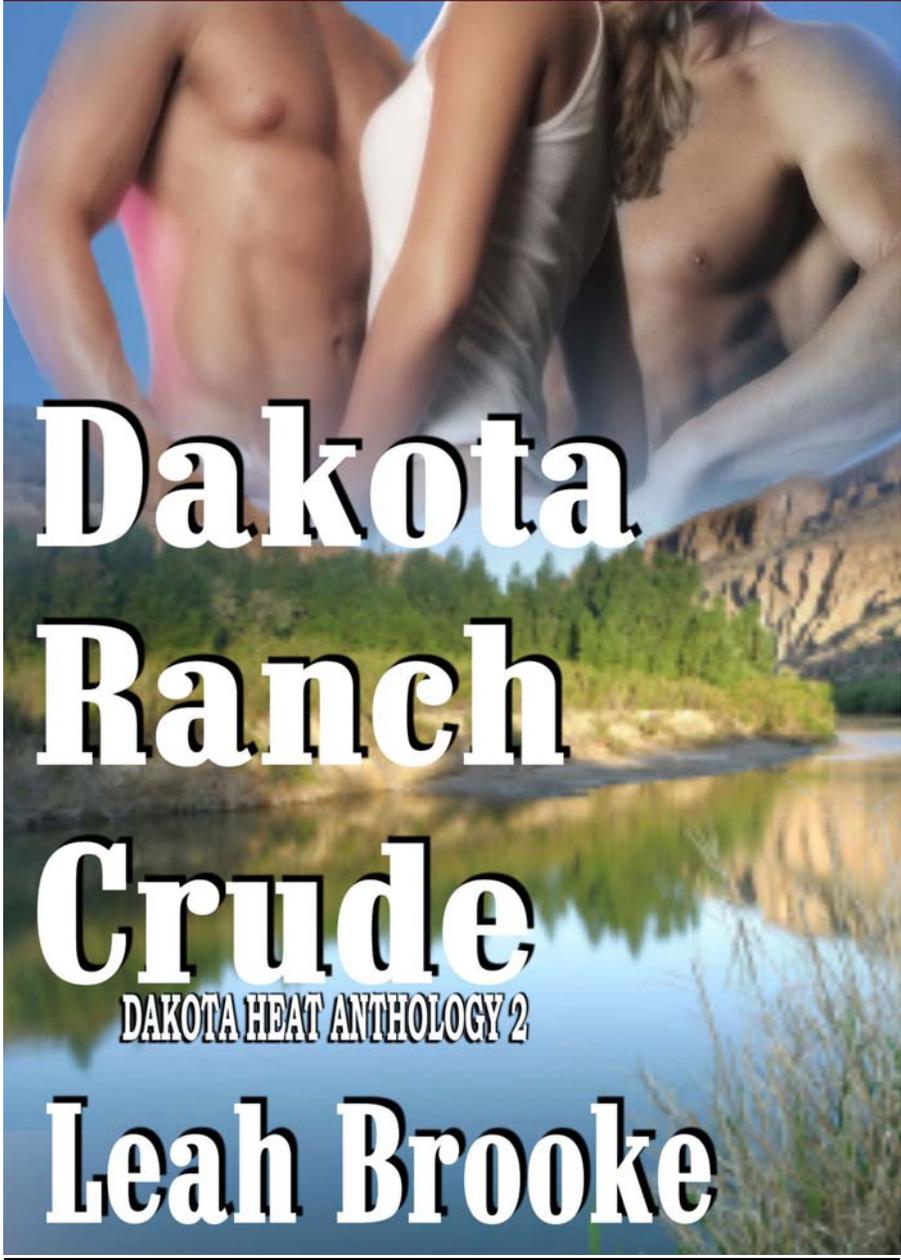


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Dakota

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DAKOTA HEAT ANTHOLOGY 2

Leah Brooke

DAKOTA RANCH CRUDE

Dakota Heat Anthology 2

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MENAGE AMOUR



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DEDICATION

To Frank and Angelo. Thanks for the love and support.

DAKOTA RANCH CRUDE

Dakota Heat Anthology 2

Leah Brooke
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Chapter One

Samantha Cross fumbled with her keys as she rushed to unlock the door. The phone rang two more times before she managed to get inside. She rushed to it, hoping it was Petey.

“Hello?”

“Sam, it’s me.”

“Petey. Thank God! I’ve been trying to call you. Two men showed up at the diner looking for you. Where—”

“Sam, shut up and listen. I’m in jail.”

“What? What happened? For what? Oh God! Petey, what did you do?”

“Right away you believe the worst! I’m already guilty, right? I’m in jail because I’m trying to protect your ass and right away it’s my fault.”

Samantha closed her eyes, mentally counting to ten. Nothing had ever been Petey’s fault. She sighed. “Okay, Petey. Why are you in jail?”

“I got caught trying to steal a bull.”

“What?”

“Listen, I only did it because of you! You know those two men that came looking for me? I met them in a bar and borrowed money

from them. I had a sure bet at the racetrack and the fucking horse stumbled.”

Samantha moved to close the door and plopped into a nearby chair, suddenly feeling very old. “So you lost it?”

“It’s not my fault! You’re the one that keeps pestering me for money for the fucking bills. I only gambled to get you your fucking money so I don’t have to hear about it anymore.”

Samantha leaned forward, rubbing her forehead where a dull throb had settled over her right eye. “So you tried to steal from your employers to pay them back?”

“Yeah. If I don’t pay them back, they’re gonna come after you. That’s probably why they came to the diner. They want to make sure they know who you are. They asked if you’re my sister, right?”

Samantha stood and began to pace, a feeling of dread settling low in her stomach. “Yes, they did. But why would they come after me if you’re the one that borrowed the money?”

“To make sure I pay them! Jesus, you’re stupid sometimes. If I don’t get them their money, they said they would break both your legs.”

Samantha gasped, horrified. She ran to the door to make sure she’d locked it. “Petey, what have you done?”

“Just come get me out of this fucking jail! Come bail me out and I’ll take care of it.”

When he told her how much bail money she’d need, Samantha groaned. “Petey, I don’t have that kind of money. I—”

“I’ve been sending you money every fucking week. You’d better come up with it.”

“Petey, this is your mess—” She heard a car door slam and pulled the phone away from her ear as Petey shouted and cursed at her. Running to the window, her eyes went wide as the two men from the diner approached her apartment building. Panic set in. “Petey! Those two men are here.”

She dropped the phone, grabbed her keys and purse and raced out.

She ran across the hall and banged on her friend's door. "Donna! It's Samantha. Let me in."

When the door opened, Samantha ran through it, closing it behind her. She shook so hard she couldn't turn the lock.

"Sam, what's going on?"

Finally getting the door locked, she gripped her friend's hand. Donna's face blurred as tears filled her eyes. "Shh! I'll explain. Just be really quiet."

Samantha moved to the peephole and looked out just in time to see the men approach her door. She'd never been so scared. What the hell had Petey gotten them into this time?

Despite wearing suits, both men looked cold and ruthless. A glimpse of their eyes sent a chill through her. A whimper escaped and she slapped a hand over her mouth, afraid they would hear her.

"Samantha," Donna whispered.

Samantha spun and slapped her free hand over her friend's mouth, shaking her head as tears ran down her face.

Donna's eyes widened and she nodded.

Samantha heard a crash and released her friend to spin back to the door and look out the peephole again. Her apartment door stood open and she watched the men go inside. Another whimper escaped when she realized just how close they'd come to getting to her.

Donna pushed her out of the way to look out. She turned back to Samantha, her eyes huge. "We have to call the police."

Another noise from the hallway had Samantha flying back to look out. The two men came back out of her apartment, leaving the door wide open, and started back down the stairs.

As soon as they moved out of sight, Samantha rushed to the window, careful to stand to the side where they couldn't see her. Not until they'd gotten into their car and driven away did she realize she'd been holding her breath.

"Sam, what's going on?"

Samantha ran to the door. "Let me know if they come back."

Instead of staying behind, Donna followed her as she ran back across the hall and into her apartment.

“Sam, damn it. What’s going on?”

Samantha explained as Donna followed her around her apartment as she looked for anything out of place. Since Donna already knew about Petey, the explanation didn’t take long.

“Damn it, Sam. You have enough to worry about without Petey getting into trouble again.

They both came to an abrupt halt when they reached Samantha’s bedroom. The men had used her lipstick to write on her mirror.

“WE’LL BE BACK”

Samantha’s legs gave way and she sank onto the edge of her bed. “Oh God.”

She wrapped her arms around herself as chills wracked her body. “I’ve got to get out of here.”

Shooting to her feet, she hurried to her closet, took out her suitcases, and began to throw clothes into them haphazardly.

Donna rushed to help. “Where are you going to go?”

Samantha snapped one lid closed as Donna threw the contents of her underwear drawer into the other case. “I’ve got to get Petey out of jail. Then I’ll figure out the rest.”

“How are you going to do that? You don’t have enough money. I’d give it to you if I had it, but I don’t.”

Samantha grabbed one of the suitcases and her purse while Donna followed her with the other. “I’m going to have to go see Petey’s employers, the men who had him arrested, and see if they’ll drop the charges.”

* * * *

Samantha eased off the accelerator, leaning forward to look up at the large sign to her right. “Dakota Ranch.” Turning her little compact down the long drive, she admired the lush green lawn and mature trees. With the exception of the asphalt drive, this could be a scene

from a hundred years ago.

Driving closer, she couldn't help but fall in love with the huge stucco house situated at the end of the driveway. The big porch that ran along the entire front managed to make the house look homey despite its size. It and all of the outbuildings had been painted a stark white.

A large stable that had what looked like dozens of cowboys all around it stood to the right. Several of the cowboys rode horses inside the post and rail fence. She assumed they were being 'exercised' as her brother called it. What kind of exercise did a horse need, for God's sake? It's a horse.

She didn't see any of the cattle that her brother had told her the ranch had become well known for, so she assumed the cows, bulls, steers or whatever had to be off playing somewhere else.

Samantha knew dairy products and cuts of beef. That was the beginning and the end of her knowledge of cows.

Everything looked to be well cared for, and the whole place just screamed money. Great. She'd imagined having to deal with some tobacco spitting cowboys. Instead she'd be dealing with some pot bellied know-it-all with a cigar sticking out of his mouth.

She knew nothing of ranches, nothing of animals or the great outdoors and had no desire to ever learn.

Her brother, however, knew more about horses and cattle and loved to work with them. She loved her little brother dearly, but Petey had always been like their father, continually getting into some kind of trouble. Samantha felt like she'd spent her whole life cleaning up their messes. Well, at least she didn't have to worry about getting daddy out of trouble anymore.

Pulling up to the front of the circular drive, Samantha pressed a hand to her stomach and took a deep breath. She had to make the Montgomery brothers understand. She had no choice. Petey had gotten them both into big trouble this time. When she opened the door and got out of the car, the heat nearly overwhelmed her. Riding in the

air conditioned car, she'd forgotten how hot it was outside.

Straightening her sundress, she grabbed her purse and climbed the steps to the porch, her high heels clicking on the wood.

Her eyes widened as she took in the size of the house up close. Jeez, she'd hate like hell to be the one that had to clean this place.

Trying to get up the courage to knock, she looked around and absolutely fell in love with the porch. The wooden swing looked like the perfect place to sit and just watch the world go by. It would seat at least three people and she could just imagine lying on it as the swing moved with the breeze and settling down for a nap. An assortment of all weather furniture sat in clusters nearby. She could spend hours out here. The shade made it several degrees cooler and she could feel a light breeze blowing. She closed her eyes and enjoyed the touch of it over her heated skin.

"What do you want?"

Samantha spun at the deep growl and barely suppressed as gasp when she saw the most unbelievably gorgeous man she'd ever laid eyes on. About six feet of hard packed muscle stood just inside the screen door, eyeing her coolly and sipping coffee from a thick mug.

Brown, sun streaked hair fell rakishly over his forehead and just skimmed his shoulders. An unbuttoned chambray shirt hung open and she couldn't help but stare. Her eyes zeroed in on his chest, tanned and clearly delineated with muscle, sprinkled with dark, silky looking hair that she just itched to touch. A pair of well worn jeans hung from lean hips.

"I asked you what you wanted."

Samantha gulped as she looked up into eyes the color of milk chocolate. This man could be on the cover of any of the erotic novels she loved to read. Her mouth watered just looking at him. When he smiled at her mockingly, dimples slashed his cheeks and even white teeth appeared between lips so firm and soft looking, she found herself wondering what they would feel like on hers. Good Lord. It should be against the law for a man to be this beautiful.

His face hardened at her continued silence and he raised a brow.

Samantha had to clear her throat before speaking. Wiping her suddenly damp palms down her sundress, she finally found her voice. “Hello. I’m Samantha Cross. I’m looking for Mr. Montgomery, either one of them.”

“I’m Jackson Montgomery. What. Do. You. Want?”

This man is one of the Montgomery brothers?

Get the drool off your chin, Sam, and plead your case!

Thoughts of the men who’d come to her apartment and the message they’d left raced through her mind and she sobered. She cleared her throat again, hating that she had to talk to him through a screen door. “I’m here about my brother.”

His face tightened even more. “You’re Pete Cross’s sister?”

Fighting the urge to shift her feet, she nodded. “I’d like to talk to you about him.”

He continued to stare at her as he sipped his coffee. He looked her over, his gaze caressing her body from top to bottom and back again. Her body heated and tingled and she struggled not to fidget. Her breasts felt swollen and she knew her nipples poked at the front of her dress. Damn.

“What are you offering?”

She couldn’t have heard him right. “Excuse me?”

“You heard me. I appreciate a good lay as much as the next guy. I gotta tell you though, my brother and I share.”

Where the surge of lust came from she had no idea, but she managed to tamp it down and firm her voice. “Mr. Montgomery, I’m here to talk to you or your brother about Petey. Since you apparently consider this a joke, perhaps it might be better if I talk to your brother. I hope *he* takes things a little more seriously.”

For the first time, she saw actual humor on his face. “Oh, Shayne is a *lot* more serious than I am.”

He pushed open the screen door and stood aside so she could enter. He hadn’t moved quite enough for her to pass without touching

him and she sucked in a breath as her nipples brushed against his chest. The electric jolt shot straight to her slit and she quickly stepped away from him. Those incredible dimples slashed again as he gestured with the hand holding the coffee mug. “Right this way. I’ve got to see this.”

Samantha walked in the direction he’d indicated, moving into a room that appeared to be their office. She came to an abrupt halt when she saw another man seated behind the desk, cursing into the phone. He slammed the receiver into its base as they approached.

“Another one of your girlfriends?”

Samantha bristled at his tone, even as the dark timber of it drew her. *Get a grip, Sam.* This man could never be called handsome, not by any stretch of the word. His hard features had been carved too roughly for that. No expression, no warmth, no surprise. Just *hard*.

His eyes were so dark they looked nearly black and ice cold. They crinkled at the corners, probably from squinting, certainly not from smiling, and he had the most incredible eyelashes she’d ever seen. His eyes stayed hooded, as though the lush thickness of those lashes weighed them down, but the sharpness of his gaze told her he never missed a thing.

What really grabbed her attention and kept her frozen in place was the sheer size of him. Even sitting behind a desk, he looked massive with shoulders wider than any she had ever seen before. When he picked up his own mug, it looked like a child’s teacup. Without a doubt, he was the most formidable looking man she’d ever met. And she needed his help. Great.

“No,” she heard Jackson say from behind her. “This is Samantha Cross, Pete’s sister. Samantha, this is my brother, Shayne Montgomery.”

Samantha gripped her purse tighter and fought the urge to fidget under the larger man’s stare. His eyes hardened even more as he dropped his pen on his desk and leaned back. The chair groaned at the movement. “What do you want?”

The deep rumble in his tone made her shudder, amazing her that not only fear had caused it. He had to be hands down the most masculine man she'd ever met and her body reacted to him too strongly for her own piece of mind. The stress must be getting to her. She understood her attraction to Jackson. Of course she would be attracted to a man who looked like a damned Greek God. But to be attracted to this man, too? Must be the stress.

Jeez, Sam. Plead your case and get the hell out of here!

* * * *

Shayne Montgomery looked up at the woman Jackson had escorted into his study. He had paperwork to finish before he could get back outside and didn't have time for interruptions. The phone call had pissed him off. Why couldn't that asshole take no for an answer? When he'd heard his brother say that a woman had just pulled in, he'd figured it had to be another one of Jackson's girlfriends. Christ, sometimes they showed up two and three at a time.

Hearing her scathing retort to his brother's demand to know what she would offer had intrigued him. Women never said no to Jackson. He'd looked up as she'd walked in and had become hard as a rock the instant those violet eyes had met his.

Samantha Cross had the face of an angel and the body of a siren. Her features looked delicate, almost fragile, except for that mouth. Her wide violet eyes, button nose and sexy as hell flush on her creamy skin brought every ounce of protective instinct inside him to the surface. Christ, what he wouldn't give to be able to have a woman that looked like this one.

Her pale blonde hair looked like a curtain of silk and he wanted to bury his face in it. Or see it fanned out on his pillow. Or fist it in his hands as he shoved his cock into that gorgeous mouth and fucked it. He couldn't keep his eyes off that mouth. He could nibble at those soft, full lips all day and never get tired of it. He hated the lipstick that

coated them. If she belonged to him, her lips would be that lush pink permanently from his kisses and would be swollen even more.

She had the mouth of a seductress.

A mouth worth killing for.

Her nipples poked at her dress, and he knew that just being around Jackson had caused it. He wondered what color those beaded little nipples would be. What sounds would she make as he tugged them with his lips?

Watching Jackson lead her to the sofa, he couldn't keep his eyes from the sway of her hips as she walked across the room. The full, rounded globes of her ass made him want to bend her over the back of the sofa and spread them.

Do not go there!

He hated skinny women and this one had lots of curves. His cock jumped, thinking about having that ass bare and ready for him to explore. He'd bet his prized bull that those globes would be firm but soft, pale against his hand. He would spend time learning that ass with his hands and lips, working his way to her puckered opening.

Snap out of it, Shayne.

Jackson looked over his shoulder to frown at him disapprovingly, probably because of his brusque manner. Hell, Jackson had always been more polite than he could ever be. Jackson did all the smiling.

His brother had definitely gotten all the charm in the family. And all the looks.

Shayne had accepted long ago that women like her only wanted men like Jackson. He had no illusions about his looks and his size, and his need to dominate in the bedroom drove most women away. Women only wanted him for two things, his cock and his money.

He had to find out whatever the fuck this woman wanted from them and get her the hell out of here. Having her here brought needs to the surface, needs he tried his best to ignore. They reminded him why he could never have a woman like her.

"Your brother's a cattle thief."

Samantha looked over at the giant sitting behind the desk. “He’s not really a cattle thief. Not at all.”

* * * *

When he just lifted a brow at her, she scooted forward in her seat. She had to make them listen. “He’s not, I swear.” She took a deep breath. “Please, let me explain.” When they both just continued to stare at her, she began.

“My mother died early this year after a long illness.” Her voice shook whenever she talked about her mother and she determinedly firmed it. “My father took off and Petey and I took care of her until she died. The medical bills kept piling up, so we sold everything, including the house to pay off as much as we could.” She paused to look at each of them.

Jackson nodded for her to continue, but neither showed the slightest flicker of emotion. Great. She just had to get through to them or she didn’t know what she would do. “Petey had been working as a dishwasher and when he saw your ad, he came here to work because it paid more. He’s always loved being around horses. Our neighbors had them.”

Their continued silence and stares flustered her. The way Shayne Montgomery stared at her had her barely resisting the urge to bolt. His dark eyes had darkened even more. His unwavering stare made her edgy, reminding her of a wild animal. She trembled, afraid he would pounce at any sudden movement. Unable to sit any longer, she stood and moved slowly to the window, keeping him in her peripheral vision the entire time.

Something about him just pulled at her. She couldn’t help but wonder what it would feel like to be held by this man. His raw masculinity nearly overwhelmed her.

Meanwhile, Jackson kept staring at her as he might a bug under a microscope. She carefully avoided his sharp gaze, which made her

feel as though he mentally stripped her bare.

How the hell could she be so consumed by sexual tension while fighting for her brother's life? How the hell could she stand here wanting to actually know what it felt like to be in Shayne's huge arms, to give in to the erotic pull of Jackson's stare while she had this threat over her head and was scared to death?

Stop it, Sam!

She took a deep breath and cleared her throat. It took her a minute to gather her thoughts. "I stayed and kept my job. Petey's been sending me what money he could and we've been trying to pay off the medical bills." She rubbed her stomach where it churned every time she thought about what Petey had done. "Petey started gambling to raise the money. He thought he could raise the money faster that way. Instead, he lost."

She rubbed her stomach again. It had almost become a habit. "He got involved with some bad people, borrowed money from them to gamble some more and lost *it*. The men he borrowed from threatened to hurt me if he didn't pay them back. He panicked. That's why he tried to steal your cow. To sell it to pay them off."

"Bull," Shayne murmured.

"It's true!" Samantha moved to the desk, leaning over it toward Shayne. His eyes flared and she hurriedly straightened. She took a deep breath and looked at them both pleadingly. She *had* to make them believe her. "He only did it to protect me!"

Jackson's lips twitched. "Shayne didn't mean he didn't believe you. Your brother tried to steal a bull, not a cow."

"Oh." When neither man spoke, she could feel her nerves stretch almost to the breaking point. Jackson's eyes kept sliding from her to Shayne and back again, but Shayne's gaze stayed steady on her. Just when she thought she couldn't stand another second of the deafening silence, Shayne spoke.

"I understand why Pete did what he did."

Samantha sighed, relief making her lightheaded. She moved to the

sofa and dropped back in her seat. “Thank you.”

“But,” he continued. “I don’t know exactly what you expect us to do about it.”

Samantha looked from one to the other, frowning. “I want you to drop the charges against him.”

“And then what?” Shayne asked softly. Too softly. She felt goosebumps break out on her arms. She crossed her arms over her chest and rubbed them, covering her beaded nipples from their gazes. What would that voice sound like in the bedroom, in the dark, against her—?

Breathe Sam! She took another deep breath. “I don’t understand.” Hell, she’d forgotten what they’d been talking about.

Shayne sighed. “Your brother seems to have a penchant for trouble. If we drop the charges against him, he’ll get out of jail, but then what? He’s already put you in danger and is deeper in debt than before. What do you think would happen if he got loose?”

Samantha blinked. His continued stare flustered her more than she wanted to admit. “But while he’s in jail, he can’t make any money. I’ve got to get those people paid off as soon as possible! I can’t keep looking over my shoulder while I’m working to pay these people back *and* come up with the money for the medical bills.”

Shayne inclined his head. “True.” The silence stretched again. “How much money are we talking about?”

Samantha sighed and looked back down at her lap “After selling the house and everything, we still owe a little over a hundred thousand dollars in medical bills.”

“And the other?”

Samantha rubbed her stomach and looked up. “Petey originally borrowed twenty five thousand but he said with interest it’s now close to fifty thousand dollars.”

Jackson whistled at the amount before his face tightened in anger. He looked over at his brother. “Pete tried to steal a bull worth over a million dollars to pay a debt of a hundred and fifty grand?”

Samantha's mouth dropped open. "A million dollars? For a cow?"

"Bull," Shayne corrected absently.

Samantha watched them both apprehensively as some sort of male communication passed between them that she had no hope of understanding. Looking at her lap and noticing that her knuckles had turned white where she gripped her purse, she made a conscious effort to loosen them. Her nerves couldn't take much more. Would they let Petey go? She didn't know what she'd do if they refused her. But even if they did let him go, how would they come up with the money they owed? Shayne had been right about that. No matter how she looked at it, she couldn't see a way out. One problem at a time. First, she had to get her brother out of jail.

She looked up to find them both watching her. Her face burned, and she wondered what they were thinking. Forcing herself to sit still, she waited.

"Can you cook?"

Samantha blinked at Jackson's unexpected question. Without meaning to, her eyes flew to Shayne, taken aback when his face hardened even more.

Looking away hurriedly, she forced her gaze back to Jackson, trying hard to ignore the heated amusement in his eyes. "Yes. I've always loved to cook. That's what I do. I cook in a diner. Why?"

"I have a solution to your problem."

Shayne's warning growl shocked her and made her tremble. If either saw it, she hoped they would think fear caused it. That growl did something strange to her insides. She tightened her thighs against the rush of heat that soaked her panties.

She met Jackson's gaze, struggling to keep her tone neutral. "You do? What is it?"

"My brother and I will drop the charges against your brother and pay off your debts."

Samantha narrowed her eyes. "Just like that? What do you want in return?"

Jackson's dimples appeared again. "I see you're not as gullible as your brother. That's good. Your brother will work here, properly supervised of course, for room and board during the next year."

Samantha slumped in relief. They'd believed her. Petey could keep his job. She would also send money and they would no longer have men threatening her. "Oh, thank—"

"And *you*," Jackson continued as though she hadn't spoken, "will quit your job at the diner to live and work here."

"What?" Samantha stared at him, stunned.

"You heard me. Our housekeeper retired. You can take her place. You'll get room and board like your brother."

She looked over at Shayne's unreadable expression before looking back at Jackson, who'd leaned back against the arm of the sofa. "For how long?"

"One year."

"A year!" Samantha jumped up and moved back to the window. How the hell could she live here with these two for a whole year without going out of her mind? Her panties had been soaked since she'd walked through the door. They both affected her too much to ignore. This stuff didn't happen to her. But how else could she get out of this mess?

Samantha closed her eyes. "Shouldn't I speak to your wives about working here?" *Please let them be married.* Then she knew she could resist them.

"We're not married," Jackson grinned and she felt it all the way to her core. "I already told you, we like to share. One woman would have to put up with both of us."

"That's enough, Jackson," Shayne growled and stood. "Don't threaten her with me. She's all yours."

Samantha looked back out the window, trying to hide her surprise and surge of lust. *They shared?* It was a fantasy straight out of her books. Oh God, what would it feel like to have them both make love to her, one in her pussy and the other...Oh Lord, she couldn't even

imagine.

“A year isn’t so bad to work off a debt like that. Besides, what are your options?”

Startled when Jackson’s voice jerked her out of her musings, she took a shuddering breath before answering. She needed a few minutes alone. Why she reacted this way she had no idea but she just had to get over it. “Just to be your housekeeper, nothing else?”

“Your job is just to take care of the house and the meals.” His eyes twinkled in amusement. “Anything else is your own choice and not part of the debt.”

Damn. She really had no other option, but the way Jackson kept looking at her unsettled the hell out of her. She tried to ignore the burning looks and the way he appeared to undress her with his eyes. Samantha looked over to see Shayne moving around his desk. Her eyes widened when she really got a look at his size. She’d never seen a man that big! Easily over six and a half feet tall, he looked to be pure solid muscle. His chest looked like a barrel and his thighs like tree trunks.

Closer now, she got a better look at those hooded eyes. Something inside her melted at the heat that flashed briefly before disappearing just as quickly. His sensual lips looked out of place on such a masculine face.

Holy cow. Her insides clenched. Her nipples poked painfully against her bra and she felt even more moisture seep from her. A quick glance at Jackson’s glittering eyes had her all but crawling with need.

How the hell could she stay here with them for a year and not go crazy?

But Jackson had been right. She had no other option.

“Okay.” She nodded. “I have to go home to quit my job and get the rest of my things. I can be back in a week.” She would use the time away from them to put things back into perspective and push all lascivious thoughts from her mind. Shayne moved even closer toward

her, shaking his head and she fought the urge to back away. “No. Call your boss from here. We’ll send someone for your things. You can’t go anywhere as long as there’s a threat to your safety.”

His deep rumbling tone weakened her knees. Samantha’s gaze slid to Jackson. His cocky grin had disappeared. Now he looked at her thoughtfully, steadily, and this look unnerved her even more.

With Shayne so close, she started trembling, almost overwhelmed by her completely feminine response to his raw masculinity. She had to force herself to focus on his words as he continued.

“I don’t know who these men are that threatened to hurt you but I’ll find out. Until I find them, you will stay on the ranch. My men are always on the lookout for strangers. Until we pay them off, they’re a threat.”

Samantha nodded. “Okay. Thanks.” Please just let him move away before she embarrassed herself.

Her breath caught and she felt a fresh rush of moisture as Shayne crossed his thickly roped arms over his chest, his whole demeanor dominant and unyielding. “You will not leave the ranch without either Jackson or me. Any of my men who try to take you off the ranch will be fired. If you try to leave, your brother goes back to jail.”

Samantha bristled at the implication that she would run out on them and lifted her chin. “I don’t welsh on my debts. I’ll work as your housekeeper for the next year and make sure my brother stays out of trouble.”

Shayne gripped her raised chin. Oh God. She couldn’t even stand that impersonal touch. Her senses had gone on overload and she knew she couldn’t take any more. She wanted those lips on hers. They moved as she stared at them. Panicking that she’d missed something, she jolted back to reality.

“No. *We* will keep your brother out of trouble. Your only job is to take care of us.” His thumb ran over her bottom lip and she felt an answering pull between her legs. The pad of his thumb felt rough against her lips, and suddenly she wanted his hands on her elsewhere.

Everywhere. What would it be like to be touched with hands as large and powerful as Shayne's?

He stared at her for several long seconds and she couldn't look away. She could only imagine how hot and intense lovemaking would be for a man like him. She shook with the need to find out. Involuntarily, she touched her tongue to his rough finger. Startled with herself, she jerked away. He dropped his hand suddenly as if he'd been burned. With a muffled curse, he glared at her before turning and striding abruptly out of the room.

Jackson watched his brother walk away and turned to her, smiling. He sobered and looked at her as though seeing her for the first time, even more intently than he had a few minutes ago. "Give me your address and the keys. I'll send someone for your things."

Samantha nodded. "I'll call my friend, Donna. I don't want her to call the police when she sees your men."

Jackson nodded and turned to leave but stopped and turned back when she touched his arm. "Tell your men to be careful. Those men already showed up at my apartment once and I don't want your men getting hurt."

Jackson frowned at her. "They didn't hurt you, did they?"

Samantha shook her head. "No. I went across the hall to Donna's when I saw them coming."

Jackson stared at her for several long seconds before nodding. "Don't worry about it. I know who to send. We're gonna have to talk about this later."

Chapter Two

Jackson got their new little housekeeper's keys and address and sent Doug and Walt to go pack her things and bring them back, warning them about the situation. He'd taken her upstairs and shown her which room she would be using and left her alone to look around.

Walking away from her had to be one of the hardest things he'd ever done in his life. The way she nibbled at that voluptuous bottom lip made his cock so hard, it made even walking painful.

The women he'd known had always been a lot more blatant than Samantha. Picking up a date for the first time, he'd been greeted at the door by women wearing little or nothing. He'd gone out with women who didn't even want to talk, just wanted the pleasure his cock could give them. Some had dated him just because they knew he and Shayne liked to share and they wanted a thrill. Even with all his experience, he struggled to control his response to this enticing bit of shy femininity.

With Samantha, he'd thought about sex, sure. His hands had itched to hold those enticing curves against him, knowing how soft and warm she would be.

And that scent.

Clean, fresh, not like the cloying perfume the women he dated usually wore. He usually came home reeking of it and couldn't wait to take a shower before going to bed. That had been one of the reasons he didn't spend the night with them.

But Samantha's enticing scent had made him want to get closer, to snuggle up to her, to have that scent linger on his pillow.

Damn, he was way out of his league here. Samantha Cross

reminded him again just how shallow his life had become. He'd become bored with his life, unfulfilled. She reminded him of everything he'd ever wanted, all the dreams he and Shayne had talked about, and he'd only just met her.

He saddled his horse and rode out to where he knew Shayne would be.

At first, he'd ignored the signs of Samantha's arousal. He could get laid without all the emotional baggage she brought with her. But when he realized being around Shayne also aroused her, he'd watched them both closely.

Shayne had looked at Samantha in a way Jackson had never seen before. His brother watched Samantha with such intense longing, it had surprised the hell out of him. Every minute, Jackson wanted her more and more. As excited as a little boy on Christmas morning, he couldn't wait to get started.

When he first saw her get out of the car, he figured she had to be one of the girls from town. He'd begun to get tired of their back stabbing and bitchiness. None of them had been a challenge. Their cattiness and willingness to jump into bed with little or no effort on his part had begun to get on his nerves.

Samantha Cross, on the other hand, had been aroused and had fought to hide it. That had amused him. But once he heard Samantha Cross begin her story, he had been drawn to her. It sounded like she spent most of her life taking care of other people. Now, she would be taking care of him and his brother. None of the women he knew would have done that. She hadn't asked for the money. She hadn't left it up to her brother to pay his own debt. She'd taken full responsibility for the entire thing, even making sure that her brother got out of jail. Sure, she said she needed his help to pay off the debt, but she would have been the one living in fear.

She could have just as easily taken off and left the bills and her brother behind.

Her determination to fight her response to both of them had

intrigued him even more. Most women wouldn't have bothered. They'd have made a play for Shayne and him and figured they could buy their way out of trouble with sex. Hell, he'd even propositioned her and she'd turned him down flat.

No, Samantha Cross appeared to be different than other women and she already captivated him. He also knew that she'd intrigued his brother. Not an easy thing to do.

Samantha seemed to have been just as taken with Shayne.

Finally spotting his brother, he sobered. Shayne hadn't been so lucky with women. His older brother had always been big, but once he'd hit his teens, he'd gotten *really* big. Their parents' deaths had instantly made Shayne the man of the house and he'd taken that position very seriously. He'd become hard and arrogant almost overnight. He had to in order to earn the respect of the ranch hands. He worked his ass off to keep the ranch afloat and gotten muscular and even bigger. And even more of a loner.

Shayne had never been a good looking man, and had never cared. But he told Jackson years ago that he felt too big and clumsy with women, which did bother him. Between that and his less than average looks, Shayne had pretty much given up on the fairer sex.

Until they'd begun sharing.

They both enjoyed sex more when they shared a woman. Shayne also felt more comfortable, knowing Jackson would be there and would warn him if he got too rough. The women they'd shared had been turned on by Shayne's take charge attitude in the bedroom, but Shayne wouldn't believe it.

Jackson knew his brother would never hurt a woman, but Shayne always feared he would. Especially after the rumors started.

Most women wanted a pretty face and so Jackson had gotten most of the action. Shayne had always been too busy with ranch work but he had gone out with a few of the women in town. Their not so subtle references to his wealth had turned him off until even the frequency of those dates dwindled to nothing. To save face, those bitches had

quickly spread the word that Shayne was rough and crude and that's why *they* had been the ones to break it off.

Hell hath no fury and all that.

Shayne had shrugged off the comments but Jackson knew his brother well. The seed of doubt that had already been planted continued to grow. He'd walked away from women and had worked his ass off, so Jackson had food in his belly, and had done Jackson's chores in order to give Jackson time to play.

Shayne's back stiffened as Jackson approached. "What the hell are you thinking?"

Jackson hid a grin. "What are you talking about? Didn't you just tell me yesterday that we had to find a new housekeeper?" Most men shook in their boots at Shayne's glare but he'd long ago become immune.

"She's not the type of girl you're used to. She's not hard like the others and I don't want you hurting her. Besides, I don't want to lose another housekeeper."

"You're right, she's not the kind of woman I'm used to. And you don't give a damn about losing another housekeeper. I won't hurt her. But I think little Samantha got aroused around both of us and it scared the hell out of her. She tried hard not to show it."

"Bullshit," Shayne growled. "Her nipples were hard before she came into the study. Once she got a good look at me she was ready to bolt."

"That's true," Jackson nodded and shifted in his saddle to watch one of the ranch hands chase down a calf. "But it wasn't because she was scared of you. I think she got turned on by both of us and it freaked her out. She doesn't look like she's used to that kind of thing."

"Bullshit."

Jackson rode beside his brother. "We have to do something about your vocabulary."

"Fuck you."

Jackson chuckled. "Better."

They rode in silence for several minutes before Shayne sighed, a look of sad loneliness in his eyes. "Can you imagine how much damage a man like me could do to a little thing like that?" He turned away, watching the men work.

"Just because you can hurt someone doesn't mean you will. The women that spread those rumors only did it for revenge and you know it. But I don't want anyone around that would make you feel uncomfortable in your own house. I guess the best thing to do is to get rid of her. Those men probably won't do anything to her."

Shayne whipped around, his eyes glittering dangerously. "No! Are you crazy? Right now the ranch is the only place where she'll be safe. She's got enough to worry about without looking over her shoulder."

Jackson bit the inside of his mouth to keep from grinning. Yep, Shayne had already started to fall for her. He just hoped their new little housekeeper didn't hurt him. If she did, he'd get rid of her in a hurry, no matter what Shayne said.

* * * *

When Doug and Walt returned with boxes loaded with Samantha's things, Jackson opened the front door for them. "Just leave them here. We'll take them up later."

Even though he knew Samantha was in the kitchen, he didn't want the other men in her bedroom.

Since when had he ever cared about something like that?

"Boss, there's something we gotta tell ya."

Both men shifted their feet and looked more than a little pissed off.

"What is it? What happened?"

Doug, the older of the two, glanced toward the kitchen where they could hear Samantha moving around. "Maybe it would be better if we talked in private."

Uneasy now, Jackson gestured toward the study. “We’ll talk in there.”

Walking into the study, Jackson cursed under his breath, unaware that Shayne was in there. He gave his brother an apologetic look that Shayne waved away.

“I said no. I don’t want you people digging up my ranch. Stop calling. Stop sending letters. No more emails.”

Despite Shayne’s cool tone, Jackson could see the fury on his brother’s face.

Shayne gestured for the ranch hands to sit down as his face tightened even more. “If you set one foot on my land, I’ll kick your ass.”

Shayne disconnected, tossing the phone onto the desk and scrubbing a hand over his face before lifting a brow at Jackson. “What’s up?”

Jackson took a seat in front of the desk. “Doug and Walt have something to tell us.” He turned to the men. “What happened?”

Doug’s lips thinned. “When we got to Miss Cross’s apartment, we found this.” He pulled out a knife and handed it over to Jackson. “Somebody stabbed her pillow with it. They also wrote on her mirror. ‘We’ll be back’.”

Jackson tossed the knife onto the desk and rushed to the door. Opening it, he heard Samantha moving around the kitchen and let out a breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding.

He nodded to Shayne, who looked like he’d been kicked in the gut. “She’s okay.”

Walt leaned forward, his arms braced on his knees. “Her neighbor said the furniture went with the apartment. We packed everything else. She also told us that two men showed up. The first time they wrote on the mirror. They must have used the knife when they came back because the woman said it wasn’t there before.”

Jackson scrubbed a hand over his face. His gaze kept straying to the knife on the desk. He broke out in a cold sweat, imagining

someone using that on Samantha.

“What about the neighbor? She’s Samantha’s friend. I don’t want her hurt.” The ice in Shayne’s voice was unmistakable.

“She lives alone,” Doug replied. “She seems like a nice girl.”

Jackson swore. “If those men find out she’s Samantha’s friend, they could hurt her to find out where she is.”

Shayne picked up the phone. “I’ll get Cal on it.”

Jackson walked the ranch hands out as Shayne spoke to the security consultant. “Thanks, guys. Tell the others to keep an eye out. No strangers on the property. None.”

* * * *

A few days later, Samantha and the men had settled into a routine. She’d also started making headway in giving the big house a good cleaning. She had already rearranged the kitchen so she could find everything.

Although she kept busy, she still had way too much time to think. She’d spoken to Donna, who now had a bodyguard courtesy of Shayne and Jackson.

They’d brushed off her thanks, telling her again to stay on the ranch.

“I mean it, Samantha,” Shayne had warned. “You do not leave the ranch alone.”

Shayne and Jackson had dropped the charges against her brother and after agreeing to their terms, Petey had come back to work. He moved back into the bunkhouse, staying with several of the other men. She didn’t know what Shayne and Jackson had said to her brother, but Petey seemed subdued.

The day after she’d arrived, she saw him in the yard and popped out to talk to him. She’d been so worried that the men would get to him before Shayne and Jackson could pay them off.

Petey brushed off her concern. “Don’t worry about it, sis. You

fixed everything. Again.”

Tears had stung her eyes as she'd watched him walk away. Mad at herself for letting him get to her, she'd walked back inside.

Although she checked for him in the yard, she hadn't gone out to speak to him since.

A quick peek in the oven told her that the chicken was done, but so far neither Shayne nor Jackson had come in to eat. She glanced at the clock. They'd told her this morning they'd be in about this time. She didn't want the chicken to dry out, so she turned off the oven and went outside in search of them. Bracing herself against the wild hunger that hit her hard whenever she saw them, she walked across the yard.

Seeing several of the ranch hands gathered at the fence, she started over. There appeared to be something exciting going on. They yelled and shouted encouragement but blocked her view of whatever inspired all the commotion. She saw Petey and moved toward him. “What's going on?”

Petey turned and pulled her to stand in front of him. “Shayne's breaking a new stallion. This one's a mean one, too.”

Samantha got jostled and Petey lifted her to the top rail of the fence so she could see better. What she saw stole her breath. Shayne's face looked harder than ever, a study of fierce concentration as he handled the stallion. The horse tried its best to throw him off, but Shayne didn't appear to be going anywhere.

The sounds the horse made sent a chill down her spine. It turned and twisted, bucking violently and still Shayne held on. Hard arms came around her waist, and when a jolt of awareness shot through her, she knew it had to be Jackson.

“That horse is going to kill him,” she told him fearfully.

He chuckled as he lifted her from the fence. “No, Sam. Shayne does this all the time. We both do, but Shayne's better at it and takes the really mean ones. He's never been thrown.”

Samantha tried to ignore the heat at her back as she continued to

watch Shayne. The horse appeared to be tiring and then all of a sudden started bucking again. Shayne held on, his gloved hands tight on the reins and she could see how his muscles bunched and shifted, pitting his brute strength and determination against the horse's intent to throw him off.

She couldn't take her eyes off of him, fear for him warring with the thrill she got watching him. All that hard packed muscle drew her attention in a way she knew should embarrass her, but right now she couldn't tear her eyes away. The hard chest heating her back drew just as much of her attention, sending her heart racing. She tried to move away, but with the fence in front of her, she didn't have anywhere to go.

Jackson's arm went around her waist, pulling her back against him. "Back up, Sam. I took you off the fence because I don't want you to get hurt."

The deep voice next to her ear made her shudder.

"I'm going to have to talk to your brother. I don't want you in that kind of danger again. If that horse had managed to get close to the fence, your legs could have been crushed."

She nodded, startled when his hands moved to her hips. Keeping her eyes forward, she watched as the horse apparently gave up. The ranch hands applauded loudly as Shayne led the horse toward the stable.

Samantha drew a breath. "It appears that Shayne won."

Jackson turned her to face him. The other men moved away, heading for Shayne until the two of them stood alone. "With a little determination, a gentle approach and a firm hand, just about anything can be tamed."

Why comments like that soaked her panties, Samantha had no idea, but Jackson apparently did, because he said things like that to her with increasing regularity.

Lifting her chin, she fought her reaction to his provocative statement. "I just came out to tell you both that lunch is ready."

She swept past him and started back toward the house, ignoring his laugh. Damn it. He knew damned well what he did to her.

* * * *

She'd just taken the chicken out of the oven when she heard the door to the laundry room open. The men had finally come in for lunch. She knew they'd take off their hats and boots before coming into the kitchen to wash their hands.

Her attraction to them had grown daily and it had become increasingly hard to hide it. Jackson's coolness toward her on that first day had changed dramatically. He touched her often, brushing against her as he walked by, a hand on her waist as he looked over her shoulder to see what she had cooked.

And he kept making those ridiculous comments, like the one he'd made at the fence, his eyes full of promise and intention.

Shayne on the other hand, spoke to her only when necessary and appeared to do his best to ignore her. He watched her constantly, however, his gaze intent whenever he looked at her. She became clumsy and flustered around both of them and it only seemed to get worse every day.

She just had to pay her debt and she could go. She had to remember that.

She hurriedly put the food on the table, knowing from experience just how hungry they'd be.

Jackson smiled at her as he walked in. "Smells good, Sam." He leaned over her as she got the rest of the food from the counter. He reached around her for the potatoes and bread, keeping his arms there for longer than necessary before moving away to carry them to the table.

Another one of those slick moves that beaded her nipples and had her stomach clenching. Damn. She wished he would stop that. She had no idea how she would last a year this way. "Thanks. I hope you

guys like it.”

She turned to find Shayne’s eyes on her.

He nodded and looked away. “It’s fine.”

Frowning at him, she poured them each a glass of the iced tea she’d made earlier and sat down to join them. The first night she’d made dinner, she hadn’t sat down with them. Not sure of her place, she’d served them and gone up to her room to unpack. Shayne had come to her room and hauled her out to the kitchen without a word and plopped her in her chair. She’d eaten with them ever since. “Petey said that the men he owes money to are meeting him Saturday night to pick it up.”

Shayne served her a chicken breast before serving himself and she found herself touched at yet another of his thoughtful gestures. “Yeah.”

His eyes narrowed as he looked at her and he got up without a word. He reached into the refrigerator, coming back to the table with the carton of milk. He looked pointedly at where she absently rubbed her stomach and filled her glass before seating himself again.

He kept doing things like that, reinforcing her certainty that he never missed a thing. Every time the subject of those thugs Petey owed money to arose, her stomach burned. And every time, he got her a glass of milk without saying a word.

When she smiled and thanked him, he just grunted and looked away.

Jackson spooned potatoes onto her plate, grinning at her. “If you keep cooking the way you do, we might just keep you forever. Right, Shayne?”

Samantha snuck a glance at Shayne who just glared at Jackson and shoved another forkful of potatoes into his mouth. “Speaking of food, I’ve got to get some. I don’t even have anything for dinner tomorrow.”

When Jackson didn’t respond, Shayne glared at him again and mumbled. “Jackson can take you to the store tomorrow morning.”

Although he did things like getting milk for her, he'd avoided spending one minute more with her than he had to and had been very careful not to touch her. The mixed messages drove her crazy.

"I'm not contagious, you know! *You* could have offered to take me to town."

Shayne raised a brow at her outburst. Even Jackson blinked at her. Surprised at herself, she snapped her mouth closed. What the hell was wrong with her? Being aroused for the better part of a week had obviously affected her brain. She opened her mouth to apologize when Shayne spoke.

"I don't go to town unless I have to. Eat your lunch."

Samantha hated his cold indifference and wanted to provoke some kind of reaction from him but feared the consequences. She settled for glaring at him. When he stared back at her stonily, it only pissed her off more. Taking a deep breath, she fought down her anger. She really wanted to get along with both of them and live in peace. She just had to ignore the way they made her feel, the riot of emotions they created in her.

It scared her that it had become more than physical. Much more. She knew damned well that men like Shayne and Jackson could never be happy with someone like her, so she tried her best to ignore her feelings.

She saw the women who came around almost daily. She'd watched out the upstairs window as the women followed Jackson around, vying for his attention. They all looked so beautiful and sophisticated. When she saw the way Shayne glared at any that had the nerve to approach him, she knew he could never be interested in her. Next to those women, she felt plain and unattractive.

She couldn't help how she felt, though, and struggled to come up with something to say. "That was really good, what you did with that horse out there."

Shayne nodded and continued eating.

Tense as hell and hurt at being ignored, she snapped. "You could

say thank you.”

Shayne raised a brow. “For what?”

“I gave you a compliment.”

Shayne looked at Jackson, obviously confused. Jackson just grinned before shoving more food into his mouth. Shayne glared at him and looked back at her, still frowning. “It’s my job. I shouldn’t be complimented for it. It has to be done, so I do it.”

“It’s nice to get a compliment. Like when Jackson says that he likes my cooking. That’s my job, too. But it’s nice to hear someone say I cooked something they liked.”

Shayne frowned at her. “I eat it, don’t I?”

Samantha sighed inwardly. Why had she even started this? “Well, it’s just polite.”

“I’m not polite. If you want polite, you’re going to have to talk to Jackson.” He threw down his fork and stood, clearly intending to storm out of the kitchen.

Samantha jumped to her feet. With a hand on his arm, she rushed to stand in front of him before he could leave. Damn it. What had she done? “I’m sorry, Shayne. I didn’t mean that you’re not polite. You’ve been very sweet to me.”

“Sweet?” His eyes narrowed. “Now you’re making fun of me.”

He really didn’t like her at all. She smiled sadly. “No. I’m not.”

Shayne crossed his arms over his chest, raising a brow sarcastically. “Okay, how am I *sweet*?”

Wishing she’d never started any of this, Samantha shrugged and pointed at her plate. “Like when you gave me the chicken breast because you remembered I like it. Like when you get me a glass of milk when my stomach burns. I just wanted to tell you how impressed I was with what you did with that horse and I felt like you were trying to blow me off. It hurt.”

Shayne watched her through narrowed eyes. “Sit down, Samantha.”

She sat back down, watching him through her lashes as he took

his own seat and picked up his fork. He paused, not looking at her.

“I’m not good with stuff like that. Jackson’s the polite one. Don’t take it personally.” He turned his attention back to his plate and starting eating again, apparently finished with the conversation.

When she looked at Jackson, she found him smiling at her as he looked back and forth between her and his brother. He winked, grinned and continued eating his lunch.

What the hell was that all about? She picked up her own fork, watching both of them. When they started talking about cattle, she let her mind drift.

Shayne’s sensitivity about not being as polished as Jackson pulled at her. He kept everything to himself, never showing anything of what he was thinking or feeling. Except for the way his eyes glittered sometimes when she caught him unaware, he seemed completely cold. Because of the way he kept himself closed off, she had no idea what those looks meant.

As soon as Shayne finished eating, he got up from the table and left without a word.

Samantha watched him go, staring at the empty doorway, listening to the sounds of him putting on his boots and going out the back door. Turning back to her plate, she pushed her food around, all appetite gone.

“Don’t let Shayne get to you, honey. He’s fighting himself. He’s trying very hard to ignore you.”

Samantha picked up her plate to scrape the uneaten food into the garbage can. “He’s doing a good job.”

Jackson chuckled. “No, he’s not. You should have seen the way he lit into your brother for putting you on the fence.”

Dropping her plate into the sink, Samantha spun. “He saw that?”

Jackson grinned. “Shayne knows everything that goes on at the ranch. And with you. So do I.”

Samantha blinked, not sure she wanted to hear this. “I’m just the housekeeper.”

“You’ve somehow managed to become more than that to both of us and you know it.”

Samantha collected Shayne’s dishes from the table and moved back to the sink. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I’ve only known you for a few days. Shayne can’t even stand to be in the same room with me and you have a never-ending line of girlfriends who show up all the time. I’ll work here for a year as your housekeeper. At the end of that year, I’m leaving.”

“What did your boss say when you called him?”

Samantha blinked at the sudden change of conversation and turned back to him. “He said not to come back, and that he wouldn’t give me a reference because I quit without notice. Why?”

Jackson got up to pour himself a cup of coffee. “Want some?”

Samantha shook her head and went back to clearing the table.

Instead of sitting back down, Jackson leaned against the counter, watching her as she washed dishes. “If you want to leave here at the end of the year, I’ll help you get another job. But I hope you’ll stay.”

Samantha trembled at his soft tone. She concentrated on not dropping the plates she washed as he continued to stare at her.

“Why do you let your brother walk all over you?” he asked quietly.

Samantha carefully rinsed the plate and put it in the stand to drain. “You don’t know what you’re talking about. Petey needs me.”

“Your brother treats you like shit. He’s a spoiled brat that expects you to take care of him and get him out of trouble.”

“It’s none of your business.”

Jackson slammed his cup down on the counter with such force, she jumped, surprised it hadn’t broken. “That’s where you’re wrong. You’re our responsibility now. You live and work on our ranch and so does your brother. We’re going to teach him to be a man and to stop depending on you to get him out of trouble.”

“Damn it, Jackson. Stay out of it.”

“Why?”

“Because.”

Jackson gripped her chin. “Not good enough. You’re not doing him any favors, Sam. He’s just going to keep getting into trouble.”

“I’m going with him when he delivers that money.”

Jackson chuckled. “You know damned well he’s going to try to take off with it. No, you’re not going. God only knows what those men will do when he stiffes them. Shayne and I are going and you are staying here on the ranch. The ranch hands will be here so you won’t be alone.”

Samantha pulled out of his grip. “I’m going.”

“No.”

“I have to!”

Jackson grabbed her shoulders. “Why?”

“Because I promised I’d take care of him.”

When the tears started to fall, she tried to hide her face but Jackson wouldn’t let her.

“You promised your mother, didn’t you?”

Samantha nodded, wiping her eyes. “She said he needed me.”

Jackson pulled her close, wrapping his arms around her and stroking her back soothingly. “Shayne and I will take care of your brother. We’ll keep him out of trouble and make him start taking responsibility for himself.”

He lifted her face, wiping his thumbs over her cheeks to dry her tears. “Shayne and I need you. We need you to trust us and to give us a chance to show you how good we can be together.”

Samantha’s eyes fluttered closed at the first touch of his lips on hers. When his tongue traced her lips, she parted them, nearly overwhelmed by the surge of desire. When his hands covered her breasts, she moaned into his mouth. It had been a long time since she’d been touched so intimately. Starved for it, she pushed her breasts more firmly into his hands, loving the erotic friction on her nipples.

When he lifted his head, she nearly groaned. His hands continued

to move on her breasts, cupping them and teasing her nipples. She wanted to feel them on her bare skin.

“You’re so sweet,” he drawled, looking down at her. His hand moved down to cup her mound.

She parted her legs, her breath shaky as he stroked her through the denim.

“You’re wet, aren’t you, Sam? Your nipples are as hard as my cock. When I finally get you naked under me, I may never let you up again.”

She groaned and tried to move closer.

Jackson gripped her shoulders again and held her at arm’s length, his own breathing erratic. His eyes bored into hers. “Christ, you test my control. Stop wiggling.”

His hands tightened on her shoulders. “Shayne wants you every bit as much as I do. I want this to work. I’m not taking you until you and my brother both admit that the three of us together is what you want.”

He jerked her back against him, covering her mouth with his again, and kissing her hard and fast. When he lifted his head, they were both breathing heavily. He didn’t speak for several long seconds.

When he finally did, it came out as a growl. “You and my brother better both come to your senses soon.”

Chapter Three

Samantha decided to make beef stew for dinner, something she could keep hot. She didn't want to have to look for them again and have a repeat performance of earlier.

Knowing both of them would want a shower before dinner, she knew she'd have plenty of time to cook the biscuits.

The front porch swing had already become her favorite place and she went there now. Using her bare toes, she put it in motion, the movement never failing to soothe her.

One of the ranch hands rode along the front fence, touching the brim of his hat when he saw her. Smiling at the old fashioned gesture, she waved back, once again feeling that this could be a scene from the last century.

A pickup went by, ruining the image, the driver sounding his horn and waving at the ranch hand. She hadn't met all of the men yet, but thought it might be Doug. Jackson had introduced her to him. Doug appeared to be assigned to watching out for her.

Although the threats were never far from her thoughts, seeing Doug now reminded her of the danger to both her and her brother. Donna had told her about the knife that had been plunged into her pillow, but neither Shayne nor Jackson had mentioned it.

She assumed they hadn't wanted to scare her.

Too late. She was already scared.

She just hoped that once the men got their money that would be the end of it. She shuddered to think about what could have happened if Shayne and Jackson hadn't helped them. They'd already paid off the medical bills.

She breathed deeply, loving the smells. She felt safe here. Well, at least safe from the men in the fancy suits.

Shayne and Jackson were another matter.

If she'd simply wanted them physically, she would have been able to fight it. But wanting them while caring for them more and more every day had been much more difficult.

It seemed impossible that she'd met them only days ago. She'd already come to care for them a great deal, and every time she saw them, the feelings she had for them kept getting stronger.

She just needed to know that they cared for her the same way and that she wouldn't be just someone to have sex with while she worked here.

* * * *

Shayne walked into the kitchen, frowning to find it empty. A knot formed in his stomach. He knew it wouldn't unravel until he found Samantha.

He found it hard to believe she'd only been here a few days. She'd already become part of this place, and a part of him. If anything happened to her he didn't know what he would do and it kept him on edge the entire time he was away from her.

Wishing for the hundredth time that he could be the kind of man she'd need, he started moving from room to room, looking for her.

Not finding her in the kitchen or study, he moved to the front door, knowing how much she loved to sit on the swing. She jolted when he walked out and he cursed himself for startling her. He approached slowly, not wanting to scare her any further, stopping several feet away to lean against a post. "Are you okay?"

Samantha nodded. "I'd better go start the biscuits."

Shayne had been avoiding her as much as possible and knew she wanted to get away from him, but he couldn't resist spending a few minutes with her. "Jackson won't be in for a little while. The biscuits

can wait a few more minutes.”

He watched as she settled back into the swing, using her bare toes to rock it back and forth. He would love to pick her up, hold her on his lap, and swing for hours.

The sight of her tiny feet with her little pink toenails made him hard as a rock.

Samantha cleared her throat. “Jackson said that you’re going with Petey to pay those guys off.”

Shayne nodded. “Yeah. Doug and Walt will stay behind to watch the ranch while we’re gone.” The thought of not being here himself to protect her made his stomach churn.

“Do you know who they are?”

“Yes.”

When he didn’t add anything more, Samantha sighed. “Well? Who are they?”

Shayne deliberately relaxed his hands that had tightened into fists. Thinking about those men in her apartment and what could have happened to her, enraged him. “Bad men. Men that won’t get near you again. Don’t worry. They can’t get to you or your brother.”

He didn’t tell her that the men were being watched and that the sheriff, along with Cal and his men would also be there. He didn’t want her to worry and would tell her when it was over.

“I’m not a child, you know. You can tell me what’s going on.”

Wanting to distract her, Shayne raised a brow. “Tough, are you?”

She stared at him for so long, he thought she wouldn’t answer. When a slow smile curved her lips, his groin tightened painfully.

“You think I’m scared of you, don’t you?”

Shayne surprised himself by grinning. “Baby, if you knew what I’m thinking right now, it would terrify you all the way to your cute little toes.”

Samantha grinned. “You think my toes are cute?”

Her smile made his cock jump and he barely stifled his groan. His face burned as her question registered. Had he really said that? He

shrugged, not knowing what to say.

Samantha blinked, her violet eyes wide. “Are you flirting with me?”

Shayne’s face burned even hotter. “No.”

His breath caught when she stood and moved close, staring up at him. The clean, fresh scent, uniquely her, had him tightening his hands into fists to keep from reaching for her. As she stood looking up at him, it reminded him again of the huge difference in their size.

Finally, she spoke. “If you don’t like me, I wish you’d just say so. If you do, stop acting like a jerk.”

Stunned, Shayne could only watch her as she stormed into the house.

“She didn’t seem scared to me.”

Shayne turned to see a grinning Jackson coming around the side of the house.

“Shut up, Jackson.”

* * * *

Right after breakfast the next morning, she and Jackson climbed into his truck to ride to town for groceries. Shayne had already gone out and she watched him from the truck window as they started down the drive. The ranch hands gathered around him, looking so much smaller next to him. Yesterday, she’d seen the way they all deferred to him. Part of it, of course, had to do with him being the boss, but she could see that he worked harder than any of them and had earned their respect with his sweat, determination, and courage. She couldn’t even imagine pitting herself against an animal so much bigger than she was.

Her gaze slid to Jackson as he pulled out of the driveway. Her body, always tingling with awareness at his nearness, reacted even more so to being confined in the truck with him.

Jackson turned to grin at her wickedly. “Something on your

mind?"

That wicked grin of his had her stomach clenching. She said the first thing that came to mind. "Why doesn't Shayne ever go to town?"

Jackson's jaw tightened. "He just doesn't. Drop it."

"Okay. Sorry. I was just curious." She watched his hands on the wheel. They looked big and competent and she couldn't help but wonder what they would feel like stroking her. Her face burned and she hurriedly turned to look out the window.

Jackson sighed. "Sam, I'm sorry for snapping. Shayne just doesn't like to go to town if he can avoid it."

Samantha jerked her attention back to him. "I know he tries not to spend any more time with me than he has to." She rubbed at a spot on her jeans. "I shouldn't have snapped at him at lunch yesterday. He was really quiet at dinner."

Jackson reached for her hand and folded it in his. Startled, she tried to pull away but he wouldn't let her.

"Shayne is six feet eight inches tall. Growing up, he was happy to be so big because he could help my dad out a lot. It wasn't until the women in town starting talking about how rough and crude he was that he started to feel uncomfortable with his size. That's why we starting sharing women. He's afraid to be alone with one. And when we did share a woman, we found something we'd never felt before. It satisfied us in a way we'd never known."

Samantha sat there, stunned and shifted uncomfortably in her seat. "I've heard about ménages, but I've never actually met anyone who participated in them before. What did you find that that you never had before?"

Jackson chuckled. "Shayne and I found that we fed off of each other's excitement. We found that we could make a woman come over and over again and that fed our excitement even more. Then I think Shayne liked that he no longer worried about being too rough. He liked having me there. I liked having him there. We've always been close but this made us even closer." He turned to look at her

sternly. “You can’t tell him that I said any of this. But it looks like Shayne is starting to care for you very much.”

Jackson came to a stop sign and turned to her with an expression she hadn’t seen before. His eyes gentled as he stroked her fingers. “I am, too. You’re the kind of woman I’d forgotten existed. I’m having a helluva time keeping my hands off of you. But I want Shayne to realize what he feels for you and accept that he can be good to you. I’ve never seen him look at a woman the way he looks at you. We want to share you, Sam. Make a life with you together. I don’t want my brother hurt, though. He doesn’t want to believe that you’re attracted to him.” He sighed and released her hand as he pulled out onto the road. “I just hope Shayne realizes what we can have with you soon. The waiting is killing me.”

Samantha just stared at his profile, open mouthed, astonished at the flood of moisture that now soaked her panties. At the same time, her heart pounded furiously, thinking about both of them caring for her in that way. Struck dumb, she didn’t know how to answer him. Several snappy comebacks went through her mind but nothing would come out of her mouth. Finally, she settled on the least explosive. “This can’t happen. Shayne doesn’t even like me. And besides, I’m your housekeeper, nothing more. If you expect me to pay my debt in another way, you’re mistaken.”

Jackson grinned. “If you had been the type to pay your debt on your back, you wouldn’t still be here. But there’s going to come a time, real soon, that you’re going to have to be honest with yourself. Do you think that I don’t see that you want both Shayne and me?”

Samantha kept staring out the window. “I don’t do casual sex.” *Especially with men she knew would break her heart.*

“Once again, if you did, you wouldn’t still be here. Shayne and I are looking for something more from a woman.”

Samantha blinked. “Oh, right, I forgot. You want to share a woman forever,” she muttered sarcastically.

Jackson smiled. “Yes. We do. Kids, the whole thing, with a

woman who sleeps nice and warm between us every night.”

Samantha closed her eyes as the image imprinted itself in her mind. What would it be like to have Shayne and Jackson make love to her? What would it feel like to be lying cuddled between them in the dark? *Snap out of it, Sam!* “I’m not the woman you need.” She tried not to squirm under Jackson’s scrutiny.

“Maybe,” he murmured. “Then again, maybe not. Shayne and I aren’t always gentle lovers. We like to hear a woman scream her pleasure. Probably not what you’re looking for, right?”

Samantha bit her lip against the wave of longing. “Right.” She thought about the books she loved to read. Jackson and Shayne would be even more than the characters in the erotic romances she collected.

When they finally got to the store, she hurriedly scrambled out of the truck, needing to put some distance between them.

But of course, Jackson stayed with her as she shopped for groceries. Because of that, her shopping took much longer. She had to keep working around the women that Jackson seemed to attract in droves. They glared at her, asking Jackson about her.

She tried to move away from him several times, seething at the women’s rudeness, but he stayed right with her. It appeared every woman in town between the ages of twenty and forty had decided to do their grocery shopping as soon as Jackson had walked into the store. Funny, none of them had grocery carts.

A redhead seemed to be the most intent for his attention, trying to battle a well endowed blond to get closer to him.

Amused, Samantha headed for the meats. “Jackson, do you and Shayne like pork chops?”

“Jackson does. Shayne will eat anything raw.”

Samantha turned to see that the stunning redhead had managed to wrap herself around Jackson. She recognized her as one of the women who came out to the ranch and followed Jackson like a puppy. “Excuse me?”

“Jackson, you haven’t introduced me to your new friend.”

“Samantha, Monica. Monica, Samantha. Yeah, Sam, we like pork chops. You’re such a good cook, we like whatever you make.”

“Oh, is this the new housekeeper? I heard her brother got into some trouble,” Monica sneered, snuggling closer to Jackson. “Have you warned her yet about your brother?”

Samantha dropped the meat into the cart.

Jackson’s face tightened as he scowled at the redhead and pulled from her grasp. He looked so cold and disgusted. Samantha would want to crawl into a hole if he ever looked at her that way, but the redhead appeared oblivious.

She raised a brow at the woman. “Warn me about Shayne?”

The redhead managed to grip Jackson’s arm again. “You have to be careful with Shayne. He’s not sophisticated at all. Not like Jackson here.” She purred and Samantha wanted to throw up. Now she had a good idea why Shayne wouldn’t come to town.

Jackson extricated himself yet again from the redhead’s clutches and grabbed Samantha’s arm. “Come on, Sam. Let’s go.”

Samantha fumed and stood her ground. She absolutely did not believe what this viper had said about Shayne. Sure he was big. But that didn’t mean he was some kind of an animal. She would love to get the chance—No, Sam don’t go there. Shayne was probably the last person in the world that needed defending but she just couldn’t help herself.

She smiled, while inside she just wanted to ram her shopping cart into the vicious redhead. “But he’s soooo wild. All that raw masculinity.”

A steel band wrapped around her waist as Jackson pulled her back against him. He growled in her ear loud enough for the women to hear. “Come on, honey. Let’s finish the shopping. I need to get the hell out of here.”

Samantha knew her nipples had beaded and poked at the front of her shirt. Being held against Jackson’s hard body put her system on overload. *Not good, Sam.*

Her eyes slid to Monica, pleased to see that the other woman did not look at all happy to see Jackson's hands on her. Her friends that had gathered around her began to snicker at her while watching Jackson nervously.

Monica finally recovered. The jealousy and anger showed clearly as her eyes shot daggers at her. "Jackson, what's going on?"

The hand on her hip felt hot through her jeans as he patted her. "Sam, go finish the shopping. I'll be right there."

Monica looked like a landed fish the way she kept opening and closing her mouth with nothing coming out.

Samantha started to push the cart, stopping again several feet away, watching out of the corner of her eye as the blond sidled up to Jackson. "Jackson, I thought we had an understanding. I'd love to fuck you and Shayne together."

Samantha moved away a little further and began picking out chicken, making sure she could still eavesdrop without appearing to. Still trying to come to terms with the erotic pleasure she'd gotten from Jackson's touch, she continued to pick up items haphazardly, not really seeing them.

The way Monica had spoken about Shayne had enraged her. Even though Jackson had already told her about the rumors, it still surprised the hell out of her.

The blond ran her hands over Jackson's chest and Samantha bit her lip again to keep from screaming at her not to touch him. *None of your business, Sam.*

Samantha watched as Jackson pulled her hands away from his chest and chuckled. "You're the one who told everyone that Shayne was rough and crude. If he didn't please you before why would you want him to fuck you again?"

Blondie shrugged. "We never actually had sex, but—"

"He knew you were more interested in his money than in him. He hated it and your cattiness, so he dumped you. That's why you started saying things about him. Now you're trying to tell me that you want a

shot at both of us?” Jackson asked sarcastically and loudly enough for everyone around them to hear.

The blond turned a deep red when she saw they had an audience. “Well, he just seemed so rough, but if he’s rough in a good way, maybe we can have some fun.”

Samantha heard Jackson’s answering laugh and she rolled her cart away, unable to listen to anymore. She didn’t care whom Jackson had sex with. Or Shayne for that matter.

With Jackson no longer in sight, she could finally concentrate on her shopping. She needed spices. Whoever had done the cooking previously had apparently used only salt, pepper and cinnamon.

Samantha needed more. Once she found them, she looked them over, mentally planning this week’s meals. With recipes running through her head, she selected a few. Lost in her thoughts, she nearly jumped out of her skin when someone touched her shoulder.

“Miss, can I have a word with you?”

She gasped and spun, her hand over her thudding heart, to find a large man standing there and staring at her in a way that sent chills up her spine. Taller than Jackson, he looked heavily muscled.

He smiled apologetically. “I’m sorry I startled you.”

Although not as handsome as Jackson, he had a killer smile, but some instinct made her uncomfortable around him. His eyes had the same cold look of the men who had broken into her apartment. Her stomach clenched in fear when she saw that this man also wore a suit. She couldn’t help glancing around for Jackson. Not seeing him, she dumped the spices in the cart and moved around it, making sure it stood between her and the stranger, all the while cursing her fear. Would she spend the rest of her life afraid of men in suits? “What do you want to talk to me about?”

“My name is Bruce Graham. I need to speak with Mr. Montgomery, but I can’t get on the ranch. I heard you work there. I was hoping you could give him a message for me.”

“Jackson Montgomery is here with me. I’ll go get him.”

When she started to move away, he put a hand on her arm to stop her. “No, not Jackson. I need to speak with Shayne Montgomery. Will you give him my card and tell him it’s of vital importance that he call me as soon as possible?”

Samantha pulled away, repulsed by his touch. She couldn’t find any fault with his behavior but for some reason he made her uneasy. She took the proffered card and moved away. “Sure, I’ll give it to him.”

She started to walk away and again he stopped her, gripping her forearm.

“Don’t touch me!”

Although he raised his hands in surrender, his eyes flashed angrily before he shuttered them again. He smiled, all traces of anger gone, making her wonder if she’d imagined it.

“I’m sorry. I don’t mean to scare you, but this is very important. The Dakota Ranch has oil on it, enough to make Shayne and Jackson Montgomery very rich men.”

“I’ll tell them and give Shayne your card.” She just wanted to get away from him.

“Tell Shayne to call me. It’s very important that he calls me before it’s too late.”

Samantha pushed the card into the back pocket of her jeans. “I told you I would.”

The anger flared in his eyes again before it was quickly extinguished. “Don’t forget.” He ran a finger down her cheek, making her flinch. “Until we meet again.”

Samantha jerked away from him and practically ran down the aisle towards the front of the store.

Finally she got to the checkout, where Jackson joined her to pay for the groceries, grinning, and with the women still trailing him. They actually followed him out to his truck. Unbelievable.

Ignoring the women trailing Jackson and vying for his attention, Samantha kept glancing around for the man in the suit.

She got into the passenger seat and left Jackson to deal with loading the groceries. She searched the parking lot, but saw no sign of the man who'd been in the store. Angry at herself for being afraid of him, she threw her purse to the floor. What could he have done to her with a store full of people there?

Jackson got in the truck, still grinning, and she looked over to see the redhead and the blond glaring at her as they said their goodbyes to Jackson. Forgetting about the man in the store, she glared back at them.

Riding back to the ranch, Samantha crossed her arms over her chest and stared stonily out the windshield. Just because she didn't care who Jackson slept with didn't mean that she had to put up with women fawning all over him in the grocery store, did it? It had ended up taking her twice as long to shop as it should have. He'd wasted her time. So had the man who'd given her the card. What was his name? Bruce Graham, yeah, that's it.

She had plenty of things to do back at the ranch and now she would be behind. She wanted to hit something.

What kind of barracudas lived in this town? Following Jackson like that and talking about Shayne. They didn't even know him. Sure he was big, but he'd been gentle and kind to her.

Oh, but what would it feel like to be the center of his attention, to have that big body and raw masculinity focused on her? It seemed impossible that she'd finally met men, real men, the kind that she'd fantasized about for years, and would never have them. *Whoa! Sam, those are only fantasies.*

Damn it.

She glanced at Jackson to see that he looked very pleased with himself. Why not? The women crawled all over him. She didn't care. He'd pissed her off by making her late getting home to do her chores. And what about the way he'd wrapped himself around her in front of everybody? How dare he? That's what put those crazy ideas in her head, arousing her. Just thinking about it got her hot again. All of this

was Jackson's fault. He made her feel things that she knew she shouldn't feel and filled her with a need that she knew would remain unfulfilled. Bastard.

Samantha stormed into the house, leaving Jackson to carry in the groceries. She found Shayne sitting at the kitchen table drinking a glass of iced tea.

"It's about damned time."

Samantha whirled on him. "Don't blame me! Blame Casanova out there!"

Shayne nodded and stood. "Monica and the others follow him around like puppies?"

"Yeah, and some blond bimbo named Tracy. It took me twice as long to shop."

Shayne actually blanched when she'd mentioned Tracy and she could have bitten her tongue. Jackson walked in, dropped several bags on the table, grinned at her and walked back out again. Shayne turned to go out to the truck. "I'll go help with the groceries."

"Wait."

When he stopped and turned to her, she dug the card out of her pocket and handed it to him. "A man stopped me at the store and told me to give this to you. He said to tell you there's oil on the ranch and he wants you to call him."

Shayne's face turned to stone. "He talked to you?"

Samantha nodded, unnerved at both his expression and tone. "Yes, in the store."

He moved fast, grabbing her by the waist and lifting her a good foot off the floor. "Stay away from that man," he told her through clenched teeth.

Samantha blinked. "But I—"

His eyes blazed as he pulled her so close their faces nearly touched. "You stay the fuck away from him. Don't disobey me on this, Samantha. You'll regret it."

He put her down, turning away abruptly and stormed out of the

kitchen. He went out to the truck, marching up to Jackson.

She heard a heated discussion but couldn't make out the words. She touched her waist, where the heat from his hands still lingered. Even as mad as he'd been, she hadn't been afraid that he'd hurt her.

Please don't let me fall in love with him!

Very afraid that it might already be too late, she slowly began to put away the groceries.

* * * *

Jackson did most of the talking during lunch, happy and grinning and she just wanted to smack him. After she'd eaten, she stood and started cleaning up, slamming the cabinet drawers in frustration.

Finally, Jackson drawled. "If you slam one more drawer, I'm turning you over my knee and paddling your ass."

Samantha froze with her hand on the drawer she'd been about to slam. Her pulse raced and she closed her eyes against the wave of pure lust that washed over her. Why the hell had the threat of a spanking in that low tone created such need? Keeping her face carefully blank, she turned to face him. "You wouldn't dare."

Shayne looked equally startled and looked over at her. Her breath caught at the heat in his eyes. When those hot eyes ran over her body, lingering on her breasts, it took every ounce of self control she possessed not to cover them with her hands.

Jackson leaned back in his chair and stared back at her, his eyes flicking to her breasts. "Slam one more drawer and find out."

Shayne bit off something under his breath and stood, moving to stand in front of her. Without warning, he lifted her onto the counter, and leaned down until his eyes were level with hers. His shoulders blocked out the rest of the room as he loomed over her.

Swallowing painfully, she stared at him, wondering what he would do. She forced herself to remain still as he reached out a thick finger to trace her cheek. She burned where he touched her. Her

nipples tightened painfully and her pussy clenched, weeping desperately.

Her breath caught as his finger traced down her cheek and moved over her bottom lip. His gaze followed the track of his caress, seemingly mesmerized.

Gripping the edge of the countertop, her chest burned and she suddenly realized she'd been holding her breath. It came out in a shudder when Shayne's finger moved back and forth over her lips before sliding down to her chin and beneath it. Applying pressure, he lifted it until her eyes met his. Caught in his heavy lidded gaze, she could do nothing but stare at him.

Oh God, she wanted him so much.

She couldn't prevent a gasp as the pad of his thumb touched her bottom lip, pressing down to force her lips open.

His face tightened and he released her so abruptly, she almost fell. He caught her and settled her back on the counter and with a glare at Jackson, turned and walked out. She heard the sounds of him pulling on his boots, and a few seconds later the back door slammed.

Stunned, she sat there, trying to make sense of what had just happened, so aroused she could hardly catch her breath.

Jackson got up and started toward her. The look on his face and the way his eyes had darkened made him look far too dangerous. With her senses spiraling out of control, she gulped as he moved closer, that wide chest coming nearer with each step.

He leaned over her as Shayne had just done and lightly rubbed his lips over hers. When he traced them with his tongue, her lips parted automatically. Smiling, he straightened. He startled the hell out of her when he stroked her nipples where they poked out at the front of her shirt. "Your time is running out, baby."

She tightened her thighs against the erotic pull at her slit.

He smiled at her, tracing her cheek as Shayne had and with a last tender look, turned to follow his brother.

Sitting on the counter, trembling with need and emotion, she

poked out her tongue to touch the spot Jackson's tongue had just stroked.

She had to harden her heart against them before they destroyed her.

First, she had to get her body under control.

She'd never last the year.

Chapter Four

Samantha finished cleaning up from lunch, not slamming any more drawers.

Something about Jackson had changed and it excited and scared the hell out of her. He'd already told her that he meant to have her but she didn't know if she could handle it. She had an idea what his 'time is running out' meant.

But being involved with two men was a fantasy, something out of her books. Nobody really lived that way and she didn't know if she even had the courage to try. Her heart had become involved. Even attempting it could break her.

She had plenty of time before she had to put the roast and potatoes in the oven. She just had to make some fresh iced tea. Oh no. She suddenly remembered that she'd forgotten to buy coffee at the grocery store. She'd used the last of it for breakfast this morning. Jackson's floozies and that man had distracted her and made her forget it. Damn.

She knew they'd both want coffee after dinner but even if they could go without it then, they'd all definitely want some tomorrow morning.

She went to the window not seeing either of them, and wondered what she should do. Shayne had warned her about not leaving the ranch. But if they were going to meet with the men Petey owed money to Saturday night, going out shouldn't be a problem. They'd have no reason to hurt her now. She would be fine just running to the store for coffee and would be back before either one of them even knew she'd been gone.

Slipping her sandals back on, she grabbed her purse and keys and headed out the door.

Once at the store, it didn't take long to find the coffee, especially with no one around to block her way. The next time she came to the grocery store she would definitely come alone.

After rushing through the checkout, she raced to her car, coming to an abrupt halt when she saw Bruce Graham leaning against it.

Forcing herself to move closer, she nevertheless stopped several feet away. "What do you want?"

Anger flashed in his eyes. "Don't get high and mighty with me. You're just a housekeeper who keeps her job by fucking her employers."

"Kiss my ass," Samantha snapped. "Get away from my car."

"Did you give Shayne my message?"

"Yes, now go away."

His smile sent a chill down her spine. "Tell him you saw me."

Samantha watched as he straightened and walked away. Why would he want her to tell Shayne that she saw him?

Yeah, like she would tell him. She wasn't even supposed to be here. Damn, she had to get back home before they found out she'd gone.

She hurried back to the ranch, finally turning into the long driveway and carefully parking her car exactly where it had been before. Turning off the engine, she heard a slam and looked up to see both Shayne and Jackson coming down the porch steps and heading straight for her.

Uh oh. They both looked livid. Damn.

Shayne yanked open her car door, making her wince as the door hinges groaned. She rushed to explain. "It's Jackson's fault. With all his girlfriends around I forgot to get the—Hey! What are you doing?"

He'd pulled her out of the car and tossed her over his shoulder, heading back into the house with Jackson on his heels.

"The coffee!"

“Fuck the coffee!” Shayne growled and strode to the kitchen. He dropped her to her feet, grabbed her by the shoulders and shook her. “You scared the hell out of me! Didn’t I tell you not to leave the ranch?”

Shayne in a rage was a sight to behold. His already hard features had tightened even more. His eyes looked blacker than ever. She had to get him calmed down. Hoping to soften him up, she smiled and laid a hand on his chest, trying to ignore the heat and the play of hard muscle under her hand. He looked madder than hell. “I just ran out to get coffee. I forgot it earlier. Nothing happened. I figured that since you’ve already arranged to pay those men, they have no reason to hurt me. I thought I’d be back before you even noticed I was gone.”

“So you thought you’d be back before I found out about it? You figured I would never know that you’d disobeyed me?” Shayne’s dangerously soft voice gave her a strange feeling in the pit of her stomach. She recognized part of it as fear, but that glittering look in his eyes made her feel something more. She’d never seen him like this before. All the cold remoteness he’d shown her had disappeared. There was no doubt in her mind that she had his undivided attention and it scared the hell out of her.

“Shayne, I just wanted to—”

“I don’t give a damn what you wanted to do. I ought to pull those jeans off of you and give you the bare ass spanking you deserve! This is my ranch and everyone on it obeys my orders or pays the consequences. For you that would be a red ass. Didn’t I tell you that you’re not allowed to leave the ranch unless you’re with either me or Jackson?”

“Yes, but—”

“Did anyone stop you?”

“Why would anyone stop me?”

Shayne’s eyes darkened even more. “That’s not an answer. And if you lie to me, I’ll know it. I swear I’ll put you over my knee. Now, did anyone stop you?”

Damn. Not knowing if he could really tell if she lied or not, she opted for the truth. “Bruce Graham was waiting for me by my car.”

“Fuck! I told you to stay away from him. He’s bad news, Samantha. Didn’t I tell you to stay on the fucking ranch?”

Samantha’s eyes slid to Jackson who somehow managed to look fierce and smug at the same time.

Shayne grabbed her chin and forced her to face him, leaning down close. His eyes looked anything but cold now. “Jackson can’t help you. You’re dealing with me now. You scared me to death. If anything had happened to you—Damn you, Samantha.”

Before she could blink, his mouth covered hers. He lifted her and her legs wrapped around his waist automatically as she struggled to get closer. His kiss meant to punish, bruising her lips as he took her mouth, forcing his tongue inside.

He kissed her ruthlessly, stealing her breath as he all but devoured her. His huge arms tightened around her as he groaned. Between one heartbeat and the next, his mouth gentled.

Wrapped in his embrace, she clung to him, her hands tangling in his hair to hold him close. His hand cupped the back of her head, his hands caressing her hair as he held her in place. Everywhere he touched, she could feel his heat and her mind and body spun out of control. Plastered against him, with his arms wrapped around her, she felt him everywhere.

She’d never felt so needed, or so desired as she did at that moment. Completely wrapped around each other, she still struggled to get closer. She knew he could crush her easily, but the hands that held her firmly in place stroked her gently.

The combination went to her head and she couldn’t have stopped if her life depended on it. Her body flared to life, needing him to fulfill her.

Desperate groans bubbled up from deep in her throat. She thought of nothing else but him and the raging inferno he’d started inside her. She rubbed herself against him, trying to ease the lust that grew even

stronger. Her nipples beaded painfully, needing to be stroked. Her pussy wept with need, clenching uselessly, begging to be filled.

His chest, hard and hot, burned her. Her nipples and slit, forced hard against him, burned even hotter. Even in his tight embrace, she couldn't stay still. Grinding herself against him, she whimpered in frustration that she couldn't get closer.

His big hand covered her bottom and pulled her more firmly against him, giving her more of the friction her body craved. Her clit throbbed, feeling twice its normal size, burning as he tilted her against him with the hand on her bottom. She screamed into his mouth as wave after wave of blinding pleasure washed over her. Her whole body stiffened as it continued, as every nerve ending exploded in almost painful pleasure. Never had she felt such absolute bliss. She'd never dreamed pleasure like this existed. It touched her everywhere, filled her completely.

She panicked as it consumed her and began to struggle. Shayne lifted his mouth from hers and held her cheek against his, his deep voice crooning in her ear. "I've got you, baby. Let go."

Held against him this way, she had no choice. When the burst began to diminish, Shayne lifted his head to stare down at her, his eyes full of heat and astonishment. "You came."

Samantha's face burned and she ducked her head, slumping against him.

With a hand on her bottom still holding her up, he used the other to lift her chin. "No. Don't hide from me, baby."

She looked up at him through her lashes to find him watching her, his eyes filled with wonder. She'd never heard that soft tone in his voice before. It warmed her, filled her with joy that he would let his guard down, even a little, with her. Reaching up, she cupped his cheek. When he turned his face into her caress and kissed her palm, her heart melted as her insides fluttered to life again.

He rubbed his thumb over her bottom lip and she shuddered, astonished to realize he held her with only one arm. "You're not

afraid of me?”

She shook her head. “No. Yes.” She looked over at Jackson. She’d forgotten he was in the room. “I don’t know what you want from me. I don’t do things like this. Please don’t play games with me.”

Shayne brushed away a tear she hadn’t known she’d shed and set her down on the counter, keeping her legs spread by standing between them. “I don’t play games.”

Samantha’s gaze slid to Jackson when he moved closer, his expression much the same as his brother’s. “He said that you sh-share women.”

Shayne smiled at her tenderly, a look she’d never seen on his face before. “We do. But with you, it’s not a game. Do you want both of us, Samantha?”

Samantha looked at each of them and nodded slowly, afraid of what she was admitting, afraid of the way they made her feel, afraid that she would hurt one of them by admitting that she wanted both of them. Being shared by two men was so far out of her experience, she didn’t know if she could handle it.

Shayne lifted her chin, his eyes still tender. “You really came. I haven’t even touched you intimately yet.”

Samantha’s face burned, but he wouldn’t let her look away.

“I want to touch more of you. I think Jackson does, too. Give me those lips again.”

When Shayne lowered his mouth to hers again, her eyes fluttered closed on a groan. This time he didn’t lift her against him. Instead he reached for the buttons of her shirt. While Shayne worked at her shirt, Jackson stroked her. One hand ran through her hair while the other touched what Shayne revealed. Shayne’s mouth gentled on hers, stroking and nibbling her sensitive lips. When he lifted his head, she whimpered in her throat and tried to follow him.

“I’ll give you more, baby. First let us see you.”

Jackson unhooked her bra, baring her breasts to their gazes. The look in their eyes excited her even more. Both men wore similar looks

of need, their faces tight. Each reached tentatively for a breast, as if waiting for her to change her mind.

She had already gone well past that.

Her body screamed for relief, yearned to be touched, stroked. As they moved close, she couldn't help but arch toward them, gasping at the first feel of their rough hands on her ultra sensitive breasts. For both of them to be touching her this way drove all doubts from her mind. They touched her reverently, their fingers moving over her slowly as they caressed the curves of her breasts.

"Ohhh." Samantha's breath caught as she tried to remain still.

"You're so soft," Shayne said so softly she barely heard him.

"And beautiful," Jackson smiled at her. "Look at these pretty little nipples."

When he touched a finger to one, Samantha almost jolted off the counter. Oh God. Her nipples had become so sensitive and needy that the least little touch sent an arrow of need straight to her pussy. She trembled and her stomach clenched almost painfully. Her panties had become even more soaked as her body prepared to be taken. When Shayne touched the other, she cried out at the exquisite pleasure.

Shayne jerked his hand away. "Did I hurt you?"

She saw the despair on his face. *This* was the crude animal that everyone talked about?

Nothing could have reassured her more. "No. You didn't hurt me. It felt too good." She took his big hand in hers and lifted it back to her breast, moaning as Jackson lightly pinched her other nipple. "Please touch me."

The heat in his eyes threatened to burn her. "You like when I touch you like this, baby?"

"Oh God. Yes."

They each touched her with one hand while removing her shirt and bra with the other. Soon she was bared to the waist and they both ran their hands over her, not missing an inch of exposed flesh.

"You have the prettiest breasts I've ever seen," Jackson told her

softly. "I have to have a taste."

"I want to taste something else," Shayne's deep voice rumbled, making her shiver. "I want my mouth on your soft pussy." Oh God. The need in his voice sent her senses soaring as fresh moisture dampened her panties even more.

Her eyes popped open when he lifted her and with alarming ease, moved to the table and laid her on it before reaching for the fastening of her jeans.

Jackson leaned over her, pinching a nipple lightly. When she gasped and arched, he did it again. "You are so incredibly responsive. Your little nipples are just begging for my touch and you came before we even had you undressed. My brother and I are going to spend a lot of time getting to know your beautiful body, honey. And we're going to enjoy every minute of driving you wild."

Her jeans and panties slid down her legs and off until she lay naked on the kitchen table. She trembled even harder and her insides clenched. Jackson leaned down and took a nipple into his mouth, sucking it hard as his fingers closed over the other. Her hands tangled in his hair as she tried to hold him closer.

"Open your eyes."

Her eyes popped open at the steel in Shayne's tone. He'd never used that tone with her before. It caused a fresh rush of moisture to drip from her. Her pussy clenched uselessly and she thought she would die of need. How could they keep doing this to her?

The touch of his rough finger on her slit made her gasp. Those little sizzles started again and she knew another orgasm loomed close. She couldn't hold it off. So close.

"You're soaking wet," Shayne murmured huskily. He plunged a huge finger into her and she cried out as she came, her cries of release filling the room. He stroked the tender flesh, drawing out her release. She tightened on the finger inside her without meaning to. It stroked a spot inside her that sent her even higher. She couldn't escape the delicious feeling. Her body jolted, spasms of pure ecstasy racing

through her.

The pleasure seemed to last forever and when it finally began to diminish, she opened her eyes, groaning to find them both staring at her. Jackson's face had tightened even more, but his eyes glittered with satisfaction as he continued to stroke her breasts.

Tremulously, she looked down to see Shayne's face had also tightened and looked even harsher than before. She closed her eyes, too embarrassed to face them. She probably seemed so gauche and inexperienced to them. They were probably used to women much more worldly and experienced, and she hadn't even been able to control herself, instead acting like some kind of sex starved virgin.

Mortified beyond belief, she lay there, not sure what to do. She still had Shayne's finger inside her, for God's sake! Trembling, she squeezed her eyes shut, unable to look at them after what had just happened.

"Open your eyes, Samantha. Look at me."

Samantha reluctantly opened her eyes, responding to the underlying steel in Shayne's voice. She felt his finger slide from her and watched, amazed, as he stuck it in his mouth and licked it clean.

He held her gaze for several long seconds before looking down at her mound. When his gaze met hers again, his eyes glittered fiercely, filled with need and emotion. "I could eat you alive."

Oh God! She started trembling all over again.

He lowered himself into the chair, effectively sitting between her spread legs. He bent, bringing his mouth closer and closer to her slit. When he finally reached his goal, he swiped it with his tongue, making her jolt and cry out. Oh God. It felt so incredible she could hardly stand it. He did it again and again, using his tongue to trace her folds repeatedly.

Jackson leaned over her, all trace of playfulness gone. "I can't wait to taste your sweet pussy, darlin'. I can't wait to make love to you." He tasted like sin, intoxicating her as his mouth moved over hers. His kisses and Shayne's touch made her forget everything but

the pleasure and she could do nothing but hold on for the ride.

Shayne's tongue plunged inside her and she moaned, deep in her throat. Jackson swallowed her moan before lifting his head to watch her.

"You look so beautiful, Sam. All sweet and flushed. We're never letting you go."

Shayne's hands slid under her bottom and lifted her to his mouth. "I could do this all day," he groaned. He began to devour her in earnest, erasing every rational thought from her mind. His tongue moved over her with alarming greed and she held on to Jackson in desperation.

Jackson leaned over her, nibbling at her jaw. "I want to feel your mouth on me, Sam. I want to feel that hot mouth take my cock inside. I want to feel that soft little tongue lick me."

Samantha's eyes opened to mere slits. "Oh! Yes." The erotic feel of Shayne using his mouth on her sensitive folds and clit, pressing his tongue inside her soaked pussy, robbed her of all reason. He held her in place, his large hands gentle but firm as he positioned her to his liking.

"Do you want Shayne to fuck that wet pussy?"

"Yesss."

The mouth on her slit paused and with one last swipe, Shayne stood to his full height over her. His face had tightened even more and his eyes appeared lit from within. He looked enormous standing over her, planted firmly between her naked thighs and she'd never felt so vulnerable. So feminine. So desired.

Her gaze slid to Jackson, too good looking to be real and watched as he fisted his cock in his hand, his eyes on hers as he slowly stroked. She lay there, unable to look away, mesmerized by the sight of his thick, hard cock moving closer. A glistening drop appeared at the tip, and she licked her lips, already anticipating the taste of him.

"Get those lips nice and wet for me, Sam." He moved closer and stroked her hair. "I can't wait to feel that mouth on my cock."

“Samantha.”

She turned her head at Shayne’s deep voice. “Do you really want this?”

Samantha moaned. “More than anything. Please. I can’t stand it. Please, you have to do something.”

Shayne’s eyes burned even brighter. “We’ll take care of you, baby. I promise I won’t hurt you. Jackson will make sure.”

She smiled at him even as she reached for Jackson’s thick length. “I know you won’t. But if you don’t do something soon, I’m going to hurt *you*.”

His look of surprise, followed by a quick grin stole her breath as Jackson reached for her, turning her face toward him.

“I can’t wait, Sam. Please, honey. I need to take your mouth.”

Suddenly ravenous for him, she opened her mouth wide to take him in, trembling with need as she felt Shayne move between her thighs. Hearing the sounds of his jeans being unzipped and foil ripping, she shook even harder.

Swiping her tongue over the head of Jackson’s cock, she got her first taste of him. His groans of pleasure as she took him into her mouth made her hotter.

When she felt Shayne nudge at her entrance, she groaned. He began to press into her and muscles that hadn’t been stretched for a long time began to burn.

“Easy, baby. I’ll go real slow. Let me know if I’m hurting you.” The unmistakable strain in his voice drove her even higher.

In answer, Samantha lifted her hips and drew Jackson even further into her mouth.

Shayne’s big hands almost completely surrounded her as he gripped her hips again, lifting her to him. Jackson’s hand moved to her breasts, caressing them and tugging at her nipples.

Shayne’s shallow thrusts took him deeper, and she groaned at the incredible fullness. She tried to rock her hips to take even more of him, but he held her firmly.

“Easy, baby. I’ll fill you.”

Shayne’s thrusts continued to press his thick length deeper and deeper. Moaning around Jackson’s velvety hardness, she kept trying to tilt her hips to take him in faster. The unbelievable fullness had her entire body quivering.

The hands on her breasts continued to explore her, stroking and lightly pinching. Her moans, their deep groans and murmured encouragement filled the room.

“These breasts are so damned beautiful, Sam. Oh God, your mouth feels so good. Like hot velvet. Fuck. That tongue.”

“Her pussy’s so tight she’s killing me,” Shayne groaned, his voice barely recognizable. “So damned sweet. All these fucking little ripples. Jesus.”

Samantha couldn’t stay still. With her hands gripping Jackson’s thighs for leverage, she squirmed on the table, so close, hanging on the edge of yet another orgasm.

“Fuck. I’m gonna come, Sam. If you don’t want to swallow, you’d better let go. Now.”

Samantha grabbed onto his thighs tighter. She needed all of him. Needed everything they could give her. The pull on her nipples intensified as Jackson groaned his completion. His cock pulsed and his erotic taste filled her mouth. She swallowed frantically, moaning as Shayne thrust further into her. Jackson’s deep groans went on and on. “Never like this. Fuck. Oh God, Sam. So fucking good.”

His groans and praise and the way he caressed her everywhere even afterward made her feel even more cared for. It also made her hotter. She squirmed harder, moaning in frustration and trying to take more of Shayne’s thick steel inside her body. She needed all of him. She didn’t want him to be careful. She wanted him to take her like he’d never taken another woman.

Shayne’s big hands squeezed her bottom, halting her movement.

“No more, baby. I don’t want to hurt you.” Shayne sounded tortured as his thrusts increased in speed but he didn’t go any deeper.

Jackson withdrew from her mouth and moved above her head, cupping her breasts and running his thumbs over her nipples. She cried out. "More, Shayne. Give me more."

The way his cock rubbed something inside her made her crazy. Her inner muscles burned from being stretched. Through eyes opened to slits, she could see his furious struggle for control. She didn't want him to feel he had to be careful with her.

She wanted him to need her so much, he forgot about control. She wanted to be able to take all of him.

She bucked on the table. "Shayne. More."

"Damn it, Samantha."

Jackson looked down at her. "Shayne, give her more."

"No, damn it."

Samantha cried out when he concentrated his thrusts on that sensitive spot inside her. "More, Shayne. Harder."

Between one thrust and the next, she went over again, crying out loudly as her body arched off the table. Every inch of her skin tingled with pleasure. Her inner muscles tightened on Shayne's cock, pleasuring her even more. It went on and on and she hoped it would never end. The tugs on her nipples added even more as did her lovers deep voices.

Samantha raised her hands over her head to grip the other side of the table as she dug her heels into Shayne's firm butt, forcing herself onto his thickness. She cried out at the delicious fullness.

With a bit off curse, he plunged into her and she screamed. He went so deep inside her, it seemed impossible. He cursed and attempted to withdraw from her. She dug her heels into him even harder, absently hearing their voices but couldn't focus on what they said. Her entire being had been taken over as one orgasm layered over another.

She shook, she cried out, she jolted in Jackson's arms as the incredible feeling burned through her. When Shayne's hands tightened and she heard his deep growl, she knew he'd followed, and

burned even hotter as his cock pulsed inside her.

Shayne's hands dug into her hips, holding her tightly against him. His deep growl thrilled her and she knew he'd forgotten all about everything but his need for her.

Jackson's hands moved from her breasts to run over her still trembling body. She slowly came back down, completely sated, and struggled to catch her breath.

Except for big hands running over her, no one moved for several minutes. The sound of the refrigerator humming accompanied their harsh breathing. The sounds of the horses and the men outside finally got through to her and she grimaced, hoping that none of them had heard the sounds coming from the house.

Jackson brushed her damp hair back from her forehead, and smiled at her tenderly. "You're incredible, sweetheart. More than I ever hoped for. I can't wait to take you like Shayne just did. I'm so glad we found you," he murmured against her lips before taking them again in another of those long drugging kisses. By the time he lifted his head, her head spun again.

She smiled up at him. "I can't feel my fingers."

"Are you okay?" Shayne asked, looking at her worriedly.

Jackson chuckled. "She says she can't feel her fingers. I think we satisfied our little darlin'."

Samantha giggled as Shayne pulled her up from the table and into his arms, settling her on his lap, his softening length still deep inside her.

"I didn't hurt you?"

Samantha leaned back to look up at him. She put a hand to his cheek and smiled, wanting to erase his deep frown. "Of course not. I'm a grown woman, not a baby." She leaned forward and touched his lips with hers. "I can handle anything you can dish out, cowboy."

Shayne's lips twitched. "Don't kid yourself. You're just a tiny little thing." He blew out a breath and pulled her close. "What the hell am I going to do with you?"

Love me.

She had to bite back the words that threatened to escape as she snuggled into his embrace, smiling at Jackson as he stood watching them, a satisfied look on his face.

What had she done?

She'd just had sex with two men she'd fallen for but hadn't known very long, and felt more desired, more cared for than she ever had in her life. Shayne stood, withdrawing from her and holding her when she swayed. "Are you sure you're okay?"

Samantha nodded, trying hard not to show her disappointment that Shayne seemed like he couldn't wait to turn her over to Jackson. He righted his clothes and when he looked at her again, his face had once again become cold and remote. "Are you sure you're okay? I didn't hurt you?"

Samantha moved away and reached for her clothes. Shayne's cool attitude stung. His demeanor had changed completely again. A few minutes earlier she would have sworn that he cared for her. Apparently, she'd been mistaken.

"I'm fine."

She winced inwardly when Shayne nodded abruptly and strode from the room.

Jackson's lips moved to her neck. "We have a few things to do to get ready for Saturday. Once we pay these guys off, we won't have to worry about your safety anymore."

She nodded, trying not to show her hurt. But Jackson saw it.

He lifted her chin, kissing her lightly. "Shayne cares for you, honey. We both do, but he just has a harder time showing it." He smiled and rubbed her shoulder. "You'll see. Everything will work out. We just have to get rid of these men who threatened to hurt you. And once Shayne realizes how you feel about him and that he *is* gentle with you, everything will be fine. I promise."

Samantha nodded. "I'm sure you're right." She forced herself to smile at him before he turned and walked out.

As soon as he left, her smile fell. She wasn't sure of anything except that when she left here, her heart would be in tatters.

* * * *

The men came in just as she'd finished setting the table. Moving to the sink, she carefully kept her back to the room as they passed through on the way to take their showers. She'd been nervous all day about sitting at the dinner table with them, not knowing what to expect. Still unsettled over her earlier reaction, she didn't feel ready to face them.

Jackson came back into the kitchen first, his damp hair combed back. He and Shayne always dressed in jeans and t-shirts after their showers and both always took her breath away. Before she knew what he'd planned, he turned her and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her close. She stiffened involuntarily. When he did nothing more than hold her, she gradually relaxed in his embrace.

When he started running his hands over her back, she melted into him. It felt so good to have him hold her this way, and she just couldn't fight it.

Her nipples poked at his chest and although she knew he had to feel it, he didn't acknowledge it. He leaned back and with a finger under her chin, tilted her face to his. "Hi, honey."

His mouth covered hers, and she leaned into him. He held her head tilted as he explored her mouth, swallowing her moan and pulling her more tightly against him. When he finally lifted his head, she blinked, dazed. God, he could kiss.

He smiled at her wickedly and bit her lip, tweaking a throbbing nipple and making her gasp, before moving away. With a pat on her bottom, he moved to sit at the table and started to fill his plate, looking from her to Shayne.

Shayne had already taken his seat and she looked over to find him staring at her. "Come here, Samantha."

Already throbbing with need, she knew she'd be no match for him. Thinking about the incredible lovemaking and then his cool attitude afterward, she began to tremble. "W-why?"

Shayne's face hardened. "Forget it." He turned his chair to the table and started filling his plate.

Too unsure of herself and his feelings, she didn't feel up to dealing with him right now. "I'm not hungry. I'm going to my room."

"Sit down, Sam." Jackson's voice lashed out like a whip.

Samantha froze. "I want to go to my room." She bolted for the door.

Shayne moved fast for such a big man. He shot out his arm, catching her around the waist and pulled her onto his lap.

She struggled briefly, but of course she couldn't budge. Moisture dripped from her as she sat on his rock hard thighs. The heat of his body ignited hers. But she couldn't forget how he'd been with her after their lovemaking earlier.

"What do you want from me?"

Jackson leaned forward. "We want to talk about this afternoon."

"I don't want to talk about it." Especially, since she hadn't figured it out herself.

She trembled as Shayne ran a rough finger softly over her arm.

"If you're afraid of me, I won't ever touch you again."

"I'm not afraid of you," she said softly.

He rubbed a hand down her arm, asking tenderly, "Aren't you going to eat your dinner?"

"I'm not hungry."

"You're shaking. You don't have to be afraid of me."

Samantha felt her face burn and ducked her head. "I'm not."

"Sam, look at me," Jackson ordered softly.

When Samantha looked up, her insides clenched at the need on his face.

"Shayne and I both care for you very much. You know that, don't you?"

Samantha shook her head. "I can't do this. We hardly know each other."

Jackson frowned. "Yes, we do. We've learned enough about each other living together. We'll learn more."

He smiled at her so tenderly. "Come here, honey."

When Shayne let her go, she stood and moved toward Jackson. "Please say what you have to say so I can go to my room. I have some things to do." She just had to get away from them and think.

Jackson pulled her onto his lap and cradled her against his chest. "I love you. I've never said that to another woman before. I want you to stay here with us. Be our woman." He lowered his mouth to hers. Held tightly against his chest, she opened up to him as he took her mouth hungrily.

She simply melted. Clinging to him, she gave him everything. The muscles under her hand shifted as he pulled her even closer. By the time he lifted his head, her body hummed. When a hand covered her breast and began stroking, she moaned helplessly.

He unbuttoned her shirt and quickly undid her bra, baring her. "I want you so badly. I've never wanted anything more."

The emotions that played across his handsome face heated her blood even more.

"Oh, Jackson. I'm afraid I love you, too." She smiled tearfully at him. "I tried not to. It's too soon. How can we love each other?" She frowned up at him. "Maybe it's just sex."

Jackson smiled at her so tenderly, it brought tears to her eyes. "I've had sex before, Sam. Many times. Trust me, it's not just sex for me." He cupped her breast, stroking his thumb lightly over her nipple, smiling indulgently when she gasped. "And I don't think you're the kind of woman who could respond the way you do to someone unless you love them."

Samantha looked over to see Shayne watching them silently, his eyes glittering. Trying not to be disappointed, she looked back up at Jackson to see him frowning at his brother. He must have felt her

gaze, back down at her.

His smile looked forced. “Everything will work out. Eat. Before I give into temptation and have *you* for dinner.”

Chapter Five

On Saturday morning the tension in the air could be cut with a knife. Samantha kept glancing back and forth between Shayne and Jackson, waiting for one of them to say something.

When both remained silent, she finally blurted, “I heard what happened last night.”

Both men stopped eating, glancing at each other before looking at her.

Jackson frowned when Shayne rose to get more coffee, leaving him to answer. “I thought you were asleep. Don’t worry about Pete. He didn’t get off the ranch.”

Samantha stared down at her plate, pushing her eggs around. “He was drunk, wasn’t he? I heard what he said.”

When both men cursed, she looked up. “He didn’t say anything that everyone else isn’t thinking.”

She’d woken to the sounds of a scuffle and harsh words. Petey had gotten drunk and wanted to go to town to get laid. She hadn’t recognized the voices of the men Petey had argued with, but heard enough to know they’d stopped him from sneaking off the ranch.

A few minutes later, she’d heard Jackson’s voice and Shayne’s deeper tone ordering her brother back to the bunkhouse.

Petey had gotten even angrier. “Easy for you guys to say. You get laid. You’re both fucking my sister.”

Samantha had already started for the door, intending to go outside to try to reason with him. Hearing his words, she froze, mortified and hurt beyond belief.

The following silence had been deafening, followed by a thud and

the sound of a body falling.

Shayne's icy, "Put him to bed," had sent a shiver through her and she'd moved like an old woman back to bed.

It had taken hours to fall back to sleep. She'd gotten up early, still upset and nervous about the meeting tonight.

It hadn't surprised her that both Jackson and Shayne had come downstairs only minutes behind her.

She dropped her fork and picked up her coffee to warm her icy hands. Nothing could have surprised her more than the touch of Shayne's hands on her shoulders. Trembling, she put down her cup, afraid she would spill it. Her eyes closed of their own volition when she felt his warm breath on her neck.

"There isn't a man on the place who doesn't know how Jackson and I feel about you."

He bent and dropped a hard kiss on her lips before straightening and moving back to his seat. He sat, calmly sipping his coffee, raising a brow at her continued silence.

Ruffled, she opened and closed her mouth several times, but didn't know what to say. Finally, she managed an, "Oh."

Her face burned when she realized how stupid she'd sounded.

Shayne surprised the hell out of her again by throwing his head back and laughing. A glance at Jackson told her he was just as amazed.

Her heart melted. When Shayne stopped laughing and began to look a little self-conscious, she crossed her arms over her chest and stuck her tongue out at him, playfully. "Stinker."

His eyes flared, all signs of self-consciousness gone. "Be careful waving that tongue around, Samantha. You could find yourself in big trouble."

Samantha batted her eyes. "Are you flirting with me?"

Both men laughed and the tension disappeared.

* * * *

Samantha prepared thick sandwiches for lunch. Throughout the meal, Jackson flirted outrageously and even Shayne teased her. She suspected they did it to ease her fears about the coming evening and because of what she'd overheard the night before. Although she appreciated the effort and teased them back, nothing could get rid of the apprehension that churned her stomach.

"Come here, Sam."

Samantha looked up at Jackson, dropping the sandwich she'd been steadily breaking into little pieces.

He pulled her onto his lap and lifted his own sandwich to her lips. "Open."

She smiled and took a bite, leaning against him as she chewed. He and Shayne finished their sandwiches and each started on another.

Between bites, Jackson unbuttoned her shirt, stroking each inch of skin he revealed. By the time he finally pulled the two sides apart and unclasped her bra, she'd become a mass of need.

"I love these pretty breasts," Jackson drawled, stroking a nipple.

Lying across Jackson's lap, his arm supporting her back, Samantha lost herself in sensation as his hands continued to roam.

She couldn't keep from moaning when his hand slid between her legs. "I want you so damned much. As soon as we get back from paying these guys off, I'm taking you to bed. I can't wait to get inside this hot little pussy."

"Oh, Jackson. I want you, too."

"You'd better be ready when I get back because as soon as I walk through that door, you're mine."

She laughed as Jackson helped her up, slapping her bottom teasingly. He made her feel so good. When she started to move away, he gripped her hips and pulled her back against him. She froze when he ran one hand over her bottom while holding her in place with the other.

"I love your ass, Sam. Has anyone ever taken you there?"

“N-no.” She shuddered when his hand moved down her jean clad bottom and pressed between her legs. Moaning, she grabbed onto the table when he began to press against her forbidden opening.”

“Do you know how good it’s gonna feel when Shayne and I take you together? One of us will be fucking your pussy while the other is fucking your tight ass.”

“Oh God.” When Jackson reached around to cover her breasts, she gripped his forearm as her legs started to tremble.

“I’m tasting, and then I’m taking that sweet pussy as soon as we get home. Shayne and I are going to start working on that ass. Aren’t we, Shayne?”

Samantha looked over to see Shayne watching his brother’s hands tug at her nipples. He looked up and met her gaze before letting his glittering eyes move over her. When he looked back up at her, his eyes blazed. “Yes.”

Kissing the top of her head, Jackson released her. When she started righting her clothing, Shayne spoke.

“No. Come here. It’s my turn.”

When she moved close, he pulled her onto his lap, and held her as Jackson had. He manipulated her nipples, alternately stroking, pinching and tugging as though gauging her response to each sensation.

She thought she would die from the pleasure.

His big hands moved over her gently, but firmly, touching every inch of bare skin.

“Shayne, please. I can’t stand it anymore.”

He unfastened her jeans and lifted her enough to push them to her knees.

Samantha felt his fingers brush over her mound and tried to part her thighs, but the jeans around her knees prevented it. Whimpering with frustration, she struggled to kick them off.

Shayne pulled them the rest of the way off and gripped her hip, flipping her to her stomach.

Samantha froze. "What are you doing?"

"I've been dying to have a good look at this ass."

His words and tone had her literally dripping. She moaned, readily parting her thighs as Shayne's callused hand moved over her bottom. He stroked her over and over, not missing a single spot, making her entire bottom tingle. She couldn't lie still, squirming on his lap as she tried to find relief. "Please, Shayne."

She heard the scrape of a chair as Jackson stood. She watched his legs as he moved around the table. When she could no longer see him, she felt his hands on her thighs, parting them even more and moving between them.

Her moans and whimpers filled the room as she kicked her legs, desperate to come. "Damn it. Stop teasing me."

Jackson chuckled. "Wild little thing, isn't she?"

"Spread her."

"Oh God." Her clit throbbed even more as fresh moisture flowed from her.

Samantha gasped as Jackson's hands moved to cover the cheeks of her bottom and spread them, revealing her most private place.

"What are you going to do?" Her voice came out breathlessly as she tried to move, but Shayne held her in place.

"Easy, Samantha. I just want to explore your bottom a little. I won't hurt you."

He'd spoken in that dark, erotic tone making her slit even wetter. Almost mindless with the need to come, she shuddered, teetering on the edge as a thick finger slid into her pussy. Once coated with her juices, it withdrew, only to slide up and press against her puckered opening.

"Jesus," Jackson breathed. "Sam, your ass is beautiful."

A chill went through her as Shayne exerted pressure and pressed the tip of his finger past the tight ring of muscle.

"Ohhh. Ahhh. Oh my God." Samantha groaned, kicking her feet as he continued his slow press into her.

“Jesus, she’s tight,” Shayne growled.

Samantha couldn’t keep up with the sensations bombarding her. Little tingles of pleasure accompanied the burn radiating from her anus. She trembled uncontrollably, chills racing through her even as a fire raged inside.

She trembled harder with each millimeter of Shayne’s finger that pressed into her.

It felt so naughty, so erotic, being exposed this way, being opened, her anus invaded. She felt so vulnerable and yet so incredibly desired.

Jackson stroked her bottom cheeks. “Easy, honey. A little more. Hell, I’m about to come in my jeans just watching.”

Samantha’s toes curled as Shayne worked the rest of his finger into her.

“I thought about doing this the first time I saw you.” Shayne’s voice sounded harsh. “Your ass is perfect. Firm and soft.”

Samantha groaned, gripping his leg even harder when he began stroking her anus with slow deliberation. Jackson slid a hand between her legs and pressed a finger inside her pussy. She cried out at the unfamiliar fullness.

“Can you imagine spanking this ass the next time Sam’s a bad girl?” Jackson asked as he began to stroke her pussy.

Shayne’s strokes got faster. “And then fucking it.”

Samantha kicked her feet, feeling her orgasm approach. Wild with need, she cried out repeatedly as their stroking continued. When a finger slid over her soaked clit and began stroking, she screamed hoarsely as she went over.

Tightening on both of them, she bucked on Shayne’s lap as wave after wave of intense pleasure washed over her. The burn and fullness in her bottom added to her pleasure, creating a sensation she’d never experienced.

Finally spent, she lay over Shayne’s lap, breathing heavily. He and Jackson both withdrew from her, eliciting a weak groan. She tried to get up, assuming they would be anxious to have sex, but Shayne’s

firm hand kept her in place.

“Stay still, Samantha.” He continued to caress her back and bottom for several minutes before lifting her to stand beside him. He bent forward to tug a nipple between his lips before standing. “Don’t worry about dinner for us. We’re going to eat in town. As soon as we pay off these guys, we’ll be back.”

Jackson moved behind her to cup her breasts, dropping a kiss on her shoulder. “You’re in big trouble tonight, baby.”

* * * *

Freshly bathed and moisturized, Samantha donned her robe and studied her reflection in the mirror. Her skin had become flushed and her eyes sparkled with excitement.

She loved Jackson and couldn’t wait for him to make love to her tonight. He’d made his intentions and his feelings perfectly clear and she was filled with excitement to start their lives together.

She didn’t know what she would do about Shayne. She loved him just as much, but her love for him didn’t sit as comfortably as it did with Jackson, if what she felt for Jackson could really be considered comfortable. She knew Shayne cared for her but didn’t know if he would ever be willing to let go and give her his all.

And she couldn’t live with anything less. She couldn’t maintain a relationship with someone who held parts of himself back from her and always felt he had to be careful around her. He desired her, she knew, but that wouldn’t be enough for her.

Pulling the lapels of the robe tightly closed, she started to pace her bedroom. How would she be able to go on living here with Jackson if she and Shayne didn’t get things sorted out between them? She wouldn’t be an occasional lay for him while committing herself to his brother. Still working on dealing with the fact that she may find herself involved in a relationship with two men, she knew there were some things she just couldn’t accept.

Shayne wanting to fuck her while remaining aloof was one of them.

She needed to calm down and think. Walking into the living room with the intention of finding a movie on television, she heard a slight sound.

Before she could react, she found herself grabbed forcefully from behind. A hand over her mouth muffled her scream as she fought like a wild woman to be free. The steel band around her waist pressed hard on her ribs.

“So we meet again.”

The deep voice boomed next to her ear as the thick arm around her waist tightened. Oh God! It was Bruce Graham.

Big and heavily muscled, he held her easily. She couldn't even turn to look at him. Realizing that all her struggles managed to do was part her robe, she froze, stiff with terror.

He caressed her waist, his hand moving threateningly higher toward her breasts. “If you scream, I'll hurt you. Do you understand?”

Fighting nausea, Samantha struggled to breathe. She nodded, her terror growing. If only Shayne and Jackson would get home!

When he lifted his hand slowly from her mouth, she licked her dry lips, tasted blood and had to swallow before speaking. “What do you want? I gave Shayne your message.”

The hand he'd removed from her mouth covered her breast. Her breath caught as he squeezed, bruising her, and she shuddered in revulsion.

“I thought you would like that,” he chuckled. “A woman who takes two men to her bed wants it bad. Not so high and mighty now, are you? When we get away from here, I'll show you what it feels like to have a real man fuck you. You don't need two to please you when you've got one as good as me.”

Samantha bit her lip to silence the whimpers that rasped her throat as he continued to knead her breast. “What do you want?”

“I want *you*.” He leaned down and bit her shoulder, making her

cry out, her mind almost numb with horror.

This can't be happening to me.

“I see you like that, too. We’ll have to have some fun while I convince your men to sign the contract.”

Calm down, Sam. Think!

“Why are you doing this?”

With a muscled arm around her waist and another on her chest, palming her breast, he forced her across the room, easily overcoming her struggles. “I need the commission from the oil well your men are going to let my company dig. Don’t worry. They’ll get rich. But, I get a nice cut when they sign. Shayne doesn’t want to listen to me. He will when he finds out I have his woman.”

Samantha’s struggles intensified as they got closer to the door. She couldn’t let him take her out of here. She’d be dead for sure. “They won’t sign. I’m just the housekeeper. Just go. They’ll be home any minute.”

“Stop struggling, damn you. You’re coming with me. Don’t make me hurt you. You’re more than the housekeeper. I saw the way Jackson touched you in the grocery store. I heard what he told those women.”

“No. I’m not going with you.” Samantha fought with everything she had. Grabbing a lamp on the end table by the door, she struck out wildly, surprised when she managed to hit him hard enough that he loosened his grip. She fought even harder, hearing him curse as he couldn’t hold onto her, his hands sliding off her satin robe.

Screaming at the top of her lungs, she scrambled for freedom. She didn’t take two steps before he tackled her from behind, the weight of his body knocking the air out of her lungs.

Oh God! Please let one of the ranch hands have heard my screams.

“After I fuck you, and they sign the contract, I’m going to kill you, you little bitch! As soon as I get you out of here, I’m going to fuck you so hard, you won’t think of giving me any more of this shit.”

Trapped on her stomach, Samantha struggled to catch her breath while she fought him. He held her down while reaching down for her robe and lifting it to expose her naked bottom.

“You have a beautiful ass, bitch. Do you let your men fuck you there?”

When his thighs separated hers and his hand moved between them, Samantha screamed, tears blurring her vision as she kicked out wildly.

“No! Oh God. No! Let go of me.”

She saw a very large pair of cowboy boots, heard a loud roar and suddenly she was free. Scrambling to her knees, she struggled to get away, fighting off the hands that tried to grab her. Screaming, with tears blurring her vision, she fought like a woman possessed. She couldn't let him touch her again!

“Sam, it's me, honey. Oh, baby. It's me. It's Jackson, Sam. I've got you.”

* * * *

Jackson barely glanced at Shayne as he fought the other man and concentrated solely on calming Samantha. He could tell when his voice finally got through to her. She slumped in his arms, crying brokenly and gripping his shirt frantically.

He pulled her close, watching over her shoulder as Shayne literally picked the other man up and threw him against the wall. Although the other man was big, he didn't stand a chance against Shayne. His brother towered over the intruder, the rage and power behind his punches not even giving the other man a chance to fight back. Within a minute, the other man lay unconscious with a still enraged Shayne standing over him.

Jackson paid them little attention, focusing all his attention on the trembling woman in his arms. He'd never been so scared in his entire life as when he and Shayne pulled up and heard her screams. He

buried his face in her hair, rubbing his hands up and down her back, trying his best to soothe her.

She'd already become the most important thing in his life. And it had happened so quickly he hadn't gotten used to it yet. This made him realize just how much he'd come to love her already. It scared him to death. He didn't know what he would have done if anything had happened to her.

Realizing that he shook almost as hard as she did, he forced himself to calm down. His woman needed him and he would be there for her. He knew he would fall apart later. The scene he and Shayne had walked in on would give him nightmares for weeks to come.

Pete spoke from behind him, startling Samantha. Jackson crooned to her again, still stroking her and making sure her face stayed hidden against him. He didn't want her to see the unconscious man in the living room. He watched Shayne's struggle for control, having no doubt about his brother's ability to rein it in.

Pete touched Samantha's shoulder comfortingly, his eyes haunted. "I'll call the sheriff. I found Doug outside. He was knocked out."

Jackson nodded, watching his brother. The incredible rage on his face kept even the seasoned ranch hands from approaching him. He'd never in his life seen his brother like this.

Shayne's eyes darted wildly as though looking for something else to hit, his rage barely spent. His fists at his sides trembled as he moved forward, his face a mask of agony as he reached for Samantha. At the last second, he stopped short, looking at Jackson with eyes full of both pain and fury. Looking down at his still trembling hands, he said softly, as though in a daze, "I can't touch her. I'll hurt her. I can't...I'll wait for the sheriff out front."

Jackson called after him but Shayne ignored him and continued out the door. They couldn't go on this way. Jackson knew Shayne loved Samantha almost more than he could stand. He wouldn't be able to hide it from her much longer.

His brother needed him now but Samantha needed him more. He

didn't want her to look up and see the unconscious man, so he carried her from the room and into his bedroom, jerking the blanket off of the bed to wrap around her.

Her whimpers tore at him. He spoke softly to her, pulling her tightly against him as she continued to shake. "It's all over, sweetheart. Nobody can hurt you now."

When she looked up at him with tear filled eyes, his heart broke. "Are you hurt anywhere? Let me see you, honey." He watched helplessly as she struggled to gather herself.

"No. I'm okay. I'm okay. I was so scared. I couldn't fight him. He was so strong. Please just hold me a little bit longer."

Jackson tightened his arms around her. "I'll hold you as long as you want."

"Where's Shayne?" She pushed against his chest to look up at him. "He's not hurt, is he?"

Jackson pulled her back against him. "No. He's not hurt, at least on the outside." He took a deep breath, letting it out slowly. "He beat the hell out of the guy who attacked you, Sam. He's still so mad he's shaking. He went outside. He's afraid he'll hurt you."

"He won't."

The absolute conviction in her voice relieved him as nothing else could have. "He and I both love you so much, Samantha. But we can never be happy and settle down until Shayne believes that."

Samantha looked up at him through her lashes. "He needs me. I need to go to him."

Jackson hugged her to him, loving the feel of her soft, warm and *safe* in his arms. "I don't know how we got lucky enough to have you but I can't imagine my life without you in it anymore." He brushed her hair back from her face, frowning when he saw her cheek. "You're hurt. Your cheek is all red and swollen. Lie down so I can get you some ice."

Samantha shook her head and pushed off of his lap. "I need to go to Shayne."

“Later. Let me—”

“No. I want to go to him now while he’s still mad. I need to show him that I’m not afraid of him.”

Jackson sighed. He knew it was probably the best thing for both of them but he wanted to take care of her cheek, and he hated the idea that she would walk past the man who’d attacked her.

“Let me get some ice for your cheek and I’ll walk you out.”

“Okay. Hurry. I don’t want Shayne sitting out there by himself.”

Jackson got her the ice and kept her face against his chest as they crossed the living room. He heard the sheriff pull up as they got to the door. He reluctantly released her. “Go to Shayne, honey.”

She turned to him. “Aren’t you coming?”

Jackson shook his head. “I’m going to talk to the sheriff to give you and Shayne a few minutes alone. He needs you, Sam.”

When Samantha nodded and turned toward Shayne, Jackson hoped his brother and their woman would find a way to help each other.

* * * *

Shayne heard the front door open and looked over, groaning when he saw Samantha. “Go back inside,” he growled. He hadn’t yet calmed down enough to trust himself around her. And where in the hell was Jackson going? Why wasn’t he taking care of her?

Wrapped in a blanket, her feet bare, and a towel held to her face, Samantha looked so small and defenseless. The rage inside him started to build again when he thought about what he’d walked in on. That someone would *dare* to touch her filled him with a fury like he’d never felt before.

“Go to Jackson,” he all but snarled at her.

She stopped as though hitting a brick wall.

His knees actually buckled at the hurt in her eyes. The well of tears broke his heart.

“Oh. I understand.” She turned and started to walk away.

The tremor in her voice threatened to bring him to his knees. “What do you understand?”

She paused and looked over her shoulder, not meeting his eyes. “He touched me and so now you don’t want to.”

The pain in her voice nearly undid him. “What? Are you crazy?”

Before he knew it, he’d covered the distance between them and lifted her high into his arms. He winced when she cried out.

Way to go, Shayne. Grab at a woman who’s just been attacked.

He looked toward Jackson for help but his brother had his back to him, talking to the sheriff. He looked back down at the bundle in his arms. “I’m sorry, baby. I didn’t mean to scare you. I’m not any good at this stuff. You should have stayed with Jackson.”

Samantha looked up at him tearfully. “I understand. Just put me down and I’ll go back inside.”

Damn it.

He would rather cut off his own arm than have her look at him that way. “Samantha, baby. Please don’t cry. I don’t know what to do for you.”

“I just want you to hold me, but I understand if you don’t want to.”

“Damn it, Samantha. I want to hold you more than anything but I’m afraid I’ll hurt you. Did you see what happened in there? I knocked a man out with my bare hands just by picking him up and throwing him against a wall. I couldn’t stand it if I hurt you. I’m too rough.”

When her little hand came out and caressed his cheek, he felt as though he’d been given the most precious gift in the world. He could literally feel the anger drain away.

“You saved me. And the only way you could hurt me is by not wanting me anymore.”

His heart melted as his insides clenched in fear. Samantha needed him and he didn’t know what to do for her. Carrying her to the swing,

he sat, wrapping the blanket securely around her. He took the ice filled towel from her and gently held it to her cheek. “Does it hurt a lot, baby?”

“No. I think I might have hit it on the floor when he tackled me. It doesn’t really hurt though.”

“I saw his hand between your legs. Did he hurt you there?”

She paled, trembling. “I’m okay. You stopped him before he could...you know.”

She looked up at him so trustingly, as though she knew he would take care of everything. The trust in her eyes as she looked at him made him feel ten feet tall. With a sense of relief, he saw Jackson and the sheriff headed toward him. *This* he could handle.

He lifted Samantha slightly with every intention of handing her off to his brother, when she shuddered and laid a hand on his chest, dropping her head onto his shoulder and hiding her face in his neck.

She’d wrapped herself around his heart so fast that he’d had no defense against her. He could see that he would spend the rest of his life wrapped just as tightly around her little finger.

“Is she hurt? We should get her to the hospital for them to check her out, along with Doug.”

The sheriff’s booming voice made Samantha flinch and Shayne instinctively tightened his arms around her.

She hid her face in his neck, gripping his shirt. “No. I don’t want to go anywhere. Please don’t make me.”

He adjusted the towel and the blanket, pulling her close. “I won’t, baby. You can stay right here.”

Ignoring the sheriff’s look of surprise, he put the swing in motion, holding Samantha tightly against him, as the sheriff and his deputies went into the house.

* * * *

Jackson watched as the sheriff questioned Shayne and Samantha.

He'd already been questioned and except for adding a comment here and there, remained silent. Shayne still held Samantha on his lap, cradling her against him as he would a newborn.

He rocked her the entire time the sheriff questioned them, adjusting the blanket around her and holding the ice to her cheek.

Going through the chain of events, they told their story, pausing only when they got to the part where the man had touched Samantha.

"I have to know what happened," the sheriff told her. "I need the whole story. You have to tell me what you saw and heard."

Shayne's features tightened dangerously. "Don't talk to her that way. Ever. If she doesn't want to talk about it, then we don't talk about it."

"No, Shayne. He's right."

Samantha sat up, holding the blanket around her. Shayne's anger had died down and she didn't want him getting mad again. She'd stayed on his lap, loving the way he held her and cuddled her close to him, knowing he needed to see the gentleness in himself that everyone else saw.

"The man tackled me from behind and had me on the floor, face down and, and..." She took a deep breath. This would be harder than she'd thought.

"He pulled my robe up and pushed his hand between my legs. Shayne got him off of me. He told me he was going to kidnap me until they signed the contract."

They'd already explained about the oil company and the man confronting her in the store and in the parking lot. Evidently, Shayne had been telling him no for months.

"He was going to hold me until Shayne and Jackson signed to let his company drill here. He was going to rape me and after they signed, he was going to kill me."

When her voice broke, Jackson moved to sit beside Shayne on the swing and pulled her feet on his lap, stroking her leg. Shayne pulled her even closer. She didn't know if she could have handled this

without them. Their touch comforted more than anything else could have. If they hadn't gotten there when they did...

But they did.

She had to remember that and not dwell on something that could have happened.

They took Bruce Graham away. Shayne hid her face in his neck as they escorted the handcuffed man out. The whole thing seemed like a bad dream and she just wanted to block it out of her mind.

When everyone left, they went back into the house to find that Petey and a few of the ranch hands had cleaned up the mess. The other ranch hands had gone back out, but Petey stayed behind.

Samantha went into the kitchen, feeling more comfortable there, and sank into a chair.

Petey knelt next to her and gripped her hand. "Sam, I'm so sorry."

Samantha blinked. She'd never heard her brother apologize about anything. "It's okay, Petey. It's not your fault."

She saw him look over her shoulder to where she knew Shayne and Jackson stood. "Yes, damn it. It is my fault. All of this is my fault. Borrowing money from those guys. Gambling. Putting you in danger." His eyes looked tortured. "I know you heard what I said about you and Shayne and Jackson. I'm sorry. I didn't mean it."

Samantha had never seen her brother this way, and knew it had a lot to do with the men standing behind her. "It's okay, Petey. Everything worked out."

"Yeah, but not because of me. I promise you, Sam, I'm going to be different from now on." He glanced over her shoulder again. "I'm not going to get into any more trouble. It's time for me to grow up and stop depending on you to take care of me."

Samantha smiled and leaned down to kiss his cheek, for the first time noticing the bruising there. She touched it lightly. "What happened?"

Petey turned red. "Shayne cleaned my clock for what I said about you. I deserved it." He stood and kissed the top of her head. "I'd

better get back to work. I'll be around to check on you later."

Samantha nodded, watching as he started out.

Halfway out the door, Petey turned back. "Oh, Sam. I need one more favor." She felt the men shift behind her as Petey grinned. "Can you start calling me 'Pete'?"

After he left, she stood. "I need another shower."

After showering, she got dressed and went back out to the kitchen, unsurprised to find both Shayne and Jackson waiting for her.

Shayne handed her a glass of milk and seated her at the kitchen table, dropping into the seat next to her. He never said a word, just sat next to her silently, running his fingers over her arm.

Jackson touched her shoulder and sat on her other side. "Would you like to talk?"

"No." They'd already been over it with the sheriff and each other and she didn't want to talk about it anymore.

So, Shayne and Jackson took her out with them when they went to check on the horses and they went for a walk, talking to her about the cattle and horses and answering her questions.

They told her that the men who Petey had borrowed money from were now in jail.

She needed to talk about anything but what happened earlier. "I've been meaning to ask you something. Why is this called the Dakota Ranch? Your last name isn't Dakota."

Jackson's arm tightened around her. "My grandfather started this ranch. He named it after my grandmother. Her name was Dakota."

"He must have loved her very much to name the ranch after her."

Jackson turned her to face him, pulling her close. "He did. I know what he felt like. I love you, Sam. I want to spend the rest of my life with you."

"Oh, Jackson."

The look in his eyes told her everything she needed to know and warmed her from within. His mouth took hers, gently at first as though not wanting to scare her and then more forcefully. Her breasts

swelled and her nipples tightened against his chest, begging for attention.

After what had happened earlier, she needed this. Needed to feel his hands on her. She needed to be touched with desire. With heat. With love.

Chapter Six

Jackson lifted her in his arms and started toward the house. Samantha couldn't help but look over his shoulder for Shayne. Her smile fell when she saw him walking back toward the stable.

Once inside, Jackson strode straight to his bedroom. He laid her gently on the bed and slowly began to undress her. His mouth touched every inch he uncovered, nipping and nibbling his way around her body, making erotic promises and heating her blood. He moved slowly, loving her gently as though afraid of startling her. Every touch of his mouth on her erased more and more of the ugliness she'd endured earlier.

He pushed the hair back from her forehead and touched his lips lightly to her sore cheek.

He stared down at her tenderly for several long seconds before gently flipping her to her stomach. At her automatic protest, he crooned next to her ear. "It's me, honey. I want to make you feel good. I love you. Just feel, Sam. There's nobody here but you and me. Close your eyes."

Samantha closed her eyes and felt Jackson's lips move down her back. Her desire had waned when he flipped her over, reminding her too much of what had happened earlier.

But as his lips moved over her back, his hands came around her and she arched so he could touch her breasts. His callused palms felt incredible against her nipples. He murmured to her as he stroked, nibbling and licking at her back and shoulders.

"You are so soft. These breasts are so soft and smooth. I love these hard little nipples," he growled in her ear as he lightly pinched

them.

Samantha groaned, her hands fisting on the bedclothes. When he moved down her body, she felt his lips on her bottom and tightened involuntarily.

“Easy, Sam. Say my name. Who’s making love to you?”

“Jackson. What are you doing? Oh God!”

His mouth moved lower, as did his hands as he separated the cheeks of her bottom and slid his tongue between them.

“Jackson,” she moaned. “Oh, what are you doing to me?”

“Lovin’ you, darlin’. Just lovin’ you. I want you to think of just me touching you here. The rest doesn’t exist.”

Samantha groaned. She’d never felt such a thing before. He spread her thighs wider and settled between them. When his tongue touched her puckered opening, she squealed and would have jerked away if he hadn’t been holding her.

“Jackson, ohhhh!”

“Do you know how good it’s going to feel when I take you here?”

Samantha tensed. “Jackson, I—”

“Not yet, honey. Relax and let me make you feel good.”

Samantha had no choice. Jackson held her in place as his mouth moved over her, sliding down and lifting her so he could lick her folds.

On her knees now, with her legs spread wide, she now lay completely open to Jackson’s ministrations. Her moans sounded loud in the room as he used his mouth on her ruthlessly now, giving her no choice but to think of nothing but him and what he did to her.

Her first orgasm hit her, surprising her with its speed. Jackson pressed his tongue inside her and she could feel her inner muscles ripple around it.

Her cries filled the room as she shuddered. Oh God. It felt so good. She felt Jackson move and heard the sound of his belt hitting the floor. “Jackson. Hurry.”

He moved away briefly, and she heard the rip of foil. Seconds

later, he was back.

She arched into him and felt his hand slide between her thighs, spreading her moisture. When a thick finger pressed against her forbidden opening at the same time another touched her clit, Samantha's senses soared. As soon as thoughts of what happened earlier started to seep in, a devastating stroke of her clit and the sound of his voice pushed them away.

"You're so wet, darlin.' This tight little hole wants to open for me, doesn't it, honey?"

"Oh God. Yessss. Jackson. Take me."

She groaned as Jackson began to press into both openings at the same time, his thick cock in her pussy, his demonic finger in her bottom. She thought of nothing but what he did to her. Thought of no one but him. He spoke to her the entire time, his deep voice demanding she say his name over and over.

Her pussy clenched on him, trying to pull him in faster, but he wouldn't be rushed. His slow smooth strokes had her crying out for more. She felt taken as never before, everything opening to him so completely and she couldn't prevent it. Didn't want to. She just wanted more.

"Your ass is so tight," Jackson groaned hoarsely. "Your pussy is so tight, so hot. Christ, I could stay inside you forever."

His words poured over her like warm honey. The fire inside her burned out of control and when his thrusts deepened, she could do nothing but feel. All thoughts of what had happened earlier dimmed, being replaced by the love and desire Jackson forced her to focus on.

His thick cock stretched her inner walls deliciously. When he found the secret place inside her that drove her wild, her cries intensified. Oh God. How did he do this to her?

Her anus burned at his steady strokes, the sensation adding to the chaos raging inside her. Grabbing handfuls of the bedcovers, she pushed back, a hoarse scream of pleasure erupting at the incredible fullness.

“That’s it, honey. Take me. Fuck, you’re so incredible.”

When he reached under her again to stroke her folds, her body trembled helplessly. Touching a finger to her clit, he let the movement of his thrusts provide the friction she needed on the throbbing bundle of nerves.

Her clit burned. Her pussy clenched. Her anus gripped.

Electric pulses centered between her legs and those devastating ripples began. Screaming mindlessly at the total loss of control, she involuntarily pushed back.

And went over.

Her entire body jolted as the sparks of pleasure spread and she screamed.

Wave after wave of the pleasure shook her. Spasms of indescribable ecstasy washed over her. She heard Jackson’s growl and knew he’d also found his own pleasure.

His cock pulsed inside her and she could barely make out his words.

“So fucking incredible.”

He slowly withdrew his finger and she groaned. She couldn’t keep from tightening on his cock as it slipped from her dripping pussy. He covered her body with his, wrapping his arms around her as they lay spooned on his bed.

His lips moved over her neck and shoulder as he murmured softly to her, stroking her still trembling body.

“I love you, Sam.”

The words spilled from him over and over as he held her. He knew the scene from earlier would replay in his mind over and over and he just wanted to forget it. He’d hoped that he would be able to make love to her tonight. He wanted to wipe all traces of the other man’s touch from her mind.

She’d responded so beautifully and knew that she would go off like a firecracker when he and his brother took her together. With one filling her pussy and the other in that incredibly tight ass, all three of

them would find pleasure like never before.

If only Shayne would let go.

He'd been extremely disappointed when Shayne hadn't joined them. Sure, it would be nice if each of them could spend time making love to her alone, but he'd thought that after what happened today, Shayne would have followed them into the house. Instead, he'd gone back to the stable.

He knew his brother loved Samantha and just hoped he intended to do something about it. If not, he would still keep her for himself. He wouldn't give her up. When he walked in to that nightmare today, it had shocked the hell out of him to realize just how much he loved her. He and Shayne had talked for years about sharing a woman but if Shayne couldn't give Samantha what she needed, he would have to find someone else.

Although she'd tried to hide it, Jackson had seen the hurt in her eyes that Shayne hadn't joined them. He would have to talk to Shayne and tell his brother to figure out his feelings for Samantha. He would have to either commit to her or walk away. Jackson couldn't stand to see her hurt again.

Hearing Samantha's even breathing, he smiled. She'd fallen asleep in his arms. After a brief trip to the bathroom, he eased back into bed, careful not to wake her. He reached down for the blanket to cover them both, settling her more firmly against him. When she cuddled against him, he smiled again and let himself drift off.

* * * *

She couldn't escape his grip. He held her too tightly and she knew he wanted to hurt her. She fought him, kicking and thrashing, trying to get free, but couldn't.

His grip tightened and she could feel his breath on her neck.

No! He would hurt her. He would push into her, invade her, taking something that she didn't want to give. She already knew the

pain, knew how it would burn. She knew the helplessness she would feel.

No! No! No!

She fought against the arms holding her, couldn't understand the frantic words said against her ear as she fought.

She had to get away!

Samantha!

A deep voice boomed, startling her and cutting through the fog in her mind.

Her eyes popped open as she felt herself lifted effortlessly and then pressed tightly against a wall of heat, which wrapped around her.

“It’s okay, baby. I’ve got you. Nobody’s gonna hurt you ever again. Wake up, baby. Wake up for me.”

Samantha jerked in surprise to find herself in Shayne’s arms as he stood next to Jackson’s bed. Remembering her nightmare, she buried her face in his throat, still trembling in reaction. Her arms tightened around his neck. Her legs wrapped around his waist, absorbing his heat. When his cock jumped against her bottom, she realized he was naked.

One huge hand under her bottom held her tightly against his chest while the other stroked her back. “You’re okay, baby. I’ve got you. Nobody’s here but Jackson and me.”

She nodded, sneaking a peek at Jackson. He knelt on the bed, his face tight with concern. She tightened her grip on Shayne as she reached out a hand to Jackson. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to scare you.”

Jackson gripped her hand. “Are you okay, honey? I couldn’t wake you up.”

She nodded again. “I’m fine. I’m okay.” She took a shuddering breath. “I was dreaming about today.”

“Come on, Jackson.” Shayne’s deep voice rumbled softly. “My bed’s bigger.”

Shayne carried Samantha out of Jackson’s bedroom and into his.

Samantha looked over Shayne's shoulder to see Jackson following them, smiling in satisfaction.

Before they could get to the bed, Samantha leaned back to look up at Shayne. "Stop."

Shayne halted abruptly in the middle of the room. "What is it? Do you have to go to the bathroom?"

Samantha shook her head. "No, but I can't sleep with you."

Shayne frowned at her. "Why not? Are you scared I'll hurt you?"

She shook her head sadly. "The only way that you could hurt me is by doing this when you don't care about me. I appreciate you holding me and waking me up from my dream, but I know that you don't want me the way Jackson does. I know you're scared to care about me and I can't get involved with someone who doesn't want any more than just sex."

Her voice wobbled and she had to clear her throat before she could continue, avoiding his gaze by staring at his naked chest. "I love you, Shayne. But it would kill me to have only parts of you."

"You think I don't love you?"

Samantha looked up at Shayne's incredulous tone.

A heartbeat later, he'd pulled her back against him, burying his face in her throat. "I love you so much I can't stand it. I love you so much that after I punched that man today, I wanted to do it again and again. He touched you. He hurt you. Now he's giving you nightmares and I want to beat the hell out of him all over again."

His arms tightened around her, almost crushing her to him and still she pulled him tighter. "You love me?"

He leaned back to look at her, his face tight. "Of course, I love you. How could anyone not love you? But I'm too rough for someone like you. It would kill me if I hurt you. I don't know what to do for you."

She said the words she couldn't say before. "Love me."

Samantha caressed his cheek, sliding a glance at Jackson, who smiled as he waited in the bed for them. "The only way you could

hurt me is by not loving me. I love you just the way you are. Your strength saved me today and you held me after my nightmare. You hold me, and you pour me milk. You are gentle with me. The only thing I want you to do for me is love me.”

Shayne smiled. The emotion in his eyes nearly undid her. “I already do.”

When his mouth covered hers, Samantha knew she’d found paradise. She had no doubt now that both men loved her as much as she loved them. She couldn’t wait to start their future together.

“Are you two coming to bed or are you going to stay there all night?”

Shayne lifted his head at Jackson’s amused tone. “We’re coming to bed.”

When Shayne moved toward the bed, Samantha bit her lip worriedly. “What if I have another nightmare. Maybe I should go sleep on the sofa.”

Shayne lay on the bed, settling her on top of his big body. “No. You sleep right here.” He reached over and turned off the light.

Lying on top of Shayne, her legs on either side of his waist, and his cock touching her bottom, Samantha knew sleep would be impossible. She could already feel her pussy weep and raised herself just enough to rub her nipples against his chest.

Shayne lay with his eyes closed as she began to move against him.

When she felt Jackson’s hand on her thigh, she looked over to find him watching her in the nearly dark room. Using only the tips of his fingers, he grazed over her thigh and down to the back of her knee before moving back up again, leaving a trail of tingling heat wherever he touched.

“My stomach is getting wet.”

Samantha looked up at Shayne and smiled.

His lips curved. “Somebody’s dripping all over me.”

His hands tightened on her waist as he lifted her, slowly lowering her inch by inch onto his cock.

Samantha groaned at the wonderful fullness and clenched on the steely thickness. Facing Jackson, she saw his pleased smile as he reached out to caress her breast. She shifted, groaning at the wonderful fullness of Shayne's hard cock inside her.

The sound of a drawer being opened and closed made her turn her head to see Shayne squirting lube onto his finger. She gasped. "What are you going to do?"

Shayne recapped the lube and slid his hand to her bottom, pulling her down onto his chest and working the lube into her tight opening. Groaning, she tried to sit up but he held her down as he slid a thick finger into her, his big hand covering most of her buttocks as he held her in place.

Shayne's thick shaft jumped inside her. She felt Jackson move in behind her, making soft erotic promises in her ear as his arms came around to cup her breasts.

When Shayne's slick finger slid out of her bottom, Jackson's cock quickly replaced it. He pressed the head of it against her tight opening and she cried out at the pinch as he breached it.

"That's it, sweetheart. Let me in your tight ass."

Shayne held her hips firmly as Jackson pressed his cock little by little into her bottom, stretching her anus and making it burn deliciously.

"Oh! I'm so full."

"You're about to get fuller," Jackson groaned harshly as he steadily worked his length into her.

She felt as though she would burst, so full her mind went blank as her lovers established a rhythm, their strokes stretching her deliciously.

She shifted slightly off of Shayne's chest, her head thrown back as she gave herself up to the pleasure. The sounds of their lovemaking sent her even higher. The deep growls and erotic praise from her lovers made her feel even more desired.

Her hands fisted on Shayne's chest. His thick muscles beneath

them felt hard as they shifted as he moved her body over his. Looking down, she met his eyes, which glittered in the small sliver of light coming through the window.

“I love you, baby.” His deep growl sounded so highly erotic, she shivered. “You’ll never get away from us now.”

Samantha moaned when the pad of his thumb touched her clit. Her answer became lost in a moan as waves of pleasure washed over her. Her pussy and anus clenched hard and fast on the thick cocks thrusting relentlessly inside her.

Her cries of release and her lovers’ harsh groans filled the room as they all found their pleasure. The hands on her firmed, holding her steady as they held their pulsing cocks deep inside her.

Jackson’s arms came around her and he buried his face in her hair. “Oh, Sam. I love you so damned much.”

“I love you, too.” Overcome with emotion, her voice wobbled. “I love you both so much.”

“Come here, baby.”

Jackson released her so Shayne could lower her to his chest. Wrapping his big arms around her, he stroked her back. His arms tightened, holding her close when she groaned as Jackson withdrew from her. With a lingering kiss on her shoulder, Jackson got off the bed and headed for the bathroom.

Shayne ran a hand through her hair. “I never thought I’d have a woman like you.”

Samantha lifted her head to smile up at him. “I never thought I’d have a man like you.” She paused, watching him through her lashes. “You wouldn’t really pull my jeans down and spank me, would you?”

Shayne lifted his head to look down at her. His eyes blazed and she felt his cock jump inside her. “Every time you disobey me,” he warned darkly.

Samantha smothered a groan as her pussy clenched on him in response. “I might have to be bad,” she grinned at him daringly, running a nail over his nipple.

Shayne chuckled, a sound she hoped she would hear with increasing regularity. He ran a hand threateningly over her bottom. “Be careful, little girl. I never did punish you for leaving the ranch when you were told not to.”

Samantha giggled. “I’m not scared of you.”

Shayne grinned, taking Samantha’s breath away. “No, you’re not, are you? But that doesn’t mean I won’t spank you if you deserve it. Go to sleep, baby.” He gave her bottom a light slap as he dropped his head on the pillow.

“Spank?” Jackson chuckled as he came back to bed. “What the hell did I miss?”

Shayne never opened his eyes. “I owe Samantha a spanking.”

“Now?” Jackson asked hopefully.

“Tomorrow. She’s going to need to rest up for it. Once her ass is red, I’m going to fuck it nice and slow.”

Samantha gasped. “Really? You’re not afraid you’ll hurt me?”

“Really. And the only thing that’s going to hurt is your ass if you disobey me again. Now go to sleep. I’m going to need all of my energy to deal with you.”

Samantha and Jackson smiled at each other, still holding hands as they fell asleep.

This time when they slept, nobody stirred until late the next morning.

When Samantha did her best to be *really* bad.

THE END

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leah Brooke loves to read and especially loves to write. After years of imagining and writing stories for her own amusement, she finally listened to her mother and submitted a manuscript.

She can't write as fast as the ideas pop in her head and usually has at least three stories going at one time.



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