

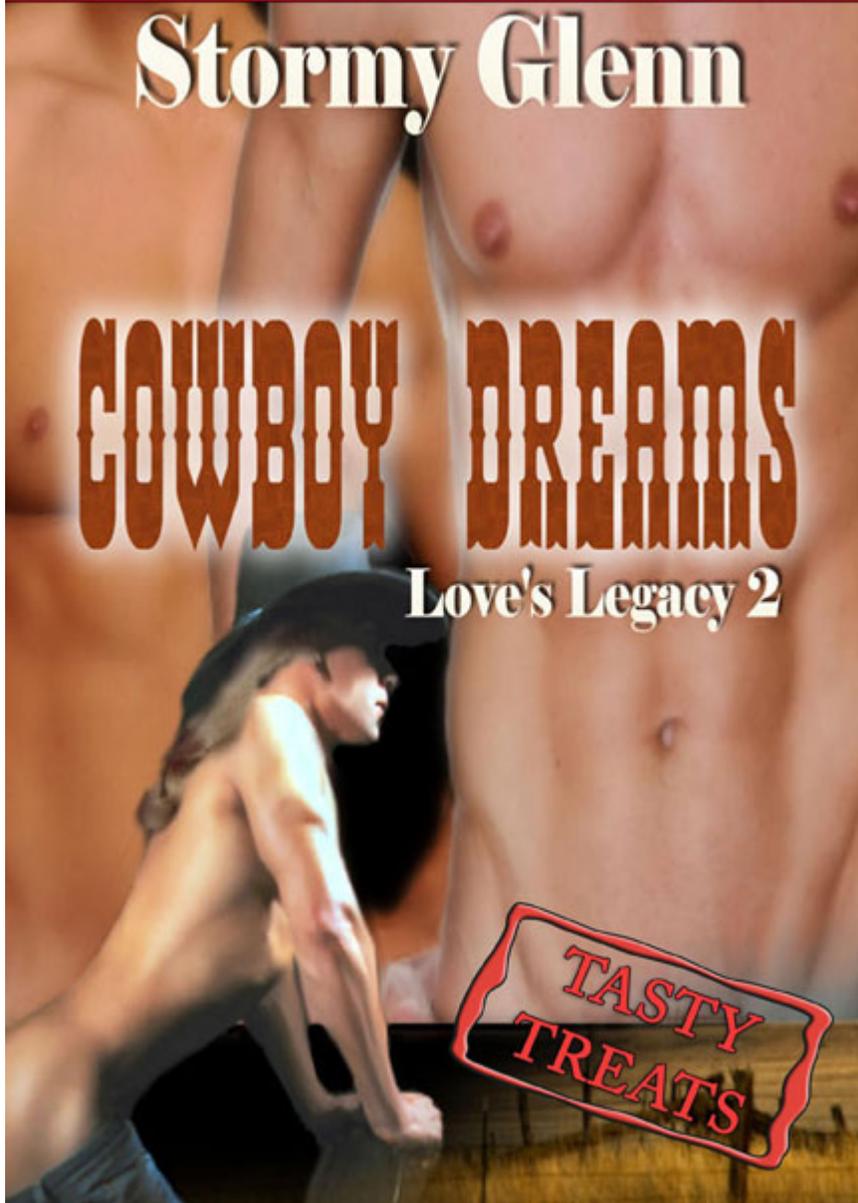
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Stormy Glenn

COWBOY DREAMS

Love's Legacy 2



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Love's Legacy 2
Tasty Treats

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Letter from Stormy Glenn

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With deep gratitude,
Stormy Glenn

DEDICATION

To cowboys everywhere, never forget to reach for your dreams.

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COWBOY DREAMS

Love's Legacy 2
Tasty Treats

STORMY GLENN
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Chapter 1

Applegate Valley, 1866

“There’s an awful lot of birds circling over yonder, Jeb,” Boone Fowler said, nodding his head toward a small grass-covered rise off in the distance. “What do ya think they’re waiting on?”

Jeb McCain pushed his cowboy hat back and shielded his eyes with his hand. He stared out over the empty prairie ground between him and the small earthen rise where the birds circled. They were scavenger birds.

“I don’t rightly know, Boone, but whatever it is, it’s either dead or dying. Suppose it wouldn’t hurt to take a gander. Might be one of our lost heifers.”

Boone nodded. Jeb clicked his tongue and nudged his horse to head toward the rise. Riding up was pretty effortless, the rise made mostly of grass and weeds. Even the slope of the hill was easy to traverse, his palomino walking right up the side until they reached the top of the rise.

Jeb pulled his horse to a stop and looked out over the small ravine below. It looked a little rockier than the side he and Boone just rode

up. Jeb guessed it might be a winter creek bed. They were far enough into the spring that they should be out of danger of a flash flood.

“Ya see anything, Jeb?” Boone brought his horse up next to Jeb’s.

“Them birds seem mighty interested in that little rocky area just south of that large boulder.” Jeb pointed to a boulder about the size of a saddle. He still couldn’t see anything that might interest the damn birds though.

He stood up in the leather stirrups to get a better look. Jeb thought he caught the sight of something, but then it was gone. He sat back down and clicked his tongue again at his horse. “Come on, Boone, we ain’t gonna see anything from way up here.”

Jeb and Boone carefully made their way down the other side of the small rise until they reached the bottom. Jeb paused long enough to ensure that his colt revolver was full, nodding when he spotted Boone doing the same. A person can never be too careful.

Jeb figured they couldn’t be more than fifty feet from whatever the birds circled. He climbed down from his horse and looped the reins over the saddle horn. He held his finger up to his lips, telling Boone to keep silent.

Jeb was lucky enough to have a well-trained horse. He didn’t need to tie him off to keep him from running. *Ponyboy* wouldn’t run, not even if he heard gunfire. He wouldn’t run until Jeb told him to, and then he’d run all out.

Even though he was being extremely quiet, Jeb could hear Boone coming up behind him. Jeb motioned to Boone to stay with the horses while he moved around to the side of where they headed.

If there was indeed something there, Jeb didn’t want to be caught in any possible crossfire. Besides, if he moved up the rise a bit, he could flank whatever the birds hunted. Once Boone nodded, Jeb moved.

Reaching a small pile of river rocks, Jeb squatted down behind them and pulled his gun out of the holster. He nodded over to Boone,

signaling that Boone could move forward. Jeb would keep him covered from his vantage point.

Time ticked by slowly as Boone cautiously made his way through the small ravine. Jeb saw him glance up, then move around a small bend in the natural path of the creek bed. A lot of prairie grass and weeds grew between Jeb and Boone but not so much that Jeb couldn't see Boone's mouth drop open in shock.

"It's a young man, Jeb," Boone said quietly, but Jeb heard him anyway. He sounded puzzled. "He's dressed in a lady's corset."

Jeb's eyes quickly glanced over the surrounding area. He didn't see any way a man could be out here in the middle of nowhere without someone else around, especially dressed the way he was. Not seeing a sign of another human being, Jeb made his way to the highest point on the rise.

He searched the barren landscape for any sign of movement but saw nothing out of the ordinary. A gentle breeze blew across the prairie. Jeb could see it moving through the tree branches off in the distance.

Prairie dogs peaked up here and there. Besides the buzzards flying overhead, Jeb could see a hawk off in the distance obviously searching for its next meal. A couple of white-tailed deer grazed on prairie grass on the horizon. Nothing else moved.

Once he knew that they were relatively safe, Jeb made his way back down to the creek bed and around to where Boone knelt next to the unconscious man. He'd wrapped a gray woolen blanket around his body and now checked him over for injuries.

Jeb knelt across from Boone, his eyes taking in the unconscious man's soft features. He didn't seem to be particularly bruised, the soft peach tones of his skin glowing in the afternoon sunlight. Long locks of strawberry-blond hair curled around his shoulders and back. Tiny wisps caressed his delicate heart-shaped face.

“He’s a might pretty thing, ain’t he, Jeb?” Boone said quietly as he brushed a stray lock of hair back from the young man’s face. “Almost looks like a girl dressed the way he is.”

“That he is, Boone, but what’s he doing all the way out here by his lonesome? We’re at least five hours from town. Where are his people? Hell, where are his clothes? And why in the hell is he dressed like a woman?”

Boone shrugged. “I don’t rightly know. I didn’t find anything, Jeb, no other clothes, no horse, nothing. I couldn’t even find his trail into the creek bed, and ya know I can track just about anything.”

Jeb’s eyes strayed to the untouched ground ahead of them. Boone was right. There wasn’t a sign of disturbance, not even a turned rock. The path behind them showed only the steps of Jeb and Boone. It seemed like the young man appeared right out of nowhere.

“I’m not liking this, Jeb, not one damn bit. It’s quieter than a gagged gopher ’round here.”

Jeb could hear the tension in Boone’s voice. He didn’t blame him. Jeb didn’t like it either. It seemed almost too quiet. The prairie could be a pretty silent place, but usually something made noise, a bug, deer, maybe even the wind, just something. Right now, it seemed like nothing made noise at all, not even the birds overhead.

Jeb glanced back down at the young man. “Does he have any injuries?”

“Not that I can rightly tell. We can have Cheta take a look at him back at the ranch.”

“Did you check to see if he got snake bit?” Jeb asked, knowing that a snake bite could be small and deadly all at the same time. Many a man died from an overlooked snake bite.

Boone just looked at him like he was stupid for even thinking Boone wouldn’t have checked for a snake bite. Jeb let out a little chuckle. “Okay, okay, point taken, Boone. Still, I’m worried that he’s not waking up. If he doesn’t have any seeable injuries, why hasn’t he opened his eyes?”

“Got me, Jeb. Maybe Cheta can tell us.”

Jeb nodded. Boone was probably right. Akecheta, known as Cheta to most who knew him, was renowned for his healing skills. While many couldn't seem to get past his red skin when everything was fine, they came to Cheta in droves when they were injured.

Jeb shook his head every time Cheta welcomed one of the town folk into his small one-room house. Cheta was pretty much ignored back home, if not downright shunned, for being a Sioux Indian and not a white man. It drove Jeb crazy.

When they moved to Applegate Valley a few months ago, Jeb didn't think things would be that much different from where they lived before, but he had been surprised. The town folks in Applegate Valley seemed to accept Cheta for who he was, not what he was. Still, Jeb hesitated to make a lot of friends in the little basin. It never paid to be overly friendly.

“All right, let's get him home and let Cheta take a look at him.” Jeb pushed himself to his feet. He reached down and took the young man from Boone's arms, then started toward his horse. He could hear Boone following right behind him.

“What do ya think he's doing out here, Jeb? And why would he be wearing a lady's corset? That seems a might strange to me, Jeb.”

Jeb couldn't agree more. “God only knows, Boone.” He glanced down at the delicate-looking man in his arms, wondering how he ended up in this situation. “But I'm sure as shit gonna find out.”

“Ya ever consider maybe he didn't ask to be out here on his own?”

Jeb rolled his eyes. “Of course I did, Boone. You think I'm green? That's the first thing I thought of.” Jeb shook his head. “It just don't make no sense for a lone man to be out here without someone having done it, not like this.”

“Someone from town, ya think?”

Jeb considered Boone's words. Could someone from town have brought this man out in the middle of nowhere and left him here

unconscious? Jeb didn't know a lot of the people in town, but he couldn't imagine they would do something like this.

"I don't imagine that anyone from town could do something like this, Boone," Jeb finally replied. "They'd more than likely just run him out of town if they didn't want him there."

"Not even the Newton boys?" Boone asked as they reached their horses.

Jeb nodded to the young man in his arms. "You actually think that the Newton boys would abandon a man out here alone, especially one that looks like this?"

The Newton boys were notorious for being the town bullies. If they got their hands on this man, he'd show it on every inch of his body. The Newton boys weren't picky about what sex they hassled. They harassed everyone equally. The sheriff seemed to try and stop them but since the Newton boys never actually did anything unlawful his hands were tied.

"Naw, guess not," Boone said.

Jeb handed the man to Boone, then climbed up on his horse. He reached down and took him back, settling the much smaller body onto his lap. Jeb wrapped one arm around the man's slim waist, pulling the man back against him, then reached for the reins.

The man's head flopped back against Jeb's chest. He tried to ignore how good it smelled. It almost smelled like roses. That confused Jeb a bit. The soaps most men used smelled either overly perfumed to the point of being nauseous or like dry dust. He couldn't remember ever smelling rose-scented hair before.

And the man felt good in Jeb's arms. Jeb couldn't tell what exactly the young man looked like under the wool blanket, but he could imagine. He felt a little jealous that Boone saw him first.

Jeb knew from a very early age that he was different than most folks. Not only was his father an immigrant from Scotland, but his mother was Sioux Indian. Jeb was born in an Indian encampment. After his mother's death when Jeb was just a boy, he went to live on

his father's ranch. That ranch became Jeb's, his father having passed away several years ago. Jeb sold it a few months back and moved to Applegate Valley with Boone.

Besides being half Sioux Indian, Jeb preferred men to women. It certainly wasn't something that he advertised. It could get him hanged, shot, or even stoned to death in nearly every corner of the west. That meant not having a lot of opportunities.

The only other people who knew of Jeb's preference were Boone, his best friend and lover, and Cheta, Jeb's maternal grandfather. Jeb found Boone on a cattle drive where Boone signed up as a drover. Jeb took one look at the man and knew he wanted him.

It took Jeb all of the two-month-long cattle drive to figure out whether Boone would even be receptive to his advances. Five years passed since then and Boone was now not only his lover but also his partner in the ranch.

In all of that time, Jeb never found himself attracted to another man beyond the occasional glance. He truly cared for Boone and would never dream of even considering someone else. The man in his arms changed all of that. For the first time since he could remember, Jeb found himself attracted to another man.

Jeb was intrigued by the man's delicate features, his small, soft body, and the soft scent of roses he smelled every time he sniffed at the man's strawberry-blond hair. Just holding the young man against him made Jeb's cock ache.

Jeb was also apprehensive about the feelings the man provoked in him. No man aroused Jeb like this since he fell for Boone. What did that mean about his relationship with Boone? And why this young man? What was it about him that intrigued Jeb so much?

Jeb couldn't deny that the man looked gorgeous, but was it enough to jeopardize his relationship with his lover? Boone was there for him through thick and thin. He supported Jeb in all of his endeavors.

He stayed up with Jeb until the early hours of the morning assisting in the birth of every foal on the ranch. Boone drove cattle, mucked stalls, branded herd after herd of cattle. He did every job on the ranch, including taking care of Jeb when he was shot by rustlers two years ago.

Boone meant everything to Jeb. He couldn't even consider giving him up, but Jeb wondered if Boone might be interested in getting to know the man *with* him. Even as the thought filtered through his brain, Jeb dismissed it. Boone was a one man...er...man.

He couldn't believe he actually considered throwing away all that he had with Boone because his cock throbbed in his pants, demanding the satisfaction of a man Jeb had never even talked to let alone looked in the eye. Jeb had to be out of his mind.

Jeb slowed his horse down and waited for Boone to ride up beside him. He glanced at the other man out the corner of his eye. Boone really was a handsome man, in a rough, masculine, cowboy sort of way.

The brown hair on his head fell almost to his collar, curling softly against Boone's high cut cheek bones. The brown mustache and five o'clock shadow Boone always had was one of the features that drew Jeb in the first place. Besides the fact that it tickled his skin when Boone sucked him, adding to the experience, it also made Boone look a tad rakish.

The thick muscles created from working long hours on a ranch and the deeply tanned skin from being out in the sun for so many years made Boone a dream to look at. And Jeb did, as often as the situation allowed.

"Boone, I—"

"I feel it too, Jeb," Boone replied.

"You feel it too?" Jeb sputtered. "Feel what?"

Boone arched an eyebrow, then glanced at the man Jeb held gently in his arms. Jeb felt his face flush to the roots of his hair when Boone glanced back at him.

“I—you—I would never—” Jeb stammered.

“Of course ya wouldn’t, Jeb. I know that,” Boone assured him. “I wouldn’t either but together, we might have us a passel of fun.”

Jeb’s mouth dropped open as shock filled him right down to his toes. Was Boone saying what he thought he was saying? “Uh, Boone, are you saying—”

Boone’s lips thinned as his grimaced. He pushed the cowboy hat on his head back with his thumb, then settled his hands on the pommel of his saddle. He glanced around the landscape as if he needed a moment to gather his thoughts.

That worried Jeb. Boone wasn’t much for long-winded speaking. He always thought about what he wanted to say before he said it. When he did finally open his mouth, the instant current of lust that rolled through him overwhelmed the shock he felt.

“I’m just saying that he’s real pretty, Jeb, and he’s the first man I’ve even thought of taken a gander at since the moment I saw you. As long as we don’t keep secrets and we all do this together, I don’t see why we can’t explore the open range before us.”

Jeb swallowed past the sudden lump that formed in his throat. “You—”

“Jeb, before ya go and get yourself in a dither we need to figure out what happened to this poor boy,” Boone said before Jeb could continue. “We don’t even know anything about him. He could be trouble.”

Jeb nodded. Boone was right. He was getting ahead of himself. Just because Jeb and Boone found the man attractive didn’t mean the man would be receptive to them. He could run for the hills the moment he opened his eyes.

Still, something about the man intrigued Jeb enough that he wanted to try. He just hoped that Boone knew he wasn’t going to jeopardize anything they built together for a complete stranger.

“Boone, you know what you mean to me, don’t you?”

“Ah, hell, Jeb, course I do.” Boone grinned, his white teeth twinkling in the sunlight. “I’ve had a lot of misgivings about things you’ve done but your feelings for me ain’t one of them.”

“What things?” Jeb asked.

Boone smirked. “Those two greenhorns that came to look at the ranch before we sold it? Ya let them stay in the bunkhouse for nearly a week even after they let your prize bull loose in the field. I’da kicked their butts out the moment they got back from ropin’ him in.”

“Ah, they were just tryin’ to—”

“Tryin’ my ass,” Boone snorted. “That damn bull is worth a lot of money, Jeb. If he got out or been injured, we woulda been out a good bull for several seasons. They didn’t know a thing about cattle breedin’, damn fools!”

Jeb chuckled. Boone had been irate at the two men who came to look over the ranch before purchasing it. Jeb wanted to beat them to a pulp as much as Boone did, but he knew selling the ranch had been more important.

A few of the town folk discovered that Boone wasn’t just Jeb’s foreman. They gave Jeb just two months to sell the ranch and leave town or they would inform the *good people* of Beaver’s Ferry that two dandies lived there. The fallout could have cost Jeb and Boone their lives. He couldn’t sell the ranch fast enough. Boone meant a lot more to him than some old piece of land.

“You don’t regret us selling the ranch and moving out here, do you?”

“Naw.” Boone shook his head. “I’m still not real sure ’bout them town folk, mind ya. Those two lawmen, the Nash brothers? I swear, they can talk a good story ’bout this valley and all but I just don’t think they’d understand about us.”

“You do realize that all three of the Nash brothers are married to the same woman, don’t you?” It was one of the main reasons he chose to settle in Applegate Valley. The people here seemed to be more

accepting of strange ways than any place he ever saw. Jeb wasn't sure that acceptance extended to him and Boone but he could hope.

It took some maneuvering on his part just to buy a ranch in the valley. He met with the town council and some old codger named Albert Dupre, who everyone seemed to idolize, before they gave him the go ahead. After that, the rest seemed easy.

Jeb never came right out and said that he and Boone were lovers but he felt pretty sure that Albert Dupre suspected it from the way the old man looked at him. It was the first time Jeb hadn't been ashamed of his preference for men and felt that he wasn't that different from everyone else. He just wanted to love the one he chose, just like everyone else.

"Yeah, I know it," Boone replied. "Don't understand it, mind ya. While those Nash brothers are good looking and all, sharing one woman between all three of them just makes my stomach churn."

"Uh, Boone?" He nodded to the young man he held in his arms. "You do realize that if we decide to go after this here man, we're going to be sharing as well?"

"Ah hell, Jeb, I know that, but he's not a woman, that's all I'm sayin'." Boone shook his head, his body giving a little shudder. "I just don't see the attraction. Can you see yourself getting hitched to a woman?"

Jeb chuckled. "Not really."

"That's what I'm sayin', Jeb."

Jeb just shook his head and clicked his tongue at his horse. He aimed to get home and see about the injuries this man might have. He wanted to see the man wake up, look into his eyes, and discover if the attraction was mutual, if this conversation with Boone was pointless.

Chapter 2

Boone never felt so glad as he did when they finally reached the ranch. He was tired and just a little saddle sore. They'd been riding for hours, searching for lost cattle that got loose during their cattle drive. He couldn't wait to get inside and pull his cowboy boots off, grab something cold to drink, and lay back on his soft feather bed, preferably with Jeb in it.

There hadn't been much chance for two cowboys to be together on the trail with the other cowhands. It had been a long couple of weeks. Jeb sent the other drovers home to the ranch to give them a little time, but then they discovered the young man, unconscious. There wasn't a chance to be alone since.

Boone climbed down from his horse and handed the reins off to one of the ranch hands. He reached down and patted Riley, the ranch watchdog, on the head and then walked around to Jeb's horse.

"Let me take him." Boone reached up to take the man from Jeb. Making sure he had a good hold, Boone turned toward the house and walked up the steps. He heard Jeb get off his horse and follow him up the steps.

"Billy, where's Cheta?" Jeb asked as he hurried ahead and opened the door for Boone.

"He's down by the hen house, Jeb," Billy replied. "Y'all want me to get him?"

Jeb nodded, then ushered Boone into the house. "Your room?"

Boone nodded. While he had a room of his own, it was mostly for show. He slept in Jeb's bed nearly every night they slept at the ranch. He didn't want the unknown man in the room he shared with Jeb until

they knew what sort of man he was. That room was special, just for them.

Boone followed Jeb into his room, laying the young man down after Jeb pulled the quilt back. He stepped away, glancing at Jeb for a moment, then back at the man. "Think we should remove his corset before anyone else gets a gander at him?"

Jeb shrugged. "Might be his, Boone."

Boone's mouth dropped open in astonishment. "A man wearing a corset?"

"Wouldn't be any stranger than the two of us being together. Most people think we're strange for how we feel."

Okay, Boone could see that. He had been judged too many times in his life because of his feelings for Jeb. He shouldn't be judging someone based on how they dressed. Still, it seemed a little strange to see a full grown man dressed in a white lacy corset.

"So, we should just leave him as he is?" Boone asked.

"Well, you might want to move so that I can see to his injuries," said a quiet voice behind them. "Then maybe you can get me some water and clean rags to clean him up?"

Boone twirled around to find Cheta standing in the doorway. He felt his face flush. "Sorry, Cheta."

Cheta walked farther into the room. He patted Boone on the arm as he passed him. "Don't think anything of it, Boone. Just get me what I asked for while Jeb tells me what happened to this young man."

Boone hurried from the room as Jeb told Cheta how they found the young man in a ravine. He first grabbed a stack of clean rags, then ran to the kitchen to grab a bucket. A quick trip outside to the water pump and he had a bucket of water.

Boone went back outside for another bucket of water. He stoked up the fireplace and poured the water into the large pot hanging over the flames. Grabbing his rags and bucket of water off the table, Boone

walked back into the bedroom just as Jeb finished telling Cheta about the young man.

“Well, that’s quite a story, grandson.” Cheta looked the man over for injuries. After several moments, he clucked his tongue, then reached for the clean rags. He wet one, then started wiping the dirt from the man’s face.

Boone watched, more and more intrigued as the man’s soft, clean features were revealed, a small, pert nose, naturally rosy and luscious lips that begged to be kissed, and high cheekbones. He looked breathtaking.

Boone glanced at Jeb to see if he saw the same thing Boone looked at. He bit his lips to keep from laughing. Jeb’s eyes were riveted on the young man, as if taking in every soft line, every curve.

Boone had never been in a position where Jeb’s eyes landed anywhere but on him. He wasn’t sure how he felt about it. He wasn’t exactly jealous, although he didn’t know why he wasn’t. But he wasn’t totally comfortable with it either.

“Jeb, ya think ya can help me in the kitchen?” Boone asked, trying to get Jeb’s eyes off the young man in the bed and back on him. “I think maybe this young man might be hungry when he wakes up. I thought we might fix us all up some grub.”

Jeb wavered, then looked over at him. “Yeah, sure, Boone.”

Boone turned and walked out of the room, heading for the kitchen and the pantry it housed. He walked past the wood burning stove and the large stone sink Jeb so painstakingly ordered and installed, right to the small pantry off to the side of the back door. Then he waited.

He didn’t have long to wait. “Boone? Where are you?”

“In the pantry.”

A moment later, Jeb appeared around in the doorway. Boone wasted no time. He grabbed Jeb by his shirtfront and yanked him into the pantry, pulling the door closed behind him. Turning to Jeb, he pushed him up against the wall, plastering his own body against his lover’s.

“Boone!”

“I want ya, Jeb,” Boone growled against Jeb’s neck. Even as he bit into the side of Jeb’s neck, he heard the hitched breath in his throat. Jeb’s hands clenched on his arms and his head fell back.

“Boone,” Jeb groaned.

Boone’s hands moved down to grab Jeb’s ass through his pants, pulling the other man up against him. There could be no mistaking the hard length in his pants as anything other than intense desire for the man in his arms.

“Fuck, Boone, I love the way you touch me.”

Boone pressed closer to Jeb when the man separated his legs. He moaned. He could feel Jeb’s hard cock pressed against his. Boone reached down and pressed his hands against Jeb’s cock. Jeb came unglued, pushing his hips against Boone’s body, his cock against Boone’s hand.

Boone grabbed the back of Jeb’s neck with his free hand, pulling Jeb’s head back so that he could look into his sparkling blue eyes. “I’m gonna fuck ya, Jeb.”

“Okay,” Jeb replied breathlessly. Boone grinned. He unbuckled Jeb’s pants and pushed them down his legs before turning him around to face the wall. He pulled his own pants down, his cock in his hand, a moment later.

No matter how randy he felt, he couldn’t fuck Jeb without some sort of lube. He quickly looked around the pantry. There had to be something. It was a pantry, for Pete’s sake. He chuckled when he spotted a jug of cooking oil sitting on one of the shelves.

“Don’t move,” Boone ordered. He stepped back and reached for the oil. Pulling the cork stopper with his teeth, he spit it on the floor, then poured some oil into his hand. Boone liberally coated his cock, then rubbed the rest into the crack of Jeb’s ass.

He pressed two fingers into Jeb without warning, hearing the soft intake of his breath at the intrusion. He worried that he moved too fast until Jeb started pushing back against his fingers.

Boone leaned forward to lick the edge of Jeb's ear. "Ya want me, cowboy? Ya wanna feel my cock pound your tight little ass?" Boone knew Jeb loved to hear him talk dirty during sex. It drove Jeb to distraction.

"Fuck, yes, Boone," Jeb groaned. "Now, Boone, fuck me now."

Boone pulled his fingers free of Jeb's ass and grabbed his cock, pressing it against the small opening he'd stretched with his fingers. "This, cowboy, this what ya want?" Boone rubbed the head of his cock back and forth over the small cleft of muscles.

"Please, Boone," Jeb pleaded.

Boone pressed the head of his cock against Jeb's tight entrance, then pushed in just enough to catch. Grabbing Jeb's hips, he bit the edge of Jeb's ear to distract him, then plunged in until his groin pushed against Jeb's ass.

"Oh, fuck!" Jeb cried out. Boone saw his hands dig into the wooden wall. He thrust again, then again, slowly building up a steady rhythm until the only sound in the room came from flesh slapping against naked flesh.

When soft whimpers started to drown out the sound of Boone pounding into Jeb, Boone knew Jeb was getting close. Jeb was too *manly* to make sounds like that until he lost himself completely to what they did.

Boone reached around and grabbed Jeb's leaking cock. He stroked him softly at first, his thumb grazing the tip and wiping up the pre-cum that pooled there. "Ya like that, cowboy?" Boone crooned into Jeb's ear. "Ya like me strokin' ya while I pound your ass?"

Jeb just groaned, no longer able to form words. Boone grinned. He knew exactly what Jeb felt. He was about to come all over Boone's hand. Boone stroked Jeb's cock faster as he increased the ferocity of his thrusts. Jeb's whimpers became outright groans.

Boone could feel himself about to come as well. His breathing was so rapid, he thought he might pass out. He felt the pressure in his cock building, settling into his balls, getting ready to explode.

“Come for me, cowboy, come on my cock,” Boone growled, knowing it was more of an order than anything else. He didn’t care. He needed Jeb to come before he could.

The sudden cry of delight from Jeb and the hot spunk that covered his hand gave Boone what he needed to move over the edge into his own release. Sinking his teeth into the soft flesh of Jeb’s shoulder, Boone thrust once more, then felt his cock throb, shooting his essence into Jeb’s ass.

“Jeb,” Boone groaned as he thrust a few more times, working his way through the intensity only Jeb had ever been able to give him. Boone’s head dropped forward to rest against Jeb’s shoulder as he tried to regain the breath that escaped his lungs.

When he could finally lift his head, he pulled out of Jeb, grabbed and spun him around. He pushed Jeb’s relaxed body against the wall, holding him there with a hand on Jeb’s chest.

Boone caught Jeb’s gaze with his own and brought his hand up from Jeb’s cock, licking it clean. Boone could see the deep blue color of Jeb’s eyes widen as Jeb watched Boone lick his seed from his hand.

“That is so fucking hot, Boone,” Jeb groaned. “I love it when you do that.”

Boone chuckled, groaning a moment later when Jeb grabbed him and pulled him close, Jeb’s lips settling over his. Boone loved it when Jeb did this. No one kissed the way Jeb did. It wasn’t just a kiss. Jeb consumed, explored, conquered when he kissed. It was a talent only Jeb had. Boone felt grateful he discovered it.

“Boone,” Jeb whispered as he pulled his mouth away to look into Boone’s eyes. “I...I...”

Boone knew Jeb wanted to express his feelings, but he had such a hard time actually saying the words. Maybe the fallout from growing up without his mother around and living with a man like his father, who believed emotions were a sign of a weak man caused him to be this way. Maybe it was because he was afraid.

Whatever the reason, Boone knew Jeb cared for him. He expressed it in everything he did even if he didn't say the words themselves. Boone had no misgivings there. He hoped one day to hear the words but it was enough for now that Jeb tried.

"Ah heck, Jeb, I know that," Boone whispered. "I love ya, too."

Boone leaned forward to nuzzle Jeb's cheek. He loved holding this big, strong man in his arms. Nothing in this world brought him more joy than knowing he could turn this rough masculine man into a quivering mass of lust.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Boone jumped when someone pounded on the pantry door. "You two about done in there?" Cheta called out. "Your *weeko kimimela* is awake."

Boone cocked his head to one side, confused. "What did he just say?"

"*Weeko kimimela* means pretty butterfly." Jeb chuckled. "I believe he is saying that the young man we found is awake."

"Then why the hell didn't he say that?"

Jeb shrugged. "Because he's Cheta."

Boone snorted as he reached for his pants and pulled them back up his legs. Jeb said that like it made perfect sense. In a way, he was probably right. Cheta knew Jeb and Boone were together long before they thought to say anything to him. Hell, they hadn't planned on saying anything in the first place. Cheta just knew.

Luckily for both Jeb and Boone, Cheta didn't seem to care they were both men. He just cared that Boone treated his grandson right. He also threatened to tie Boone naked to an ant hill and smother his body in honey if he didn't. Boone wasn't taking any chances. He'd do everything in his power to make Jeb happy, including getting to know the young man in the other room.

Boone buckled up his pants, then turned to see if Jeb was ready to leave the pantry. He seemed to be. He nodded, satisfied that all of

Jeb's bits and pieces were safely tucked away, then opened the pantry door and walked out.

"We really should get something together to eat," Boone commented as they passed through the kitchen. "He's bound to be hungry."

Jeb nodded. "Let's just go and meet him and then we'll see about getting him some grub."

Okay, Boone could do that. He felt as anxious as Jeb to meet the man they found. Food could wait. Boone and Jeb both paused at the entrance to the bedroom. The next few minutes could change their lives forever and they both knew it.

Boone glanced at Jeb, reaching down to give his hand a small squeeze, then pushed the door open. He stepped inside, his eyes going instantly to the small man that sat on the bed. Boone's breath whooshed from his lungs as deep emerald green eyes looked up at him. The man looked even more stunning awake than he did asleep.

"Hello," Boone said. He noticed that Cheta gave the man one of Boone's long nightshirts to wear. It hung on the man's small frame as if it were two sizes too big.

"These are the two men that I told you about, the ones that rescued you," Cheta spoke softly. "They are good men, *weeko kimimela*. They will not harm you."

That statement brought Boone's eyebrows up in surprise. Could the man be afraid of them? Boone realized that he and Jeb appeared like big men but he didn't think they looked dangerous or threatening. Could he be wrong?

"How ya feelin?" Boone asked.

The man shrugged.

"I'm Boone." He pointed to Jeb. "This here is Jeb."

The man still didn't say anything. Boone began to get concerned.

"Ya know we'd never hurt ya, right?" Boone asked. "Me and Jeb, why we just 'bout went plum outta our minds when we found ya in that there ravine. You were out cold, barely a stitch on ya."

That did get a reaction from the young man. His face flushed scarlet red and he dipped his head down, hiding his face behind a curtain of strawberry-blond hair that fell all the way down to his waist. Damn, it was pretty hair, too, all shiny and silky-looking. Boone wanted to run his hands through it.

“Where are your people?” Jeb asked, stepping farther into the room.

Tears appeared in the young man’s eyes as he looked up at them. “I don’t know.” His voice sounded so quiet Boone needed to lean in closer to hear him. “But I hope he’s dead.”

Boone felt shocked by the man’s statement and wanted to know more. He stepped over to sit on the edge of the bed near the bottom bed rail. He leaned back against the wooden rail, not wanting to crowd the young man who scooted farther up on the bed. He really looked frightened.

“Can you tell us what happened?” Jeb asked, coming to stand behind Boone.

Boone immediately noticed that the young man’s eyes drew to where Jeb rested his hand on Boone’s shoulder. He didn’t seem repulsed by the gesture, rather fascinated, even if his face flushed red again.

The man shrugged his thin shoulders, the gown slipping down to his arm. He cast Boone and Jeb a small glance as he quickly pulled it back up. It didn’t seem to help much. The gown still hung on his small frame.

“Let’s start with something simple,” Boone said, hoping to calm the agitated man. “What’s your name?”

“Avery. Avery Jones.”

Boone smiled and held out his hand. “It’s mighty nice to meet ya, Avery, Avery Jones,” he said. “I’m Boone Fowler.”

The man giggled. “Just Avery is fine.”

“Well, okay, Just Avery it is.” Boone grinned.

The man giggled again, this time a little louder. “You’re silly.”

Jeb patted Boone. “That’s my Boone, forever with the humor.”

Boone wasn’t sure if things just went south or not when Avery’s eyes widened and his mouth formed a small circle of surprise.

“You—your Boone?” Avery whispered. *Oops!*

“Uh...” Avery looked so desperate for the truth that Boone couldn’t lie to him. He reached back and placed his hand over Jeb’s. “Yeah. I’m sorry if that makes ya uncomfortable, Avery. We’d be happy to see ya into town if ya want.”

“Really?” Avery whispered almost breathlessly. “You two are...married?”

“We’re not married, no,” Boone replied, “but we live as married folk do.”

“You can do that and people let you?”

Boone shrugged. “Don’t matter much what people will or won’t let us do, Avery. This is our ranch and I figure what we do on our land is our business. But, like I done told ya, if it makes ya uncomfortable, we can get ya to town.”

“No, no, it’s all right with me.” Avery looked a little flustered. “This is your place and all. Guess you can do what you want here.”

Boone nodded. At least Avery hadn’t run screaming for town. That meant something. Boone would keep an eye on Avery and watch for his reaction to him and Jeb. He didn’t want to give up the freedom to be together they found on their ranch but he also didn’t want to make Avery feel uncomfortable.

“So, Avery,” Boone continued, “can ya tell us where ya are from?”

“We came from back east. We’d been traveling by wagon trail for weeks. Mr. Morgan wanted to go to California. Said we were going find gold and be rich.”

“We?” Jeb asked.

“My aunt, uncle, and me.”

“Where are your parents?” Jeb asked.

“Oh, Ma and Pa passed some years back.” Avery said it like it was no big deal, which surprised Boone. “They caught that yellow fever before we even reached Kentucky. Went real quick, too.”

Boone felt bad for the young man. Seemed he’d been through a lot. “And ya traveled with your aunt and uncle?”

Avery shook his head. “They weren’t my real kin, just some folks that passed through when Ma and Pa got sick. Pa gave me to Mr. Morgan, said I would be a real big help to him and all.”

“He *gave* ya to Mr. Morgan?” Boone asked, totally stumped. It hadn’t been that long, but even out here in the West they heard about President Lincoln freeing the slaves. Boone knew slavery still happened. He’d just never seen it before.

Avery shrugged like it was no big deal. Boone didn’t know if he believed that. He couldn’t imagine what it must be like being sold to some stranger but he didn’t figure anyone could be so calm about it. He knew he wasn’t calm about it and he wasn’t the one that had been sold.

“Don’t ya have other family, Avery?” Boone asked. “Someone ya could have gone with?”

“Naw, Ma and Pa were it. I didn’t have no siblings.”

“So, how’d ya end up in a ravine, Avery?”

Avery’s green eyes shot up to Boone’s, then fell to the blanket covering him. Boone watched him fidget with the blanket, his fingers twisting the material around his fingers, then untwisting them over and over again.

“Avery?”

“Mr. Morgan done sold me to a couple of cowboys for a few hours.” Avery’s face reddened with anguish and shame when he glanced up at Boone and Jeb. “They just wouldn’t take no for an answer, so I ran.”

Boone felt Jeb’s hand clench under his. He didn’t blame his lover. Boone could just barely control his own anger. He couldn’t imagine

anyone being callous enough to sell another human being, especially someone they should be caring for.

“And the woman’s clothes?” Jeb bit out.

“After Mr. Morgan sold me to those men I needed to get away. Sara, that’s Mr. Morgan’s wife, she done gave me some of her clothes and helped me get away. She didn’t like Mr. Morgan none, said it was her way of paying him back for everything he’d ever done to her.”

Well, that explained a lot. Boone couldn’t help but chuckle. “I did wonder, Avery.”

Avery flushed again. “Sara said I made a right pretty girl what with my long hair and all. I felt funny putting her clothes on but it got me out of town and away from those two cowboys.”

“If you escaped those two cowboys how’d ya end up in that ravine?” Boone asked.

“My uncle found me. Said if I was gonna act like a woman, then I was gonna be a woman. He took me way out there, tied me up, and just left me there with nothing but those clothes on my back. Took me a couple of hours to get free, but I did.”

Boone nodded. He pretty much suspected that was what happened. He just knew somehow Mr. Morgan was involved. He could also see that Avery felt proud of himself for escaping his uncle. “Do ya think your uncle is still lookin for ya?”

Avery nodded. “He said he was gonna track down them two cowboys and bring them to where he left me. He didn’t want a reputation as a man that went back on his word and he already spent the money gamblin’ and drinkin’.”

“But it’s okay for him to have a reputation as a man who sells other people for money?” Jeb scoffed. “Sorry sack of shit!”

Avery looked astounded at Jeb’s show of anger, his mouth dropping open in shock. Boone would have laughed if the situation hadn’t been so serious.

“Avery,” Boone started, “we don’t agree with folks selling other folks. I hope you understand that. What your uncle did was wrong.

Jeb and I would be right proud to help you get away permanent like, if you've a mind to."

"You—you'd do that?" Avery whispered. "Why? You don't even know me."

Boone shook his head. He couldn't very well tell Avery that he and Jeb would help him get away from his uncle because they were interested in him. That just didn't sound right. Made them seem just like the two cowboys Avery had been sold to. That didn't leave him with a lot of explanations.

"Because folks should help other folks when they're in need," he finally said.

Avery watched Boone and Jeb for several moments, then nodded his head, a small lock of hair falling over his forehead. "I guess that'd be okay, then."

"I have a suggestion, if I may," Cheta said from by the door. Boone turned to look at him, having forgotten that the old Indian stood in the room until he said something.

"Cheta?"

"I believe it would be in the *weeko kimimela's* best interest if he continued to dress as a woman until his uncle is gone from the area."

He heard a small giggle from the bed. Boone's eyes widened in shock as he turned back to look at Avery and found a small grin on his face. "Avery?"

"You think I can pass as a woman?"

Boone wasn't sure how to answer that. He glanced over his shoulder to Jeb, hoping he had an answer. Jeb's lips were drawn together in a firm line, but a distinct twinkle flashed in his blue eyes. When Jeb didn't answer, Boone turned back to Avery.

"I think ya make a might pretty woman, Avery, just as your aunt suggested," Boone said. "I also think this is a choice only ya can make. Jeb and I won't make ya dress as a woman unless ya agree."

Avery seemed to think about it for a moment, his brows drawn together as if in deep thought. Then he grinned. "I guess that would be

okay, but if I'm dressing to hide from my uncle don't you think you should call me something else?"

"Ava."

Boone looked back at Jeb in surprise. "Ava?"

Jeb shrugged. "Avery, Ava, sounds about the same but not quite. Avery is more likely to answer to it than anything else."

Boone heard Avery snicker behind him. "Okay, Ava it is then." He looked at Avery and smiled. "Welcome to the family, Ava."

Avery just giggled.

Chapter 3

Jeb reached the edge of town a week later just as the sun started to come up over the horizon. He came on a mission. Cheta decided that *Ava* needed new clothes. He insisted that he needed everything from the toes up. Jeb got sent to town to buy it all.

He still wasn't sure what exactly he needed to buy. What all did women need? Hell, a man just needed a good woolen shirt, a pair of pants, and a sturdy set of cowboy boots and they were pretty much set.

Women seemed to need so much more. Cheta gave Jeb a list, and how his grandfather knew what to put on the list, Jeb would never know. Cheta's wife had been an Indian. She died many years ago. She didn't dress as a white woman.

Jeb rode through town until he came to the general store. He hoped he could get what he needed there. Coming to a stop, he climbed down from his horse and tied the reins to the hitching post.

Feeling a little like a greenhorn from back East, Jeb walked into the general store and started to look around. While the store was open it seemed to be a little early for a lot of folks. The only other person there was the store clerk and he seemed to be busy putting stock away.

Jeb looked around, finding a couple of the items Cheta wanted for *Avery*. He found a pair of shoes, some bonnets, and a shawl. He couldn't find a single ready-made dress or woman's under things.

"Are you looking for something specific, Mr. McCain?"

Jeb jumped, then turned toward the store clerk. “Uh, yeah, I’m looking for one of them ready-made dresses for women. You got any of those?”

“Sorry.” The clerk shook his head. “We have us some mighty nice material. Just came in on the freight wagon from Denver. You want to see that?”

Jeb shrugged. “I kind of hoped for something ready to go, you know what I mean?”

“Have you tried Mrs. William’s tailor shop down the street? She might have what you need.”

“Mrs. William’s tailor shop?”

The clerk walked to the door and pointed a few doors down. “Right down there. Not sure she’s open yet, but if you knock on her door I’m sure she’d be more than happy to help you.”

“Yeah, okay, then I guess I’ll take these for now.” Jeb set his items on the counter. He waited for the clerk to add everything together, while his eyes roamed the shelves behind the man.

A small pink package caught his gaze. He’d never seen something in that particular shade of pink before. Most items in the general store came in plain brown wrappers. “What’s that pink thing?”

The clerk glanced over to the shelf, then chuckled. “Oh that. My wife convinced me to buy it. It’s a bar of rose-scented soap. She said all of the woman would be wanting it once they knew what it was.” He shook his head. “I haven’t sold a damn one.”

“Does it stink?”

“No, it actually smells pretty nice. My wife used a bar of it and she smelled like fresh cut roses for days. I just can’t seem to sell any of it because Mrs. Nash, the older one not the younger, makes her own soap and sells it to most of the local women.”

“Can I smell it?”

“Yeah, sure.” The clerk turned to grab the pink parcel. He turned back, holding it up for Jeb. Jeb was afraid to touch it but he leaned in

and sniffed. The clerk was right. It did smell like fresh cut roses. He liked it.

A sudden thought came to Jeb. If Avery needed to look like a woman, smelling like a woman might make the disguise even better. He grinned. "I'll take two."

The clerk's eyebrows shot up, but he quickly added it to Jeb's purchases. "You getting hitched, Mr. McCain?"

Jeb suddenly thought about how all of this might look to everyone. What better way to advertise that he had someone new at home than to buy a bunch of clothes for a woman? Of course, it might work in his favor too.

"Done got hitched already," Jeb replied, hoping God wouldn't strike him down where he stood for lying. "Ava arrived last week. Unfortunately, there was a small accident during her trip and most of her clothes got destroyed."

"I'm so sorry to hear that," the clerk said. Jeb thought the clerk might actually feel sorry. The man held out the two bars of rose scented soap to Jeb. "Here, you take these home to your wife as a welcome-to-Applegate-Valley gift from me and my wife."

"Oh, no," Jeb said in surprise. "I couldn't do that."

"I insist." The clerk grinned. "Besides, if my wife found out that I didn't welcome your missus properly, especially after what the poor thing has been through, why, she'd skin my hide."

Jeb chuckled at the visual that gave him. The general store clerk was a thin rail of a man. His wife was not. He could see the woman ranting at her husband for all she was worth. "I thank you, and my wife will surely thank you when she gets a whiff of this stuff."

The clerk wrapped up Jeb's purchases and handed them over. "You just go on down to Mrs. William's tailor shop and she'll set you up. And don't forget to bring your new wife in and introduce us. Always like to meet the new members of our little valley."

"Yeah, I'll be sure to do that." *When there was snow in hell!*

Jeb hurried out of the store before the clerk could say anything more. He put his purchases in his saddlebags, then walked down the street to the tailor shop. The sign in the window said the place was still closed. Jeb wondered if he should knock or just wait for the shop to open when he heard a carriage ride up behind him.

Jeb turned to see Nyssa Nash and one of her husbands, Ian, driving up in a buckboard wagon. They stopped right next to him. Ian quickly jumped down and ran around the side of the wagon, helping his very pregnant wife down. They both turned to look at Jeb.

“Jeb McCain, isn’t it?”

Jeb nodded. “Mr. Nash, Mrs. Nash, how are you?”

“Fat!” Nyssa growled. “Fat and hungry.”

Jeb blinked.

“Nyssa!” Ian exclaimed.

“Oh, please, like he’s never been around a pregnant woman before,” Nyssa replied and rolled her eyes. He wondered if all married men went through this. Nyssa Nash seemed like a woman he would not want to piss off.

“Why are you just standing there?” Nyssa asked. She held her hand out to Jeb. “You don’t think I can do this on my own do you? I’m as big as a barn. Help me inside.”

Jeb looked at Ian in desperation but the man just shrugged at him, then hurried ahead to open the door to the tailor shop. Jeb held out his arm for Nyssa, then walked her toward the building.

“So, what are you doing standing in front of my mother’s tailor shop, Jeb?”

“I...uh...my wife, her clothes got destroyed on her trip out here and I need some things for her,” Jeb said, deciding to stick with his story. “The clerk down at the general store said Mrs. Williams might be able to help me out.”

“Your wife?” Nyssa cried out. “Why Jeb McCain, did you go and get hitched?”

Jeb nodded. At the look of excitement on Nyssa's face, he began to wonder if the marriage story was such a good idea. He could practically see the wheels turning in her head and knew what she would say before she even opened her mouth.

"Tell me all about her, Jeb. What's her name? Where'd she come from? How long have you been married? Are you going to have children? Oh, it would be so nice for the girls to have someone to play with. You do know I'm having triplets, don't you? I'm breaking with family tradition and having three girls instead of three boys. I—"

"Nyssa, stop," Ian interjected. "You're not even giving the man a chance to answer."

Nyssa flushed. "I'm sorry, Jeb, I do tend to go on and on sometimes."

Jeb smiled. "It's no problem, Mrs. Nash."

"Well, tell me about your wife then."

"Her name is Ava and she arrived from back East last week."

"Is she married to Boone, too, or just you?"

Jeb suddenly remembered what made Applegate Valley so unusual, something that drew Jeb and Boone in the first place. The women in Applegate Valley tended to marry more than one guy at the same time. Nyssa Nash was a perfect example. She was married to the three Nash brothers.

Jeb found himself nodding before he thought about it. "Yes, Boone and I are both married to Ava."

* * * *

Jeb rode into the ranch yard wondering if this would be the last time he saw it. Boone was sure to kill him when he found out what Jeb did in town. Granted, Jeb came back with most everything Nyssa and Mrs. Williams said a woman would need.

He also came back with the news that he and Boone were now married to Ava, a man. Yep, Boone would kill him, then Avery might.

Jeb climbed down from his horse and handed off the reins to Billy before reaching for his packages. There were several. The rest would be arriving tomorrow. He took a deep breath, then headed for the house.

Opening the door, he found Cheta and Avery sitting at the table. Boone stood in the kitchen drinking a cup of coffee. He seemed to be trying to hide a chuckle with his coffee cup. It made Jeb wonder what he missed.

“Honey, I’m home,” he called out as he closed the door behind him. He walked to the table and set his packages down on the table. “This should keep you until the rest of your wardrobe arrives, Mrs. McCain.”

Jeb braced himself as silence fell over the room.

“Mrs. McCain?” Boone choked. He slammed his coffee cup down on the table and glared at Jeb. “What have ya done?”

Jeb smirked. “It’s not so much what I did, rather what I said.” Boone merely raised an eyebrow at him. Jeb shifted from foot to foot as he tried to explain what happened in town. “Everyone started questioning me about why I came to town to buy clothes for a woman so I said that Ava was my wife and her clothes got destroyed during her trip from back East.”

“Ya couldn’t have said she was your sister?”

Jeb gaped. “I didn’t think of it.”

Boone crossed his arms over his chest, still glaring. “And she just had to be *your* wife?”

Jeb flushed. He glanced at the floor, avoiding Boone’s eyes.

“Jeb McCain!”

“Actually, Ava is married to both of us.”

“What?” Boone and Avery exclaimed at the same time.

Jeb rolled his shoulders, the tension between his shoulder blades building by the second. He could feel a headache coming on. For a moment, he wished he kept his mouth shut and just told the clerk it

was none of his business, but in a small town like Applegate Valley, everyone's business became everyone else's.

"Applegate Valley was founded on the idea that a woman here married more than one husband. When Nyssa Nash cornered me and asked if Ava was married to both of us, I said yes." Jeb shrugged. "It seemed like the thing to do at the time."

Boone stepped forward and sat down in a chair. He stared at his coffee cup for several moments. Jeb started to get worried. Did he do something he couldn't take back? Would Boone be pissed at him? Would Avery?

Suddenly, Boone's deep laughter filled the room. Jeb glanced at him in shock. "Boone?"

"It's almost too perfect."

Jeb tilted his head to one side, confused.

"Don't y'all get it?" Boone asked. "We're trying to hide Avery. If he's married to both Jeb and me, we can hide him in plain sight. We don't even have to explain why we suddenly have a woman on the ranch. Jeb did that for us."

"But I'm not a woman," Avery complained.

"Naw, but ya said it yourself. You're pretty enough to be a woman and with all the stuff Jeb brought from town, you're certainly gonna look like a woman."

"I also found this really nice rose-scented soap," Jeb added, encouraged by Boone's acceptance of the whole idea. "It smells real nice and the clerk down at the general store swears you'll smell like fresh cut roses for days if you bath in it."

"I have to bathe?"

Jeb chuckled. Avery sounded horrified. "Yes, Ava, you have to bathe. I don't want my wife smelling like a dung heap."

"And roses are better?" Avery slammed his hands over his chest, his lower lip coming out in the prettiest little pout Jeb ever seen. "I think I want a divorce."

“Oh, come on, Avery,” Jeb said as he sat down in the chair next to him. “It won’t be that bad. Once your uncle leaves the valley, you can go back to dressing like a man. We just need to hide you for a little while.”

“Besides,” Boone added, “I’m sure he won’t stick around long if he can’t find ya.”

Avery shook his head. “You don’t know Jerald Morgan. He won’t give up. I’ve tried to get away from him before. He never gives up.”

Jeb cocked his head to one side, curiosity filling him. “What do you mean you’ve tried to get away from him before?”

Avery regarded Jeb for a moment. “How old do you think I am?”

Jeb shrugged. “I figured you to be about nineteen or so.”

Avery shook his head. “I’m twenty five.”

Jeb’s mouth dropped open in shock. “Twenty five?”

Avery nodded. “I’ve been trying to get away from my uncle since I turned sixteen years old. Every time I got away, he found me and brought me back.” Avery clasped his hands together on the table and looked down at them. “I wanted my own life, to do something *I* wanted to do. Jerald Morgan had other ideas.”

Jeb didn’t like the direction of the conversation. It began to make his skin crawl. “What ideas?” he asked in a low voice. He hoped he was mistaken about what Avery might say but the sullen look on the man’s face said he wasn’t.

“Jerald Morgan is a charlatan. He sells snake oil and sundries to unsuspecting folks. Every penny he earns he either drinks or gambles away. Sara and I have tried to make do with whatever we could hide away from him. It hasn’t been easy.”

“That still don’t explain what he wanted with you, Avery,” Boone added, his voice low and filled with tension.

Jeb glanced up at him in surprise. He hadn’t heard that particular tone in Boone’s voice more than a few times in all of the years they had been together. He was usually pretty easy going. Right now, Boone sounded like he wanted to rip someone’s head off.

Avery looked decidedly uncomfortable. His fingers clenched together and he squirmed in his seat. “When he couldn’t cover his gambling debts, he used Sara and me as collateral.” Avery’s voice was quiet, almost a murmur when he continued. “He didn’t always pay up.”

Jeb stared at his hands. If he lifted his head and looked at Avery, he knew he wouldn’t be able to control the anger coursing through his body. He wanted to rip someone’s head off just like Boone, but preferably after he beat them to death.

To think, someone took this sweet young man and used him in such a horrible fashion? Jeb suddenly felt sick to his stomach. Hadn’t he and Boone wanted to do the very same thing? They took one look at the beautiful man and decided they wanted him. They were no better than Jerald Morgan.

“*Weeko kimimela*,” Cheta said, breaking the heavy silence in the room, “where is your Sara now?”

Jeb glanced up. *Shit!* He should have thought of that. If Avery left and Sara helped get him away, no telling what Morgan would do to her. Jeb suddenly felt that if they could save Sara from Morgan, maybe it would even out his own sin of desiring Avery.

“Do you think he’s gonna hurt Sara for helping ya get away?” Jeb asked.

“He’s done it before. Sara tries to take my punishments, has since I was a small child.” The fire burning in Avery’s eyes when he glanced over at him surprised Jeb. “She don’t deserve the things he does to her. She’s a good woman.”

Jeb didn’t care what Boone or Cheta thought. He decided right there and then that he would do everything in his power to save Sara for Avery any way that he could.

“Where would Sara be right now?” Jeb asked.

“Probably back out at our camp. My uncle don’t like us coming into town much. He usually sets up camp outside of town and rides in

on his horse. Sara never goes into town, but he'd bring me in if he needed something."

"Would she go with me if I told her who I was?"

Avery's eyebrows shot up. "You gonna go get Sara?"

Jeb shrugged. "If she's as bad off as you say, then she needs to get away from Morgan as much as you do. If we're gonna try and save you, we might as well save her at the same time, don't you think?"

Avery stared at Jeb for a moment. Then the most beautiful smile Jeb ever saw broke out over Avery's face. Jeb felt like he just bought a prize winning bull for pennies on the dollar. He was elated.

"You just tell me where she is and how to convince her to come with me and I'll br—"

"We!" Boone inserted, glaring at Jeb.

Jeb grinned at Boone, then looked back Avery. "*We'll* bring your Sara home to you."

Chapter 4

The next morning, Boone checked the bullets in his rifle, then set it on the bed. It was the latest thing, manufactured by B. Tyler Henry. Boone had been impressed when he bought it. It was said to have improved loading and be accurate up to two hundred yards. He prayed it was. He thought might need it.

He grabbed an extra box of shells and shoved them in his pocket before checking the ammunition on his sidepiece. Boone didn't much like having to use his guns, but out in the West, a man died when he didn't.

"Boone."

Boone knew Jeb stood behind him. He'd know Jeb's voice anywhere. He dreamed of the deep raspy tones and heard Jeb call out to him in every fantasy he had. "Yeah, Jeb?"

"You have any idea how we're going do this?"

Boone chuckled and shook his head. "Nope."

"You know I'm going be mighty upset if anything happens to you."

Boone turned to Jeb in surprise. "Nothin's gonna happen to me, Jeb."

"You don't know that."

"Jeb—"

"I'd really prefer that you stay here and keep Avery safe. Let me go and get Sara."

Boone didn't want to have this conversation with Jeb. He knew that Jeb saw him as an adult, knew that he was a full grown man, but

sometimes his lover could be a little overprotective. While Boone loved that about his man, it also drove him crazy.

“Jeb—” He tried again.

“Please?” Jeb’s voice was almost a murmur.

Boone turned to look at him. Jeb stood in front of their bedroom door, his arms crossed over his chest and a frown on his face. Boone didn’t think that Jeb was trying to be difficult. He was truly worried.

“Don’t ya think I’ll be just as worried sittin’ here at home while ya go out and rescue the damsel in distress?” Boone asked as he walked up to Jeb. “I can’t just sit here and twiddle my thumbs while you’re in danger, Jeb. I have to be there to guard your back.”

Jeb stroked his hand through the hair on the side of Boone’s head. “I just worry.”

“I can take care of myself, Jeb.”

“I know that,” Jeb replied, his voice a little deeper than usual. “I— I just worry.”

“And that’s why I love ya.”

“Do you love me enough to stay home?” Jeb countered, one eyebrow raised in challenge.

Boone chuckled. “I love ya enough to make sure no one shoots ya in the back.”

“I’m not going to convince you to stay here, am I?” Jeb finally sighed.

“Nope.”

Jeb’s lips thinned as he frowned. “You’re a pain in my ass. You know that don’t you?”

“Now, why would ya go and say that?” Boone grinned. “I’ve always made sure you enjoyed me being in your ass.”

Boone was delighted when Jeb’s face flushed, his eyes narrowing to little slits. Boone stepped up close to Jeb. He stroked his hand down Jeb’s muscular chest. “I’d be more than happy to give ya a little showing right now, if ya’d mind to.”

Boone tweaked Jeb's nipple through his shirt. Jeb's head fell back and he let out a long hiss. Boone leaned forward and raked his tongue up Jeb's exposed neck before nibbling on the man's square jaw line.

Boone unbuttoned Jeb's shirt and pushed his hand between the heavy material, his fingers gliding over naked skin. "I'd like to show ya a lot of things."

Jeb groaned. Boone felt Jeb's arms wrap around him, his fingers clenching in the material on the back of Boone's shirt. "Fuck, Boone! How do you do this to me every time? You breathe and I want you."

Boone chuckled. He felt the same way about Jeb. He'd go the rest of his life without sex if it meant being close to Jeb, knowing he was alive and happy. Luckily for him, being close to Jeb meant he didn't have to go without anything.

"The things I want to show ya, Jeb," Boone groaned against the man's neck, "if only people kn—"

"Ahem."

Boone froze when someone cleared their voice behind him and Jeb. He turned to see Avery standing there. At least, he thought it was Avery. By process of elimination, it had to be. There were no other women at the ranch.

Boone's breath caught in his throat. Before him stood a beautiful woman dressed in a green calico-print dress that fell in waves to his high-heeled-boot-clad feet. His long strawberry-blond hair had been swept up in some sort of French twist. A simple golden band circled his ring finger.

"Avery?"

"Ava McCain, how do you do?" Avery said, grabbing his skirt and giving Boone and Jeb a small curtsy.

"Well, I'll be damned," Boone whispered.

Boone grunted a moment later when Jeb smacked him upside the back of his head. "You just might," Jeb growled.

Boone suddenly realized he stared at Avery like a man lost in the desert stared at a waterhole mirage. He felt his face flush. He quickly dropped his eyes, staring anywhere but at the vision before him.

In all of his years, Boone never felt an attraction to a woman before. He knew he preferred men from a very early age. The only reason he could think of that he suddenly found himself attracted to a woman was that he knew underneath all those female clothes stood a man.

“I think you look very nice, Avery,” Jeb said. “Every bit the women we’d ho—”

“I’m Ava now, remember?” Avery giggled. “Your wife? Ava McCain?”

Boone thought he preferred the deeper tone of Jeb’s laughter, but he looked forward to the small twitters of amusement that came out of Avery’s mouth. They sounded like sunshine and birds chirping all wrapped up together.

Jeb nodded. “Ava it is.”

Avery took a step closer. “Since I’ve suddenly become the new Mrs. McCain,” Avery said, giving both Jeb and Boone a heated look, “don’t y’all think we should behave like married folk do?”

Boone looked up at Avery in shock. Did he just say what Boone thought he did? “Avery, you know we would never make you do—”

“We’re not asking you to—” Jeb added at the same time. Boone could hear the same astonishment in Jeb’s voice that he felt.

Avery took another step, the long length of his skirt swishing around his legs. “I know you’d never make me do anything I didn’t want to do. You’ve both proven that over the last week. I just figured,” Avery shrugged, “we might as well have a little fun.”

Boone watched, mesmerized as Avery’s hands went to the small buttons on the front of his dress and he began unbuttoning them. He wasn’t sure he ever saw anything so sexy in his life. He was so hard right then he was afraid his dick would break off in his pants.

“Avery, are ya sure ya know what you’re doin’?” Boone whispered. He needed to know that Avery wasn’t doing this out of a misguided sense of gratitude. “Jeb and I’ll help ya no matter what. You don’t have to do this.”

Avery’s hands paused. He got a sad, lost look on his face. “You don’t want me?” His hand swept down the front of his dress. “Is it because I’m dressed as a woman?”

Jeb gently grabbed Avery’s arm, gaining his attention. “Boone and I didn’t say we didn’t want you, Avery. We just want you to be sure. We would never take advantage of you the way your uncle has.”

Boone reached over and grabbed Avery’s other arm. “Ya need to think about what you’re proposin’ here, Avery. If you join Jeb and me, it’s for keeps. We don’t do this with just any cowboy that comes along.”

“Boone, don’t—” Jeb started.

“Jeb, ya know you can’t be with Avery and not feel somethin’ for him.” Boone stroked the side of Jeb’s face. “How ya gonna feel, cowboy, if ya do this and Avery leaves afterward? It’ll tear ya up.”

“Boone.” Jeb’s eyes floated close as he leaned into Boone’s hand. Boone knew Jeb was the symbol of the big bad rancher. He could take down a bull by himself, shoot better than anyone Boone ever met, and ride harder and longer than even Boone could.

Underneath that rough exterior beat a heart of gold that Jeb wore on his sleeve. Maybe that was why Jeb had such a hard time expressing his emotions. He was too afraid of losing what he had. Sometimes, Boone felt older than Jeb.

“You’d all keep me?” Avery whispered.

Jeb’s eyes popped open and they both turned to face the other man. “We’d never keep ya against your will, Avery,” Boone said quickly. “Ya have to know that. You’re free to leave whenever ya want.”

“But if—if I wanted to stay, permanent like, you’d let me?” Avery’s voice sounded quiet, small. His fingers twisted in the calico

material of his skirt. Boone saw him take a deep breath as if bracing himself for rejection.

That convinced Boone. He might not know much about the young man, but he had been attracted to him from first sight. The last week spent almost totally in his company just reinforced the feelings Boone started to have for the man.

Boone reached over and cupped the side of Avery's face. "Yeah, we'd like to keep ya."

"You mean that?" Avery's eyes begged Boone to say *yes*.

Boone nodded. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Jeb nod as well. The smile that crossed Avery's face rivaled the joy Boone felt when the man giggled. He suddenly felt lighter, more optimistic about the future.

"Then, y'all think we could get on with this little show of yours?" Avery asked, his fingers going back to the buttons on his dress.

Boone chuckled. "That was slicker than snot on a chicken's lip."

"Boone!" Jeb admonished, his jaw dropping open as he stared.

"Oh come on, Jeb," Boone snickered. "He done worked that in slicker than shit."

"But you do want Avery to join us?" Jeb asked.

"Hell, yeah," Boone replied.

Avery suddenly stood between the two of them, a hand placed on each of their chests. He glanced back and forth between them. Boone was intrigued. This was the first sign he saw of Avery exerting himself.

It wasn't that he thought Avery a weak man. No one could have gone through what he did at the hands of Jerald Morgan and lived without having a lot of strength. Still, Avery gave the impression that he was a more docile person. Could Boone be wrong?

"Don't, please," Avery pleaded. "I don't wanna be the reason y'all are fightin'."

Boone frowned. "Avery, we're not fightin'."

“Avery, we don’t fight,” Jeb said. Avery just looked at him. Jeb rolled his eyes. “Okay, we do fight. Any couple does. But we try really hard not to. If we have a problem, we talk about it. Before now, it’s just been Boone and me. We have to stick together.”

“Yeah, Jeb knows I was just spoutin’ off my mouth.”

“He does that a lot.” Jeb snickered.

Boone was shocked at the sudden change that came over Avery. The look in his eyes, the way his body suddenly moved, it was sensual and sent Boone’s level of desire shooting through the roof.

“What else can ya do with your mouth?”

Boone blinked. Did those words just come out of Avery’s mouth? Sweet, docile, little Avery? He glanced over at Jeb. He wasn’t surprised to see Jeb’s mouth hanging open. At least he wasn’t alone in his astonishment.

Boone grinned. “I can do a lot of things with my mouth. Just ask Jeb.”

Avery turned to look at Jeb. While Jeb grinned down at Avery, Boone grabbed the skirt of Avery’s dress and began pulling it up. He reached his hand under the thick material and groaned.

“Damn, Avery, ya don’t even have any bloomers on under here.” Boone felt a naked ass cheek in his hand, a very tight naked ass cheek. His cock throbbed. He could just imagine how great it would feel to pump himself into that tight little ass.

Avery giggled. “Didn’t think I needed them.”

“You don’t.” He grabbed Avery around the waist and swung him around to the bed, pushing his body down onto the bed. He heard Avery squeak when he tossed the skirt of his dress up over his head, baring his naked ass.

“Damn!” Jeb swore.

Boone chuckled. “Yeah, that’s kinda what I thought.”

Boone reached down and stroked his hand over the tight round cheek. He chuckled when Jeb’s hand landed on the other cheek. They both lifted and squeezed then, as if they shared the same brain, they

separated Avery's ass cheeks, baring the little puckered hole they both wanted into.

Boone knelt on the floor and licked the little flowered hole, watching with delight as it quivered, Avery's whole body shuddering. Avery let out a low deep groan. Boone licked again, pressing his tongue against the snug little hole.

"Best two out of three?" Jeb asked from above him, his voice almost breathless.

"Works for me." Boone glanced back up at Jeb. "You get the cards. I'll get him naked."

Jeb looked like he might to protest. "The quicker it's decided," Boone said, "the quicker we can play with him."

"Do I get a vote?" asked a muffled voice from the bed.

"You always get a vote," Boone assured Avery.

Avery wiggled around until he could roll over on his back and look up at them. "What are y'all doin'?"

"Unless you disagree," Jeb said, "best two out of three hands gets your ass first."

Avery blushed deep red but he was grinning. "Okay."

Boone stood up and grabbed the edge of Avery's dress, pulling it over his head and off his body as Jeb went to get the cards from the other room. Boone had Avery completely undressed and stood there staring at him by the time Jeb came back into the room.

"Damn!" Jeb swore again, coming to a halt. Avery lay back on the bed, one leg slightly bent at the knee, his arms tossed over his head and his hard cock standing at full mast.

"We are in so much trouble," Jeb whispered to Boone. "We ain't never gonna get a lick of work done with him around."

"We'll hire someone to run the ranch," Boone replied as he palmed his aching cock. Just that sight of Avery made him damn near ready to come in his pants. He and Jeb needed to figure out who was gonna get what and soon.

"Deal."

“Huh?” Jeb asked, never turning away from the splendid sight before him.

“Deal the damn cards!” Boone growled.

“Oh, yeah, right.” Jeb flushed and sat down on the side of the bed.

Boone walked around to sit on the other side, both of them at the bottom of the bed, giving Avery plenty of room to move about. Boone could barely tear his eyes away. Every move Avery made was sensual. He looked like a walking sex telegram.

“Cards?”

Boone turned to look at Jeb, confused for a moment before Jeb nodded down at the cards sitting before him on the bed. Boone felt his face heat up as he grabbed the cards. He held two eights, a ten, a three, and an ace. Okay, so he had two pair.

He tossed all but the two eights down. “Pair of eights,” he said as he laid his cards on the bed.

“Pair of fives,” Jeb grumbled, tossing his cards down.

Avery giggled. Boone glanced over and nearly swallowed his tongue. Avery lay back against the pillows stacked at the top of the bed. He slowly stroked his cock, his green eyes watching Boone and Jeb intently.

Boone gulped passed the lump building in his throat. “Damn!”

“Deal,” Jeb growled.

Boone glanced over to see Jeb’s eyes riveted on Avery. He groaned at the fire he could see burning in Jeb’s eyes. His lover of several years was raring to go. Strangely enough, Boone didn’t feel jealous. He felt aroused beyond anything he could ever remember.

Boone grabbed the cards and quickly shuffled them, then dealt out five cards for him and Jeb. He picked his up, grimacing at the hand he dealt himself. It sucked. He had nothing he could work with, an eight, a five, a two, a jack, and a nine.

“Full house,” Jeb said as he laid his cards down. *Crap!*

“I ain’t got shit!” Boone snarled as he tossed his cards onto the bed.

“My deal.” Jeb chuckled, then cast Avery a lecherous grin. “You just keep playing with yourself there, honey. Boone and I’ll be there soon enough.”

“Just deal the damn cards, Jeb,” Boone griped. While Jeb dealt the next hand, Boone quickly shucked his clothes and cowboy boots, tossing them to the floor. He wanted to be ready in case he won the next hand.

He almost purred when Jeb’s eyes turned on him and Jeb growled. It felt good to know that even with someone new in their lives Boone still affected his lover. He also liked the soft groan he heard from Avery. It made Boone feel ten feet tall to know he could arouse these two gorgeous men.

Boone picked up his cards and fingered through them. He held a full house, three queens and two tens. Not bad, but it really depended on what Jeb had. He glanced up at his lover, noting the lower lip caught between his teeth. Jeb’s tell for a bad hand of poker was biting his lip. Boone doubted the man even knew he did it.

Boone wanted to win more than almost anything. The thought of sinking his cock into Avery’s tight little ass made his body shudder. But he also wanted to share the experience with Jeb. He didn’t want to do anything without him. He just didn’t know how to accomplish that without one of them losing out.

As Jeb fingered his cards and bit his lip, Boone tried desperately to come up with a plan that would satisfy all three of them. Then suddenly it hit him. He reached over and yanked the cards out of Jeb’s hand.

“Hey!” Jeb exclaimed.

“You won a hand, I won a hand. We’re even. I say we stay even.”

“But who gets to—”

“I say whoever can hold out the longest gets his ass.”

Boone felt the weight of Jeb’s stare. He shrugged. “Besides, I want his mouth as much as I want his ass. Who says we can’t all have a little fun at the same time?”

Jeb grinned. They both turned to look at Avery. Boone didn't know what Avery saw in their faces but he suddenly gulped and scooted up the bed.

"Oh, damn!" Avery said softly.

And just like that, Boone and Jeb were on him. Boone moved to one side while Jeb took the other. Boone could see Jeb's hands roaming all over Avery's body while his did the same. Avery groaned, his head falling back against the pillows.

Boone grabbed Avery's thigh and pulled it over his. Avery, the natural sex animal that he seemed to be, moved the other one himself, draping it over Jeb's leg. Boone felt a growl building in his chest.

Avery's hands lay over his head and his legs spread open wide. His entire body laid bare for Boone and Jeb to ogle, and ogle Boone did. Avery was mouthwateringly beautiful.

Jeb was handsome, rugged. He made Boone think of strong arms holding him, late nights cuddled in front of the fireplace held by the man he loved. Avery was stunning. He made Boone think of being the one doing the holding.

Boone leaned over and captured one brown-hued nipple with his lips. He grinned around that nipple when Avery hissed and arched his body closer to him. He stroked his hand slowly down Avery's chest to his abdomen, then pushed through the soft curls surrounding the man's jutting cock.

Avery whimpered.

Boone heard a low chuckle. He looked up to see Jeb watching him. He could see a definite glow in Jeb's eyes. It thrilled Boone to the bottoms of his feet and made his cock ache. He grinned back.

"You gonna get naked, too?"

Jeb didn't even answer. He just rolled off the side of the bed and got to his feet. Even with a very naked Avery lying next to him, Boone couldn't help but watch Jeb get undressed. The sight never failed to arouse him.

"Damn!"

Boone glanced down at Avery to find him watching Jeb take his clothes off. He practically drooled. Avery's hand moved down his body toward his cock, but Boone beat him to it. At Avery's look of surprise, Boone grinned.

"Let me." Boone moved over to settle between Avery's legs. Avery's purple-headed cock stood proudly before him. Boone leaned up on his arms and licked the head. Avery squealed, his entire body quivering.

"Oh God, no one's ever—I've never—" Avery moaned.

"No one's ever what, Avery?" Jeb asked as he climbed onto the bed to lie down next to the man. Boone grinned. Jeb took the words right out of his mouth. Boone licked at the head of Avery's cock again. This time, he sucked it into his mouth, running his tongue across the small slit in the top.

Avery whimpered. "No one's ever done that before," he cried out.

"Avery, you're not a virgin, are you?" Jeb asked.

Boone paused as he waited for Avery's answer. While he was honest enough with himself to know he would be pleased if they were the first to have Avery, he knew it could lead to some problems, too.

"No, no," Avery said breathlessly. Boone gave his cock another swipe. "I've never—no one's ever done that."

"Well then, I guess it's about time someone did, huh?" Jeb chuckled. "Boone? Would you be so kind?"

Boone eagerly nodded his head and went to work on Avery's cock. He sucked it deep into his mouth, then let it go, then deep again, all the while running his tongue over every inch. Drops of pre-cum dotted his tongue every time he reached the head. Avery tasted amazing.

"Boone's very good at sucking cock, Avery," Jeb whispered just loud enough for Boone to hear over his slurping. "Especially when he gets all of your cock into his mouth and swallows. Damn, there's nothing like it on earth."

Boone proudly did exactly what Jeb described, sucking Avery's cock in deep, then swallowing, allowing his throat muscles to gently massage Avery's cock. Avery went wild. His hips started pumping against Boone's mouth. His cries grew so loud, Boone wondered if the ranch hands might hear him.

"Oh fuck!" Avery cried out.

Boone glanced up to see Avery reach for him but Jeb stopped him, pinning his arms to the bed. Jeb captured Avery's mouth, smothering his cries. Boone grabbed Avery's hips and held them down against the bed.

He continued to suck and lick until Avery's body suddenly stiffened. That was his only warning before ropes of white cream shot into his mouth, then slowly dribbled out the sides. Boone licked Avery clean, each swipe of his tongue sending the man into more shivers.

When he raised his head, Jeb stared down at him, a proud and loving expression on his face. Jeb winked. Boone grinned. Avery groaned.

Boone kneeled between Avery's legs. He grabbed his throbbing cock and stroked it a few times. He felt hot, needy. He wanted to come so bad he could almost taste it. Boone wiped up the drops of pre-cum on the head of his cock, then held out his finger.

Jeb grinned, leaning forward to suck Boone's finger into his mouth. Boone tilted his head to one side and groaned. Jeb could suck cock just as well as Boone could. Just the feeling of Jeb's tongue caressing his finger made Boone shudder.

"I need and I need now!" Boone growled. "Get your ass over here, cowboy."

"Don't you want—"

Boone shook his head. "I had his first already. Time for you to have his other first."

"Boone," Avery said, sounding like he just found his voice, "I'm not a virgin. I told you that already."

Boone patted Avery's thigh with his free hand. The other one still held his cock. "You may have been fucked by other men but you're still a virgin to someone taking you that truly cares about you."

"Isn't it the same thing?"

"No." He wasn't going to expand on the answer. Avery would figure it out soon enough.

Boone scooted back as Jeb knelt between Avery's legs. He rubbed his hands over Jeb's ass. While breaking someone new in was nice for Boone, there was nothing like having a lover that knew him.

Boone bounded off the bed and quickly grabbed their bedside bottle of oil. He pulled the top with his teeth and poured some in Jeb's hand before moving behind him once again. Pouring some oil in his own hand, he replaced the cork top and tossed the bottle onto the bed.

Boone liberally lubed Jeb up. He pressed one, then two fingers into his lover to get him ready. Jeb soon pushed back against him, impaling himself on Boone's fingers. Boone added a third finger. He loved getting Jeb ready. Nothing made him feel better than knowing he gave Jeb pleasure.

"Better get Avery ready, cowboy," Boone ordered. "I'm gonna be in your ass in 'bout ten seconds."

Jeb nodded. "He's ready."

Boone blinked. He was? Boone concentrated so hard on getting Jeb ready, he totally missed watching Jeb get Avery ready. *Damn!*

"Then go get 'em, cowboy."

Boone heard Jeb groan and Avery cry out. He leaned around Jeb's body to see him slowly sinking into Avery's ass. A single glance up at Avery told him that the man started to understand the difference between being fucked by a stranger and being loved by someone who cared.

"Okay, I'm in," Jeb said, breathing heavily.

Boone grabbed Jeb's hip with one hand, his cock with the other, then slowly guided himself in. Once he passed the first set of muscles, Boone paused, giving Jeb time to grow accustomed to him and to give

himself time to catch his breath. He didn't want to come too early, and he felt pretty close to doing just that.

"Ready, cowboy?" Boone finally asked as he patted Jeb's hip. Jeb nodded and started moving, thrusting slowly into Avery. Boone did the same, trying to find a workable rhythm with Jeb's movements.

Eventually he found one, Jeb thrusting in when Boone did, Jeb pulling most of the way out when Boone did. It seemed to work for them. It at least gave them all pleasure by the sounds Boone could hear.

"Harder, harder," Avery cried out, his head moving back and forth on the pillows. "Oh God, please, harder."

Boone could feel Jeb start to move, thrusting harder into Avery. It also impaled Jeb on Boone's cock every time he backed out. Boone groaned. The feeling was so intense he thought he might explode.

"Jeb, I can't hold out too much longer," Boone groaned. He started to protest when Jeb moved away from him and pulled his cock from Avery but Jeb quickly motioned Boone to take his place.

"I had him," Jeb said. "Now, it's your turn."

Boone's eyes widened. Jeb wanted to share, and on Avery's first time too. "Jeb, ya know I ain't got the power to stop once I start."

Jeb nodded and gestured for Boone to take over loving on Avery. Boone was only too eager to comply. He grabbed Avery's hips and pushed himself in to the root, groaning as Avery's muscles tightened around him.

Boone knew if Jeb didn't hurry, he would be left in the dust. He only had so much willpower and he slid away faster than a June bug on a hot tin roof. "Jeb," Boone whimpered, "please."

"I've got ya, baby," Jeb crooned as he got Boone ready to receive him.

Having Jeb's fingers in his ass, his own aching cock buried in Avery's ass, it all made Boone crazy. He needed to do something to keep from coming. A sudden idea made him reach down to grab Avery's cock, stroking him quickly.

Avery cried out, his eyes rolling into the back of his head. Boone could feel Avery's inner muscles tightening around him. He felt so hot, so tight. "Jeb, now!"

"But, you're not—" Jeb protested.

"Now, Jeb!" Boone exclaimed. He felt Jeb push into him a moment later, wincing at the slight burn he felt, but once Jeb pushed all of the way in, Boone didn't care about the slight twinge of pain he felt. The pleasure he felt was too intense.

Boone started thrusting into Avery, his hand stroking the man's cock. Avery whimpered. His body started to shake. Suddenly, his body went rigid, then white cream shot out of his cock, coating Boone's hand and Avery's abdomen.

Boone groaned. Besides the fact that Avery clamped down on him like a vise, the sight of the man climaxing sent Boone right over the edge. His fingers gripped Avery's hand as he roared out his release, filling Avery with his seed.

Boone dropped his head down to Avery's chest. He heard Jeb cry out behind him, then felt hot spurts fill him. Jeb's hands clasped his hips so hard Boone knew that there would be bruises the next morning.

He groaned when Jeb pulled free of him, then collapsed down on the bed beside Avery. He could see Jeb's chest rapidly rising and falling as the man tried to regain his breath. He appeared hot and sweaty and smelled of sex. Boone thought he never looked sexier.

Boone glanced down at Avery. His eyes fluttered as they drifted closed. As Boone watched, Avery's hand curled under his cheek and he seemed to fall asleep, a smile gracing his lush lips. Boone chuckled. Apparently, Avery enjoyed himself.

Chapter 5

Avery was so nervous he could spit. Jeb and Boone were getting ready to go out after Sara. It wasn't that he didn't want Sara rescued, rather that he felt concerned that something horrible would happen to Jeb and Boone.

They had been all ready to run out the day after their first time together. Avery put them off for the last ten days using various means. Some of it took the form of diversions, like dragging one or both of them into bed. Others had been outright pleading on his part.

Last night while the three of them lay in bed, Jeb and Boone finally convinced Avery it was time. Avery still didn't like it but he understood it. He didn't know if Jeb and Boone understood how malicious Jerald Morgan could be when crossed. Avery did.

Avery jerked out of his thoughts when a deep voice chuckled behind him. He turned to find Jeb standing there, leaning back against the doorframe. "Oh, hey, Jeb."

Jeb pushed away from the doorframe and walked over to stand behind Avery. Avery leaned into the hand Jeb cupped around his cheek. "What's wrong, honey?"

Avery shrugged. "I'm worried, what else?"

Jeb scooted around to squat in front of Avery. "It's gonna be okay, Avery. There's nothing for you to worry about. Boone and I will get Sara and bring her back here where you will both be safe."

Avery snorted. "So says the man wearing britches."

Jeb chuckled, looking Avery up and down. "I don't know. I think you look kinda nice in a dress. Boone and I may just have to keep you in them."

“And you can go suck a pickled egg, too.”

Jeb fingered the bottom edge of Avery’s dress. “I’d rather suck something else.”

Avery felt suddenly hot. His palms sweated so much he wiped them on his dress. Jeb’s eyes filled with so much desire, and it was all aimed at him. Avery never experienced true passion before Jeb and Boone. Men looked at Avery but they didn’t really see him. Jeb and Boone saw him.

They seemed to generally care for him. Avery prayed that they did. He started falling for the two sexy men the minute he met them. They just seemed so caring, so loving. They made Avery feel safe and accepted, something he hadn’t felt in a long time.

If Jeb and Boone just played him, Avery didn’t think he would survive it. He needed them, what they offered him. Giving up the dream he lived for the last two weeks would be devastating.

“Jeb,” Avery crooned, “I—”

“Jeb? Avery?” Boone shouted as he ran into the house. “The sheriff is coming down the road and he has someone with him.”

Avery froze. He didn’t know what to do. His heart beat rapidly in his chest. He suddenly felt very cold and began to shake. The sheriff was coming. He’d take Avery away and give him back to Morgan, Avery just knew it.

“Ssshhh, Avery,” Jeb murmured. “It’s gonna be fine. Sheriff Nash is a good man. He won’t hurt you.”

Avery shook his head. No, he didn’t believe Jeb. He needed to hide. Avery started scanning the room looking for a place to hide from the sheriff. Any place would do. He knew from experience that he could curl up in very small spaces.

“Avery!”

Avery looked up, stunned by the vehemence in Boone’s voice.

“Just go in the kitchen and start making bread or some damn thing,” Boone said. “You’re Ava McCain. Everyone knows that. Jeb and I, your husbands, will go deal with the sheriff.”

Avery got up and went into the kitchen. He stopped and looked around. He grabbed the apron Jeb bought him and tied it around his waist, then grabbed a bowl. Bread. He needed to make bread. What in the hell did he know about making bread?

“Need some help, *weeko kimimela*?”

Cheta stood in the kitchen doorway. He had a happy, welcoming smile on his face. Avery felt so relieved to see the man he almost dropped the bowl in his hand.

“Cheta, the sheriff is coming and Boone sent me in here to make bread and be *wifey*, and I’ve never made bread. I have no idea what I’m doing and the sheriff is going to know I’m not a woman and he’ll return me to my uncle and then—”

“*Weeko kimimela*, you need to take a deep breath and calm down. You’re getting far too upset. It can’t be good for you.”

“Cheta,” Avery whined. Cheta patted him on the shoulder.

“Not to worry, Ava, I know how to make bread and I would be more than happy to show my granddaughter-in-law.”

Avery blinked. “Cheta, ya know that I’m a man, right?”

“Of course, my dear granddaughter.” Cheta chuckled. “Now, go get the flour.”

Avery shook his head and went into the pantry to get the tin of flour. He came back to the kitchen and set it on the counter. He glanced out the window just in time to see Jeb and Boone greeting a stranger with a star on his shirt and his uncle Jerald Morgan.

* * * *

“Mornin’, Sheriff Nash.” Jeb greeted the man on horseback. “What can we do for ya?”

“Mornin’, Jeb, Boone,” Lucas Nash said, tipping his cowboy hat back with his thumb. “You seen any strangers ’round here lately?”

“Naw, not that I can think of,” Jeb replied, rubbing his hand over his chin. “You lookin’ for someone particular?”

“This here is—”

“Boone,” Cheta called out from the front door, “you’re *weeko kimimela* would like to see you in the kitchen. I believe she has a question about dinner and how many guests there will be.”

Jeb could see Lucas watching, smiling. Lucas Nash was an Indian himself. He knew *weeko kimimela* meant pretty butterfly.

“My, my,” Lucas said, “it would seem your grandfather is quite taken with your new wife.”

Jeb grinned. “Not as much as Boone and me.”

Lucas chuckled. “Do I get to meet the little lady?”

“Ah, well, sure, Sheriff,” Jeb replied, suddenly worried about the outcome of that meeting. Would Lucas Nash recognize Avery as a man? “Just let me go in and get her.”

“Sheriff, I really don’t have time for this,” grumbled the man sitting on the horse next to Sheriff Nash.

Lucas heaved a large sigh and rolled his eyes. “There is always time to be neighborly, Mr. Morgan, and if you don’t like it, you can damn well find someone else to guide you around the valley.”

“Now look here,” the man sputtered, “I have a letter from the governor of the territory. He told you to—”

“I know very well what the governor said in his letter. You’d be good to remember that I don’t answer to him. If you remember what I told you this morning, Applegate Valley is not part of the recognized territory of the United States. I am only assisting as a favor to the governor, who is a good friend of mine, and for no other reason.”

Morgan snorted. “Fine, go meet the little woman but the least you could do is get me something to drink, preferably something strong.” The man ran his fingers around the collar of his shirt. “It’s hotter than Hades out here.”

Jeb’s heart thundered as he led Lucas into the house. What would the sheriff say? Would he make Jeb and Boone return Avery to Morgan? And Morgan? What in the hell was he doing here with the sheriff?

“Ava? Honey?” Jeb called out as he walked into the house. “Sheriff Nash would like to meet you.”

“Please, call me Lucas. If you call me Sheriff Nash I might think you’re talking about my brother, Royce.”

“We’re in the kitchen, Jeb,” Boone replied.

Jeb didn’t know what to expect when he led Lucas to the kitchen. He found his grandfather and Avery both sitting on the floor, laughing like loons. A flour tin lay empty between them on the floor.

“Uh...” Jeb just didn’t quite know what to say.

“Seems your grandfather was teachin’ Ava a new bread recipe,” Boone said, laughing from his position leaning back against the wall next to the pantry door. “It didn’t go well.”

Jeb chuckled. He couldn’t help it. Flour covered both Cheta and Avery from head to toe. “Looks like you two are having a grand time.”

That just sent Ava and Cheta into more laughter. Jeb glanced over at Lucas and shrugged. “Sorry. It seems my wife is a little indisposed at the moment.”

The sheriff shook his head, a wide grin on his lips. “No mind, Jeb. She looks like she’s enjoying herself.” He leaned forward and held out his hand. “It’s nice to finally meet you, Mrs. McCain. I’m Sheriff Lucas Nash.”

Jeb held his breath as Avery stopped laughing and looked up at the sheriff. He suddenly went whiter than the flour and jumped to his feet, running to stand behind Boone. Lucas glanced back at him in confusion.

“Did I say something wr—” Lucas began only to be interrupted by Jerald Morgan.

“Sheriff Nash,” Morgan thundered, “are you about done in here? I don’t have all day, you know.”

“I don’t believe I invited you into my house, Mr. Morgan,” Jeb said. Anyone who knew Jeb knew to be forewarned by the deep, rusty

tone in his voice. Most would have run in the other direction. Morgan just sneered.

“I don’t believe I asked you,” The man sneered.

“Now, Mr. Morgan, I don’t care who you have a letter from,” Lucas began, “I won’t allow you to—”

“Avery! You little shit!” Morgan suddenly yelled as he bounded across the room. Avery cried out and bolted out the back door, Morgan fast on his heels. It took mere seconds for Boone and Jeb to follow, Sheriff Nash and Cheta bringing up the rear.

Jeb ran out the door hoping to get to Avery before Morgan did. He nearly tripped over his feet as he tried to stop when he saw Avery up against the side of the house, Morgan holding a gun on him. Riley barked and growled just feet from them.

“Morgan, drop the gun,” Jeb shouted.

“Morgan, what in the hell do you think you’re doing?” Lucas shouted.

“Ava!” Boone shouted.

All three men stopped moving when Morgan cocked the gun. Jeb could see Avery shaking, his eyes widened with fright. When he turned to look at him, Jeb could see love and sadness and regret in Avery’s green eyes.

It ripped at Jeb’s heart. He wasn’t going to lose Avery just after finding him. He started to creep forward, his eyes on Morgan’s trigger finger. He was a little more than a step away when Morgan suddenly turned on him.

“He’s mine, do you hear me?” Morgan shouted. “And no one is going to take him away from me.”

Jeb wasn’t sure Morgan was sane. His eyes seemed a little too wide, a little too clouded. When Morgan waved him away with a gesture of the gun, Jeb slowly took a few steps back. “You’re not gonna get away with this, Morgan.”

“Avery is mine,” Morgan shouted again. “He belongs to me. I found him and I get to keep him.”

Morgan's words confused Jeb. He thought Avery's parents gave him to Morgan. *Finding* implied that they might not have had anything to do with it. He wanted to figure it out but he had better things to worry about, like the fact that Morgan turned the gun back on Avery.

"Ava? Honey?" Jeb called out. "I want you to come over here to me."

Avery shook his head, flour flying everywhere.

"Come on, honey, come to me, please?" Jeb pleaded. He needed to get Avery away from the front of the gun barrel.

"No!" Morgan shouted when Avery started to move.

Jeb saw Morgan's finger start to pull the trigger. His heart fell from his chest. In a mad dash, Jeb leapt across the space between him and Morgan. He grabbed for the hand holding the gun. Out of the corner of his eye Jeb saw Avery run past him.

Hoping Avery reached the safety of Boone's arms, Jeb wrestled for possession of the gun. He heard a sudden blast as a gun went off and looked up. Morgan stared at him, his mouth dropped open in surprise.

"No, he's mine," Morgan whispered before blood bubbled from his lips and dripped down his chin. Then he fell to the ground. It was only then that Jeb saw the bloody bullet holes and arrow in Morgan's back.

He glanced up to see both Boone and Lucas, each with a smoking gun in their hands. Cheta stood there with a bow. Avery sat off to one side with his arms wrapped around himself, shaking.

"Oh, honey," Jeb cried out as he rushed over to Avery and scooped the man up in his arms. Another set of arms encircled them both. Jeb looked over to see Boone holding them. Cheta was petting and calming the dog. Lucas removed the gun from Morgan's dead hand.

Jeb carried Avery into the house, Boone right behind him. He moved quickly to their bedroom and sat down on the side of the bed. Tucking Avery's head under his chin, Jeb began rocking him.

"It's okay, Avery, he's gone now. He can never hurt you again."

"Yeah, Avery," Boone added. "Now we can go get your Sara and bring her back here and Morgan can't stop us."

Avery sniffled. "I thought he would kill me," he whispered, his hands digging into the material of Jeb's shirt. "I thought I'd never get to tell you how much I love you both."

"We love ya, too," Boone said.

Jeb knew Boone said it for him, too. He knew he didn't say the words real well, if at all. Maybe the time had come to change that. Maybe this should be a new beginning for all of them. He looked up at Boone. He wasn't surprised by the tears he could see in the man's eyes.

"I love you, Boone," Jeb whispered quietly, watching as the man's eyes widened. "I love you, too, Avery. I love you both so very much."

Chapter 6

“So, you want to explain to me just what the hell is going on?” Lucas asked as he looked across the table at Jeb and Boone. Avery was lying in the bedroom, resting. He was also avoiding the sheriff, not wanting to meet the man in case something went wrong.

“Not really, no,” Boone replied.

“Do it anyway,” Lucas insisted.

“How much have you figured out on your own?” Jeb asked.

Lucas raised an eyebrow. “I’ve figured out that your wife will never go nude bathing with mine.”

Jeb chuckled. “Actually, Avery would probably be the safest person in the world to go nude bathing with your wife. You or one of your brothers, however...”

“So her name really is Avery?”

“No, *his* name is Avery,” Boone said.

“And he’s dressed like a woman because?”

“Because we wanted to hide him from Morgan,” Jeb said. He sat back in his chair, running a tired hand through his hair. “Look, Sheriff, this whole—”

“Lucas, please,” Lucas said. “I believe I’ve already asked you to call me Lucas.”

“Lucas then,” Jeb said. “This whole thing is a mess. We found Avery beaten and unconscious in a field about five miles out. Of course, we brought him home, hoping that Cheta might be able to do something for him...”

“And?” Lucas asked when Jeb paused.

“And we decided that Avery’s best chance of avoiding Morgan was to pretend to be our wife,” Boone said. “We could keep him safe here.”

“So, he doesn’t belong to you?”

Boone nodded. He couldn’t help the large smile that crossed his face. “Oh, he belongs to us, all right.”

“And I’ll wear dresses every day for the rest of my life if it means that they can keep me.”

Boone turned to see Avery standing in the bedroom doorway. He cleaned the flour off and dressed in a clean gown. He still looked beautiful. “Hey honey, come on over here and meet the sheriff.”

Avery walked across the room and sat down in the seat Jeb and Boone set for him right between them. He glared across the table at Lucas.

“Well, you’re pretty enough to be a lady.” Lucas chuckled.

“I’m not,” Avery countered.

“Do you prefer to be called Avery or Ava?”

“Do I get to stay with Boone and Jeb?” Avery asked. Boone could feel Avery’s body shaking. He already knew the answer but Avery needed to hear it directly from the sheriff’s mouth.

“None of my business,” Lucas said. “If they want you to stay, it’s up to them. Course, I think they’d be stupid to let you go. You seem to care about them as much as they care about you. You might want to think about giving up the whole dress thing, though. No one in Applegate Valley will look down on you for loving someone, or two someone’s.”

“Then, please, call me Avery.”

“Okay, Avery, want to tell me about Jerald Morgan?”

Avery shrugged. “When my parents died they gave me to Morgan. That was several years ago. I’ve been trying to get away from him ever since.”

“How old are you, Avery?” Lucas inquired.

“Twenty five. Why?”

“As long as you’re legal, there isn’t any reason you can’t make your own decisions. If you wanted to leave him, he can’t keep you. You do know that, don’t you?”

“That may be true in your world,” Avery said. “In my world, Morgan’s word is law. Just ask Sara.”

“Who’s Sara?” Lucas asked.

“I am.”

Boone glanced over to see Cheta escorting a small sandy-haired woman into the room. She looked older, like she had seen too many hard years, but there was a sparkle in her eyes that said she still fought for life.

Avery cried out and jumped up to run into the arms of the woman. Boone instantly knew the woman was Sara, Avery’s aunt. He suddenly had a very worried feeling that Sara might try to take Avery away from Jeb and him. It made his heart pound painfully in his chest.

“Sara,” Avery cried, “how did you get here?”

“Your Mr. Cheta came and got me,” Sara said as she looked at the man standing next to her. “He said that Morgan died and that you needed me.”

“I do need you,” Avery said. “I’ll always need you.”

“Then I am yours, dear boy,” Sara said as she gently caressed the side of Avery’s face.

“Come, I want you to meet some people.” Avery grabbed Sara’s hand and pulled her over to the table. There was such excitement and relief in his eyes that Boone decided that if Avery wanted to leave with Sara, he wouldn’t stop him. He couldn’t break Avery’s heart.

“This is Jeb McCain and Boone Fowler,” Avery said. “They love me and want to keep me.”

Sara clasped her hands to her mouth. “Oh, Avery, you found your true loves.” She reached over and gently touched both Jeb and Boone on their cheeks as she looked deeply into their eyes. “I can see how much they love you. It shines in their eyes.”

She hugged Avery to her. “I am so happy for you, my sweet boy.”

Boone was stunned. Sara supported their relationship? She wasn't going to take Avery away from them? He thought at that moment that he might love Sara.

"Mrs. Morgan," Boone said as he stood to his feet. "It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. Avery has been right worried about your safety. We were planning to get ya when Morgan and the sheriff showed up here."

Sara cast a curious glance at Lucas. "The sheriff?"

"Yes, your husband gave me a letter from the governor of the territory asking me to assist him in his search for his lost nephew," Lucas said.

"Not only has Jerald never even met the governor but he would no more be concerned for Avery's safety than he would be concerned for mine. I'd bet your letter is a fake, Sheriff."

"I started to wonder," Lucas murmured.

"Mrs. Morgan," Jeb stood to his feet, "I wonder if I might ask you a question."

"Certainly, young man."

"How did you come by Avery?"

"Morgan said he found him wandering alone in the woods. Said he felt bad for the poor boy. I suspect that he had something to do with the disappearance of Avery's parents, but it was nothing I could prove or do anything about as long as Jerald was alive."

"I am sorry for the loss of your husband," Lucas said quickly. "I really didn't have a choice. He held a gun on Avery and I just couldn't let him be hurt."

"I'm not sorry in the least, Sheriff," Sara replied to the shock of everyone. "My husband was a snake. He deserved exactly what he got. I'm just surprised it didn't happen before now. I'm sure if you wired the towns between here and the Mississippi you'd find he's wanted for one thing or another in most, if not all of them."

Boone chuckled. He truly started to like Sara. She had spirit, kind of like a young foal. “Mrs. Morgan, I know I speak for Jeb and myself when I ask ya to stay here with us and Avery.”

Sara looked confused when she glanced at him. Boone smiled. “We want Avery to stay here with us. We love him. You’re his family. We’d like you to stay here and be our family, too.”

“Stay here?”

“Oh, yes, Sara,” Avery cried out, clapping his hands together. “That would be wonderful. You can stay and we’d never have to be apart again. No more Uncle Jerald, no more snake oil salesmen, no more gambling halls. Just you and me and Cheta and Jeb and Boone.”

Boone laughed from sheer joy. Avery looked so happy he bounced. Sara seemed stunned, but she looked like she was warming up to the idea. Jeb looked just as happy as Boone felt.

“Are you sure that’s what you all want?” Sara asked.

Everyone nodded enthusiastically, including Cheta, who, Boone noticed, kept giving Sara covert glances. Boone wondered if they might have another romance in the making. That would surely keep Sara with them.

“Then yes, I’d love to stay.”

Avery shouted out his exuberance and threw his arms around Sara. Boone felt Jeb stand up beside him, an arm snaking around his waist. Boone leaned his head back against Jeb, feeling more content than he ever did in his life.

He had two men who loved him who he could love back, a growing family right before him, and, it seemed, a community that would accept the love of three men. What more could he ask for? He had every cowboy’s dream.

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stormy believes the only thing sexier than a man in cowboy boots is two, or three men in cowboy boots. She also believes in love at first sight, soul mates, true love, and happy endings.

Stormy lives in the great Northwest region of the USA, with her gorgeous husband and soul mate, six very active teenagers, two boxer/collie puppies, two old biddy cats, and three fish.

You can usually find her cuddled in bed with a book in her hand and a puppy in her lap, or on her laptop, creating the next sexy man for one of her stories. Stormy welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website at www.stormyglenn.com.

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