gushed at the feel of him, her slick sex welcoming him home as though he'd always belonged there, as though he'd never left.

"Come," she cried. "Come inside me."

She wanted his semen, every last bit of it now and for the rest of her life. One day soon, she would take it without the benefit of the pill and she would make him a baby, a beautiful little boy or girl to fill out their love.

"Yes, Jilly...yes, my love."

She orgasmed at the word. He'd called her his love. It was all she needed to release the pent-up tensions, the culmination of sweet, sweet friction.

They cried out together, no longer caring who heard them outside the storeroom. It was the best they'd ever had, more familiar than ever and yet fresh all over again. It would be that way always, she was sure of it.

When they'd both expended themselves, he pulled up her panties and held her in his arms. Precious minutes passed, she felt so safe, so secure, and yes, loved. This was the man, the feeling she'd waited for all her life. If only they hadn't been so stubborn as not to tell each other sooner.

"I love you, cowboy," she whispered.

"And I love you, cowgirl."

"I hope you know I won't ever be a pushover," she informed him.

"Oh, I hope not," he flashed that killer smile of his. "Cause I sure don't want to get bored, after all we are gonna be spending our lives together."

"Darned straight, and I intend to make you suffer for every minute of it."

He patted her sore, well-fucked bottom. "Me, too, cowgirl."

"You better," she shot back, "or I'll have to make you bring out the lariat to keep me in line."

"I could always use the roping practice," he mused. "Among other things."

She squeezed him so tightly that he almost couldn't breathe. "I'm the happiest cowgirl in the whole world."

"And I'm the happiest cowboy. Just don't tell anyone, it'll ruin our image."

"Your secret's safe with me," she grabbed his ass for a change.

He laughed. "I figured I could count on you."

She sealed her promise with a kiss. "To the end, my love. To the very, very end."



### **About the author:**

Reese Gabriel is a born romantic with a taste for the edgier side of love. Having traveled the world and sampled many of the finer things, Reese now enjoys the greater simplicities; barefoot walks by the ocean, kisses under moonlight and whispers of passion in the darkness with that one special person.

Preferring to remain behind the scenes, cherished by a precious few, Reese hopes to awaken in the lives of many the possibilities of true love through stories of far off places and enchanted lives.

For the sake of love and hope and imagination, these stories are told. May they be enjoyed as much in the reading of them as in the writing.

Reese Gabriel welcomes mail from readers. You can write to Reese c/o Ellora's Cave Publishing at 1337 Commerce Drive, #13, Stow, Ohio 44224.

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