



# Mad About Her Cowboys

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**Category:** Romance, Western, New Adult

**Description:** Dumped, pregnant and most-pursued woman in Daly?

Former socialite, Madison Meade, came to Daly to help a friend and to escape her past, but somehow, she's now the town's most want—most wanted date, that is. She arrived less than two weeks, and the courting is in full swing. Four suitors have emerged as the most-determined winners, but how long will they stick around when they learn about the small secret that isn't going anywhere for at least the next eighteen years?

The Quist brothers, Connor, Franklin, Edison and Neal, have their own secrets—the foremost being: they're not siblings at all. Brothers of the heart, they've done everything together since adolescence and that's not changing now. Of course, they'll pursue Madison together, and if one of them emerges as the "winner" then no hard feelings—winner take all. Until then, they'll convince Madison pleasure with them—all of them, only them and not her other suitors—is the best way.

But when troubles from Madison's past intervene, will someone swoop in from the outside and steal the brothers' prize? Or will the love her cowboys nurtured endure all comers, proving Madison is completely mad about her cowboys?

**Total Pages (Source):** 45

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 5:20 am*

## Chapter One

Cowboys and ranches and horses, oh my!

Madison Meade laughed nervously at the weird Wizard of Oz-esque mantra stuck in her head. It had been on replay since she'd left Gillette almost two hours ago. In a whirlwind, she'd flown in with her three large suitcases yesterday, bought a car to replace the one she'd sold back in Detroit then stayed the night at a local hotel before heading to Daly to start her new job. Most of her worldly belongings were in the trunk and backseat, all fitting in those bags she'd brought. Four other boxes would be delivered via UPS in the coming days. That's how little she owned after selling all her furniture, not wanting to lug it most of the way across the country to the state of Wyoming.

This move was all about a new start.

New job.

New town.

New home with all the trappings.

Her hand settled over her belly while tension and butterflies jumped through her.

A new life. A whole new life.

She sucked in an excited breath as the sign welcoming her to Daly came into view.

This was it. She was here. Her brand new start. Her do-over.

Slowing from highway speed as she entered the city limits, she tried to take everything in. She hadn't actually been to the small town before today, and the quaint, Norman Rockwell view before her wrapped a warm blanket of belonging around her. This was it. Her perfect home.

It hadn't been long since she'd been in this area, though. She hadn't been to Daly proper. On her trip here, she'd only gotten as far as the Flying D ranch, situated on the northern outskirts of the town. She'd spent her entire visit there, while attending her friend Moon's wedding and everything surrounding it. Somehow, she'd never quite made it to Daly's Main street. Now, Moon's twin, Madison's best friend River, was leaving her job with the local doctor, and Madison had been hired to replace her. Everything had happened so fast—the Skype interview, being offered the job, selling everything and moving.

And here, she was.

Madison's gaze swept left and right almost overwhelmed by the sleepy street. Dusk was coming, but lights on the old-fashioned lampposts gleamed through the coming gloom. Being the beginning of November, they'd already decorated for the holidays. Wreaths hung from the poles and garlands with multi-colored lights draped the tops of the shop windows.

She passed the bed and breakfast where she'd stay for the time being, and the auto shop/gas station combo. To her left, the town hotspot seemed to be the diner. A plethora of dirt-covered pickups were parked near and around it, and through the window, she saw the place was nearly bursting with cowboys. Cowboys...so many cowboys. She forced her gaze away and kept on to the doctor's office a half block away to her right. She was meeting Riv and the doctor before settling into her temporary lodgings.

This place was a dream come true, a restart when she most needed it, the only black spots were the circumstances under which River was leaving Detroit and the reason for her coming here. Everything about the brain tumor, especially Riv's terminal diagnosis, terrified Madison, though coming from an oncology office, she'd dealt with the same conditions often. She'd rather not have this opportunity if it meant River wouldn't deal with this. If ever something was bittersweet, this was it. Good for Madison; horrible for her friend. Madison was just glad she'd be able to spend the time with River before the tumor took her from all those she loved.

She pulled into the angled parking in front of Doc Walker's office. The place looked dark, and she knew it had closed about an hour ago. Being November, night fell early, and with no big-city lights everything seemed darker, even with the quaint streetlights. River opened the office door with a wide smile on her face.

"Welcome home!" she yelled, seeming to all the world to be carefree and happy. Madison saw the strain around her eyes, though.

"Hey," she replied, hugging Riv tight before stepping back. "Oh my gosh, this place..." She looked around and indicated the town.

"I know, right? It's like stepping back into the 1950s or something. Don't worry. They're pretty modern in their attitudes—and they have fancy coffee and Wi-Fi at Leena's."

"The diner? Yeah, it looks pretty busy," Madison said, following River inside the office. The waiting area was darkened, but she saw lights coming from the back.

"It's the place to be most nights," River told her. "At least, it is if you're a single cowboy who doesn't want chuck-house grub or to cook for yourself. Leena makes great food, too. Though if I were you, I'd visit in the daytime not at night unless you want about a hundred marriage proposals at first glance."

Her eyes widened. “What?”

“Not a lot of women around here, babe. You’ve just become a hot commodity.”

“Oh...” My God. She wasn’t so sure about that. A curvy girl with a lot of baggage—emotional and forthcoming anyway. She couldn’t imagine she’d be any man’s ideal, no matter how lonely he might be.

Riv patted her shoulder. “Don’t worry, I’ll give you the full Daly rundown tomorrow. Let’s meet with Doc, then I need to get to family dinner.” She grimaced and tapped her temple. “Moon’s back from her honeymoon, so it’s time to tell them about this.”

“Oh, hon.”

River blinked hard. “It’s okay,” she said, her voice thick. “I’ll be...okay.”

Madison hugged her, knowing it wouldn’t be okay, but her friend needed her strength and support. “I’m here for you.”

“I know. I’m so glad you came.”

## Page 2

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“River, are you going to introduce me to my new nurse or not?” the doctor called from his office doorway. Both women chuckled before heading his way.

“He’s a big teddy bear,” River said, pulling the hair tie from her long, dark hair and running her hands through it. It fell around her slim shoulders, and Madison noted she looked thinner than the last time she’d seen her, a little over two weeks ago.

“I heard that,” he said, his lined face friendly, despite his feigned growl. With his white hair, dancing eyes and just a little extra around his middle, he reminded Madison of someone’s jolly grandfather—not hers. Hers was a cranky jerk, but Doc Walker was just the type to fit in this Rockwell-like town. Right now, he wore a light-blue dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up his forearms, but she could imagine him in a white coat, handing out suckers to good kids.

“Doesn’t make it any less true,” Riv retorted. Madison liked their easy relationship and hoped she’d share the same with her new employer.

“Aren’t you late for family dinner?” he asked.

“Keep it up, and you’ll scare away your new nurse,” she said. “Then where will you be?”

“Same place I was before you came here,” he replied.

“I know how much you miss running yourself ragged and having piles and piles of paper and files everywhere, as well as making people wait forever to see you, but let’s try to make Madison feel like her job is important, okay?”

Walker shook his head and turned his laser focus on her. “Ms. Madison, welcome. I’m really grateful you could take over for River—so’s my wife, truth be told. You came highly recommended by River and your former employer, so I expect great things from you.”

“No pressure,” River murmured as Madison thought the same.

They all laughed.

“Okay,” he said, turning serious. “Let’s get this paperwork done, so we can all get home to dinner and you can get settled. Lodging is part of your work package. Since River is staying in the apartment upstairs for the time being, the office is paying for your stay at O’Keefe’s.”

“Thank you.” She could afford to pay for her own place, but she was thankful she didn’t have to, nonetheless. With that, she followed the other two into the small office where they proceeded to fill out all her forms. Tomorrow morning, she’d hit the ground running.

## Chapter Two

She was here.

Connor Quist watched the curvy, long-haired woman follow River into the doc’s office. Madison Meade. He’d been waiting for her arrival ever since he’d heard River and Dr. Walker talking about her last week. Connor being here, across the street, was a coincidence though. He wasn’t being a stalker. He’d been heading to Leena’s to meet up with his brothers when he’d seen her car pull in.

It was fate; that was all. Sweet destiny. And despite his awful beginnings in life, Connor believed in providence, that certain things were just meant to be. Such as him

hearing about Madison coming here, after he'd seen her at the wedding and fantasized about her later that night while alone in his bed. Such as being right here when she'd gotten to town. And such as knowing his brother, Franklin had an appointment with Doc this week. They'd all be there to meet her properly—okay, that last one was of Connor's making. He'd arranged the appointment because he'd known when she'd start work in the medical office. He wished it was tomorrow, but he'd taken the first opening he could get. Knowing she was destined for the Quists, he just had to trust someone else wouldn't try to snap her up.

His mouth watered as he studied her sweet, curvy figure, the streetlight gleaming off her shiny black hair that hung in curls to her lower back. Despite her generous, womanly shape, she was a tiny little thing. He doubted she'd come much higher than his pec when he held her. The muscles in his arms flexed at just the thought. Holding her. Loving her.

He swallowed hard. The hours between now and the mid-morning appointment late in the week would seem eternal. Lord, he wanted it to be time now. He wanted to be standing close enough to catch and memorize her scent, to see every small facet of her features, to make her smile at him. To claim her.

Most of all, Connor wanted that last bit—to claim her. Somehow, deep down, he'd known she was his the moment he'd heard she was coming back. He hadn't been so enraptured by her for nothing. And it wasn't because he'd lacked a woman for so long. He and his brothers had no problem heading into Gillette for some good times. No...this was something different.

Of course, she wouldn't be just his. He'd share her with his brothers, who weren't really his blood. They shared everything—it was the Daly Way, after all. But sharing with them was different. He'd always known that he and Franklin would have the same woman, that Edison and Neal would probably take part in the loving...until they went off to Cranston, attending the college nearby and finding their own woman



to share.

Cranston was a lot like Daly, a community where ménage was the way of life. It was where they'd all grown up in the same foster family. Thankfully, there were enough high-powered, ménage-sympathetic people in politics in that area that officials had ignored that the second adult male in the household was far more than their foster parents' friend.

"What the hell are you doing out here, just standing around?" Franklin asked, coming up beside him. Connor hadn't even heard him approach. Franklin must have gotten tired of waiting for him to join him and the other two at Leena's for their once weekly dinner out.

"She's here," he said, still staring at the door where Madison had disappeared.

"Madison?" Franklin asked, and when Connor glanced over, he saw Franklin's attention trained to where Connor's had been.

"Yeah. Fuck, she's beautiful. Just as perfect as I remember."

"I wished I'd seen her," Franklin said after a huffed sigh. Connor was the only one who'd homed in on Madison at the reception.

"You were busy hitting on one of the bridesmaids," Connor laughed. "I was scoping out our future."

"You always were the responsible one," Franklin quipped. "But how did you possibly know?"

Connor shrugged. "How did I know the four of us guys were meant to stay together? How did I know to move us here? To start our farm?"

## Page 3

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“Your gut.”

Connor’s gut feelings were legendary in the family. After all these years, none of the other three questioned it—though their foster parents, who loved them dearly, hadn’t been keen on it. Still, they knew Connor’s “feelings” were rarely wrong, too. He didn’t know everything—he’d be the first to admit that—but when he got that indescribable yanking inside of him, he knew. When it happened, he sat up and paid attention.

“Anyway, since there was no spots for my truck near Leena’s, I had to park over by the Farm and Feed. I was on my way to meet up with you guys when she got here and River took her inside.”

“Are you going to wait out here until she comes out?”

He shook his head. “No. We’ll see her later this week, and then she’ll know she’s ours.”

Franklin laughed as if to say “yeah right.” He slung his arm around Connor’s shoulders and pulled him toward the diner. “Well, Mr. Psychic, I hope it’s that easy. C’mon, I’m starving.”

“Do you feel okay? Does your blood sugar feel off?”

“Calm down. It’s normal hunger,” Franklin grumbled. But Connor couldn’t help but worry.

Franklin was the reason they'd be at the doc this week. His Type-1 diabetes was what had landed him in foster care. His loser family couldn't deal with the disease and had abandoned him to the state when he was eight. Eight fucking years old, and he'd been abandoned by his family who was supposed to love him and care for him always.

Connor had been willing to cut them a tiny bit of slack when he'd thought they couldn't afford their child's care and medication; then he'd found out they were one of the wealthiest families in the state. Dealing with the sickness had just been a hassle to them. It had really messed up Franklin, and Connor had vowed to never abandon him. They were truly brothers of the heart, if not by blood.

Hell, to tell the truth, all four of them were all messed up. He'd never known his father, and his mother had flitted in and out of his life while his grandmother had raised him. When she'd died unexpectedly, also when he was eight, he'd ended up in foster care, too. He had no idea what had happened to his mother. With her drug issues, it was very possible she'd died sometime in the past twenty years.

Neal and Edison were both ten when they ended up in the system, Neal had been orphaned, and Edison was there because of criminal neglect. With the starvation, lack of basic care and being left to fend for himself more often than not, it was a miracle he'd made it to ten before being removed from that home.

Eventually, they'd landed with the Quists and become a family. They'd probably needed that extra adult in the household to deal with two ten-year-olds and two twelve-year-olds dropping on them at once. It had been a crazy, wonderful time, and though not blood-related, they really were a unit.

Falling in step with Franklin, Connor followed him to Leena's where Neal and Edison were holding a booth.

"About time," Edison grumbled, ribbing him. "Get lost?"

“He was mooning over a girl,” Franklin reported. “Good thing I went to get him. He’d still be there, and we’d be starving!”

“Hey, gentlemen,” a voice said from the end of the table, and they found Dev from the Bowen Bar standing there. Dev helped out during dinner hours since the businesses were connected and shared the same owners. “What can I bring you to drink? And if you know what you want to order, now would be good.” Dev glanced around as if to say it’s crazy in here. Better order now, or it’ll be quite the wait.

As always, Connor was struck by the boy’s features, which leaned toward the feminine. So of the cowboys around here were bisexual, he knew Dev would have no problem with companionship if he leaned that way. None of the Quists did, but none of them had a problem with that, either.

He glanced at Franklin. “Know what you want?”

Of the four of them, they needed to worry most about him.

“Yeah, same as always.”

Connor turned his look to the other two. They both nodded, so he looked back to Dev. “I guess so. Let them order first, and I’ll figure it out real quick.”

Minutes later, Dev was on his way to the kitchen and the brothers were alone—well, as alone as possible in an overcrowded restaurant.

“How were your classes today?” he asked the younger two. In the morning, they all worked together, but in the afternoon, Edison and Neal were taking online courses in preparation for college next semester. At twenty-six, they were late entries—returning students, Connor supposed they were called—and they wanted to stay ahead of the ball.

“Normal,” Edison said. “I hated the English class and loved marketing. Neal, of course, loooooooooooved his English lectures.”

Connor laughed. Edison was taking a 101 prereq English class that would count toward a writing credit, while Neal was taking any English and History course he could fit in. They were best friends with entirely different interests. Connor envied them their schooling and the campus life they were about to enjoy in a few months, but he wouldn’t trade his place in Daly for anything. Franklin claimed the same, though he could easily take advantage of opportunities outside of here if he wanted.

“Don’t love it enough to write your paper for you,” Neal retorted. “Better get to work on it tonight.”

Edison made a face then turned his gaze to Connor. “How did the training go with the horses?”

“Could have gone better...”

“You train horses?” Dev asked as he returned with their drinks.

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“More like I try to convince them to go along with what I say.”

Dev laughed, and Connor was again struck with how different Dev was from the rough cowboys around here. “You know...” the server said. “Someone bought part of the Last Chance Ranch’s land from Briar Rhodes, and they’re opening a horse training facility.”

“Really? No, I didn’t know.”

Dev nodded. “I can send some info over to your place, if you want. With your guests taking out those horses, you’ll want them as trained up as possible.”

“That would be great. Thanks.”

Dev smiled happily. “It’ll be there tomorrow.” With that, the server headed off again.

“Speaking of guests...” Franklin started. “I got final confirmation a few hours ago; that group of physicians will arrive Thursday afternoon. The guy facilitating their leadership building will get in a few hours before that.”

“Right,” Connor answered. He kind of wished they wouldn’t have guests this weekend. He wanted to focus on Madison. Still, it was their livelihood.

When they’d started their experience service, he’d been worried about competing with the Last Chance Ranch, but as it turned out they had similar but different operations.

The Last Chance gave people the opportunity to pretend to be cowboys—the whole City Slickers, dude ranch thing. The Lazy Q was all about vacation memories and facilitating events. Experiences. Their guests came here to relax, take pictures, go fly fishing, ride horses, hike and the like. Occasionally, they hosted business functions, weddings or family reunions. No one really wanted to rope a steer or wrangle cattle. If they wanted to check that out for a few hours, the Quists partnered with the Last Chance to offer the experience. All in all, it worked out well, and Daly was becoming known as a great place to vacation—though, truth be told, it was also a difficult place to get reservations. Both operations were nearly fully booked through to next fall.

“Anything on the job posts?” he asked.

“Nothing yet. People are leery about moving to BFE, even with our reputation. If something doesn’t pan out soon, we might want to check with Robert. His place slows down some over the winter. That might get us a couple month’s labor.”

“Maybe. Let’s give it a few more weeks.” The Flying D was the biggest ranch operation in Wyoming and the second largest in the United States. Even in winter months, they were busy.

“So, back to the girl...” Neal started.

“Our woman,” Franklin said. None of them questioned that she was theirs, despite never speaking to her, and in three of their cases, never yet seeing her. Connor’s gut had spoken, and none of them questioned it. His gut feelings were legendary in their accuracy.

“Right. But what’s the plan? What if she hates us?”

“Fuck, what if she hates even the idea?” Edison added.

“Language,” Franklin and Connor said in unison.

“Aw, c’mon guys, it’s not like we have customers around. It’s not like the cowboys in here care.”

“Habits,” Franklin reminded.

Edison rolled his eyes. “I can’t fucking wait until I’m away at college, and I’ll fucking swear all the fucking time and no one will fucking care.”

“We’ll see. I have a feeling Ma and Dads will have something to say about that.” While the younger two would have their own place in Cranston and wouldn’t be living with their foster parents who considered the four boys to be their own, the younger two Quists would still be in their back pocket.

“Fuck that,” Edison muttered under his breath. Connor fought back a grin. Eds was such a rebel when he got something in his craw.

“Neal?” Connor asked. “Want to hand over your barn chores for tomorrow. Seems Eds could use some thinking time.”

“Oh, come on, Connor!” Edison protested. “You’re not the boss—”

“Kinda is,” the other two interrupted. This was a banter they’d often engaged in with one or the other of the younger men. They were all partners in the business, but Connor owned Quist Encounters at the Lazy Q, having developed it with the small trust he’d received on his twenty-first birthday, from a relative he hadn’t even known. It had been enough that the bank hadn’t balked at giving him a business loan for the rest of the operation’s needs. So, yes, Connor was the Quist Encounters’ boss, but they each took their parts seriously.



“Fine, Dad,” Edison gritted out. “Though I think your freaking language rule is stupid.”

The other three laughed.

“It’s not like I have any other hard and fast rules—other than not screwing with the female customers.”

Neal knocked his shoulder into Eds. “But feel free to have at any of the guys.”

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“Oh, thanks.” Edison smirked. Though many of their friends here in Daly were gay or bisexual, none of the Quists played for the home team—difficult with no available women in the nearby vicinity. Connor knew Edison and Neal occasionally hooked up with girls from Gillette they’d met on Tinder. “So, about Madison. Like Neal asked: What if she hates us?”

“She’s not gonna hate us,” Connor asserted with full confidence. His gut tightened, a flutter confirming the truth in his words. They needed her, and he didn’t know why, but he got the feeling she needed them, too. That wasn’t wishful thinking, but he couldn’t say why he believed that. They’d find out soon enough, wouldn’t they?

Madison was theirs, and soon, they’d know everything about her.

### Chapter Three

Fighting her queasy stomach on Thursday, Madison snuck half of a saltine from her purse on the floor and focused on the schedule book River was reviewing. Though everything was mirrored online, Doc preferred the paper book to figuring out the online program.

“Couldn’t we just print the online schedule?” she asked, trying not to move much. Or breathe much. Or live much. This morning sickness sucked! That it was mornings only and contained to the first trimester was a big fat lie. She’d just started the second, and it hadn’t settled. She might have to talk to Doc about anti-nausea meds. Though Riv didn’t know, Madison had confided to her boss that she was pregnant, not wanting the man to feel duped that he’d hired her only to have her need maternity leave soon after. Turned out he loved kids and even had no problem with her bring

the child with her to work with her. Madison wasn't so sure how that would work out, but she'd see.

So far, besides her doctor back in Detroit, Doc Walker was the only one who knew her condition. Well, aside from the father who'd denied the baby was his.

"No," Riv replied. "Doc likes to see the overview and make notes and changes as he sees necessary. Sometimes, he does that after hours when we're not here." She glanced at said doctor as he passed. "You know, when he should be home with his wife."

"River, are you calling me a workaholic?" he asked in mock horror.

"Never, John. Would never do that."

Madison chuckled at the camaraderie between the two, hoping it would grow between her and John, as well. Back home—no, Daly was home now. Back where she used to work, the physicians acted as if they were gods and the nurses and techs were their minions.

"Right," he laughed. "I'm running over to Leena's to get one of her mochas. She just got in peppermint, and you know how I love them. Text me if my next appointment shows up here before I get back."

"Sure thing, Doc." She turned to Madison once he'd left. "You've probably noticed this week, we're pretty laid back. What he didn't say is that he'll be a while. The next one scheduled isn't for a bit. I—"

She cut off as a pair of men walked into the waiting room, their eyes latched on the desk. Madison shifted in her seat, uncomfortable with the attention. She glanced down at the schedule. They weren't supposed to have anything in yet.

“Good morning,” she called out. “How can we help you this morning?” She’d caught on to the office’s routine quickly. Frankly, the Daly office was easy compared to the larger practices she’d worked at in the Detroit area.

River placed a hand on Mads’ arm. “This one’s for me.”

Madison watched the men watching River as they rounded the desk to the archway that led into the lobby. God, the way they looked at her as if they could devour her. Yet there was a subtle sadness in their gazes, too. She couldn’t blame them, knowing River had only a few months to live. It was shredding her too, though she tried her best to act normal. River didn’t need to deal with a host of morose people in her life while she was still trying to live.

Madison couldn’t leave the desk, but she tried to give the three some privacy while they stood in the waiting room. Pulling out her phone, she scrolled through her Facebook feed. Her chest tightened and blood rushed past her ears drowning out everything when she saw a private message from her Martin—her fiancé of four years, ex-fiancé now, the abusive doctor who’d cheated on her with one of their coworkers, another nurse, and also refused to believe Madison’s baby was his. Fine with her. She could raise this child on her own. She certainly didn’t want to see him again.

Ignoring the message for now, she opened her email and found several messages from him, as well. What the hell? Why was he suddenly opening the lines of communication again? And why?

She took a deep breath and closed her mail, deciding to address it all later, and looked up to where the two cowboys were embracing River while she spoke with them. Her friend patted their chests then a few moments later, returned to the reception desk.

“Both of them?” Mads asked once Riv had regained her seat behind the desk.

“Yeah. They’re the ones you saw me with at Moon’s wedding.”

“Both?” Mads repeated.

“Yeah. It’s kind of a thing here in Daly. You’ve been here almost a week. You haven’t noticed?”

Madison shook her head. “No, I’ve pretty much been at the O’Keefe’s B&B or here. I haven’t really gotten out much.” All she’d really noticed about the Daly residents was that there were a ton of men. So. Many. Men.

“Well,” River started. She cleared her throat. “Around here, it’s called the Daly Way. Even if you haven’t gotten out much, you must have noticed the severe shortage of women in town.”

“I thought maybe I just hadn’t seen them. Most people live outside of the town-proper.”

“True, they do, but let’s just say...when my sisters and I moved here, we nearly doubled the female population. This is a cow town, with men who come here just for work. They’re mostly single, without connections. Many are getting away from a world that’s beat them up and escaping to a better place. A lot of them were drifters before they came here and found home.”

“So they’re mostly transient?” That didn’t sound appealing. It sounded unsafe and something she didn’t want to get mixed up in, either.

River shrugged. “Some, I guess. Most come here and stay, though. Those who end up with a woman—especially if it’s one guy and one girl—tend to leave to raise their families in the city. That’s crazy, if you ask me. This is the perfect place to bring up kids. Pretty much no crime to speak of. Everyone knows everyone. A rock star lives

on Daly's outskirts, too—okay, that last part isn't really a factor. But Daly's pretty much perfect, save for the lack of women.”

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Madison's hand stole to her stomach as she imagined raising her baby here. What River described of the conditions sounded perfect. It might be lonely, but Mads was used to being alone. And when the baby came, she'd have that focus. The little one would be her everything. And that was okay, too. No man would want her with her baggage. The Daly cowboys wouldn't want a woman and a baby.

"Rayna is trying to change things around here. Bring in more people," River when on, unaware of the direction of Madison's thoughts. Rayna was one of the owners of the B&B where Madison was staying until Riv vacated the apartment upstairs.

"She's nice and so in love with her husband, Jamie. He's kinda shy, isn't he?"

"It's the scars. He believes people will think he's some kind of freak, but he's one of the nicest men I've ever met. Rayna saw that in him right away. Anyway, when she decided to move here a couple years ago, she appointed herself as head of our tourism—a position she created because there was no such thing before her arrival. Her plans have taken time and run into some roadblocks, but she's starting to make headway. But that's another story. You wanted to know about my guys. My boyfriends."

"Both of them." Though Madison was loath to admit it, the idea sounded appealing. Really appealing. Maybe, it was her hormones. She'd heard pregnancy made some women horny. That could be the case here.

"Right...the Daly Way. It's not an official motto or anything. That's just what people have taken to calling it because it's the way around here. Because there are so few women, relationships in this town are usually of the polygamous variety.

Trinogamous, even. Sometimes more.”

“You just made up that word.”

River laughed. “Maybe, but anyway... Even if relationships or marriages end up being one guy and one woman, like Rayna and Jamie or my sister, Moon, and her husband, Pete, generally, they started out as ménage relationships. Sometimes, like with my sister, Paisley—or Jamie’s brother, Patrick and his partners—it stays as a ménage.”

It stays a ménage... What would that be like? Ménage. The word and idea stuck with Madison through the rest of the workday, evening and into the next day. Every patient who came in, she wondered if they were in a situation like that. Had they tried ménage? Were they looking? By Friday afternoon, it became apparent that many were and they’d heard all about the new nurse at Doc Walker’s.

“I should be insulted,” River laughed as yet another pair of men sauntered into the office to see her friend—the tenth pair of non-patient visitors since the practice opened that morning. These two bore wildflowers and chocolate.

“It’s so sweet,” Madison whispered, overcome by it all.

“Aw, Miss River,” one of the guys said, having overheard her comment. “You know we’re all sweet on you, and we’re right tore up over...” He paused, apparently unsure whether he should mention her sickness. “Over you leaving Doc’s,” he finished. “But we all know you belong to those assholes—excuse my language—Cauldwell and Danielson. They slapped ‘claimed’ on you as soon as you stepped into town.”

“Um-hmm,” River replied.

“Is that so?” Madison tapped her fingers on the desk, pinning the men with a stare.



“Nobody better be marking me claimed.”

Even if it intrigued her, she was no one’s property. She could date and explore as she wanted. Or not. Thinking of her pregnancy, or not seemed a very real possibility.

“Aw, Miss Madison,” the same one placated her—apparently, he was the talker of the pair. “It ain’t like that. We all knew Miss River was into them, too. No one just says claimed.”

“I don’t know about that,” a new voice interrupted. Madison looked up to see four men entering. It was as if an immediate tsunami of attraction slammed into her. Holy God, she’d never felt anything so powerful, not even with her ex. More confusing, she couldn’t discern which of the four men it came from. Her thighs tightened, pressing together as she regarded the quartet of rugged cowboys. Whoa! If a woman were confronted by this, no wonder she’d think the Daly Way was a good idea.

Unlike with Riv’s men, these four devoured Madison with their eyes as they stood behind the two boys, who’d come in before them. The tallest of the new group leaned forward and said to them, “Claimed.”

“Well, fuck,” the quiet one said.

“Spread that shit wide,” he told them.

“Language...” one of his companions muttered with a snicker. The one who’d declared her “claimed” glared at him, dark brown eyes flashing fire.

“Oh my God,” Madison exclaimed as the first cowboys dropped their gifts on the counter and took off as if they’d been burned. “What the hell was that?”

The spokesman for the new cowboys smiled at her as if he hadn’t just told those

others she belonged to him. She shivered at the intensity in his gaze as he studied her. His grin might be affable, but his stare was hungry, predatory...claiming.

“Afternoon, Madison,” he said, her name on his tongue like a sensual caress. “I’m Connor, and that there is Edison, Franklin and Neal. Franklin has an appointment with Dr. Walker.”

“And you all needed to come in?” River interrupted in a no-nonsense tone while Madison glanced at the schedule, trying to gather her wits.

“Oh, right.” She tapped the computer screen with the end of her pen. “Franklin Quist for a diabetic consultation. You’re a little over an hour early. We’re not busy, so let me check with the doctor to see if he can see you early.”

“Oh, that won’t be necessary, darlin’,” Connor said, leaning on the counter. “We can wait. We’d love to chat with the new girl in town. You know, since you’re not busy.”

River stepped between them, forcing Madison to push back her chair a bit. Madison leaned sideways to take in the group. All four were tall and well-built. Rugged and tanned, looking as if they spent a lot of time outdoors. They all had dark hair, as well, but they all had different eyes. Connor had chocolate-brown eyes while one of the others, who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with him, had eyes that appeared golden-amber. Of the two slightly behind them, one had silvery-gray while the other man’s were a light, almost-gray blue.

Of all the cowboys who’d come in here today, Madison wanted to know these four. Why they drew her while the others hadn’t, she had no idea. Maybe, she was tired and being hit hard with baby hormones.

Baby.

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Right.

No matter what she thought or how attracted she might be, no was always the correct answer with the men of Daly. Especially with her past.

River planted her hands on her hips. “As amusing as this is, gentlemen, you can’t camp out in this office. Come back in an hour.”

Ignoring the order, one of them asked after River’s health, genuine concern in his amber eyes, making him as appealing as Connor, so appealing Madison had to swallow back her desire and remind herself they were off limits. She was in such big trouble.

“Y’all still can’t hang out here,” River said after she’d answered his enquiry. “Go check out the new shipment over at the Farm and Feed or hang out at Leena’s. Madison is working.”

“Ms. River...” one of the pair in back protested. Madison decided the two who stood slightly behind were younger than those up front. Probably not by much though.

Connor held up a hand, stalling the complaint. “No, it’s okay. We’ll come back in a little while.” Looking past River, he gave Madison a lingering look then nodded. With an air of unhappiness, the four left. At least temporarily.

Madison watched them go, her bottom lip pulled between her teeth. Their sculpted asses with worn denim molding them. Mmm... What was that old snarky phrase about it being oh so good to see a guy go? The Quists had backsides that should be

immortalized in pictures.

## Chapter Four

“You’re drooling,” River teased.

Madison looked over at her friend. “That was...something. Those guys... Did they just claim me?”

River laughed and patted her on the shoulder before taking her seat again. “Buckle in. This is just the start.”

“And you’ve had four years of this?” How had she held out with all these freaking hot guys who wanted to shower presents on their intended woman, worshipful intent in their eyes?

“No. Like the boys said earlier, Seth and Tai dissuaded the full-court press from the other men around here. I met them within minutes of coming to Daly...literally, they were the first people I met. From then on, they made it clear to all that I was off limits.”

“I’m not sure if that makes you lucky or not.”

“I think the Quists might decide the same about you. All the men today were interested, but those four...?” She fanned herself. “The temp went up about thirty degrees with the way they looked at you. Do yourself a favor; if you end up being interested in them, don’t wait years like I did. You never know what will happen next week.”

After working in an oncology office and seeing what was happening to her best friend now, Madison knew that. Since embarking on this new phase of her

life—motherhood, a new job, a new town, all the old dreck left behind—she'd vowed to live each day to her fullest. Did she think the Quists would be involved? No. But she understood the importance of being fully present for each moment of life.

"I promise." Madison leaned back in her chair. This conversation had gotten heavy, fast. "I can't believe it's Friday already—your last day! Do you guys have big plans?"

"Not really. Just settling into Seth and Tai's house."

They talked about the move for a while, and while the Bed and Breakfast, as well as the O'Keefes, was great, Madison couldn't wait to move to the apartment upstairs. She didn't want to rush River, so she wouldn't bring her suitcases over until tomorrow. The things she'd shipped via UPS were already here and stored in a closet upstairs. The move would be easy.

Before she knew it, the Quists had returned. She caught her breath, wondering how she'd forgotten how breathtaking they were. It had only been forty-ish minutes.

"I'll go see if Doc's ready," River said, getting up then leaving Madison alone with them. What had she said about the heat earlier? A wave of prickles skated down her spine, and she fought to keep her breathing even as blood rushed through her, throbbing at the base of her neck. Her core clenched again, making her all too aware of her reaction to these cowboys.

"You can have a seat," she told them, needing them to step away and give her the space to get herself under control.

Connor leaned his hip against the counter. "Have dinner with us tonight?"

"Smooth," the one beside him muttered. It was the guy with amber-colored eyes. He

turned a smile on Madison. “I’m Franklin, the one with the appointment.”

“It’s nice to meet you.”

He indicated to the other two men. “That’s Neal.” Blue eyes. “And that’s Edison.” Silver-gray eyes. “We’d all be mighty happy if you came out to the Lazy Q and have dinner with us tonight, so we can get to know you. And maybe, you could get to know us.”

She studied them, trying to ignore the flutters in her belly—flutters that definitely weren’t from the baby. “That’s...that’s really nice of you, but—”

“Don’t say no,” Connor interrupted. “We’re not like all the yahoos who’ve been traipsing through here today.”

Whew, didn’t she know that?

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“Just think about it,” he continued. “We’re nice guys.”

“Said every serial killer ever,” she quipped, very sure that nice guys wasn’t accurate at all. These four oozed sexual energy, more than any so-called nice guy that she’d ever met. And that frightened her just a bit—they didn’t scare her, but her reaction sure did.

Edison burst out laughing, and his mirth drew a smile from her. “Oh, I like her,” he chortled. “Let’s keep her.”

“Um...”

Neal jostled him. “Not how it works, dork.”

“Please,” Edison begged, leaning forward on the counter, resting on his forearms. His hands clasped together, and his frame tipped way too close to her. She smelled the scent of his soap—something like Irish Springs, she thought. Woodsy. Male. Alluring.

“I’ll think about it.”

“Fair enough,” Connor said, grasping Edison’s shirt near the shoulder and tugging him back. “Let us know before we leave. You have a favorite food?”

Chocolate but it gave her heartburn right now. “I’m pretty easy. With food,” she quickly added. “I like burgers.”

He nodded, his eyes still full of that heat, though everything that passed between them was rather innocuous. He looked like he wanted to say something, but she was afraid to push, unsure if she wanted to know.

She should just nip this in the bud now. She wasn't getting involved with them or any other of the cowboys in Daly. A romantic or sexual relationship of any kind just didn't fit with her plans.

Plans. Right. That made it sound as if she had some grand path she wanted to follow. Right now, her plan was: settle in, have baby, raise baby, survive, forget past. Simple.

But maybe she could...be friends with the Quists. They seemed nice enough. Maybe a friendship with them would throw other cowboys off the scent. No, that wouldn't be fair to anyone. Gah. Why did life have to be so confusing?

"You got an awful lot goin' on in that head," Franklin observed quietly. "It's just dinner. No pressure. No commitments."

"I'll—"

"Doc's ready now," River interrupted Madison. "We've got the big room, so all four of you can come along."

"I can go—"

River interrupted Franklin this time. "All four of you," she said in a no-nonsense tone.

Connor looked as if he might refuse. The other three followed River, but Connor stayed behind considering Madison. She didn't shy away as he brazenly reached out and gently cupped the side of her face, drawing his thumb along her cheek. "Think



about it, okay?” With that, he disappeared through the doorway to the exam rooms, following after River.

Think about it... Think about it? Like she could do anything but? She was still quivering from that brief caress. When she thought of being with them, she got a warm feeling all over. The idea of having four protective cowboys to cuddle with, to enjoy the upcoming holidays with... It would be nice. A pipedream but nice.

And...no. Just no. She couldn't indulge.

A few moments later, Riv came back to the desk.

“Overwhelming, isn't it?”

Um, yes!

“What part?” Madison laughed, embarrassed by the attention and her reaction. Overwhelming seemed like an understatement. And that was just the Quists and the full-court press a few minutes ago. Then there were all the other men who'd cycled through here today. She couldn't help the feeling they'd all have their eye on her when she stepped out.

“Doesn't it ever frighten you? All the men? Watching you? Wanting a part of you?”

River's lips pressed together, and her brows drew in before she slowly shook her head. “No, not really. They've all been hands off. They know I'm Seth and Tai's. Besides, Daly has their own version of frontier justice. Women are prized, and guys wouldn't dare step out of line. The repercussions would be dire, and they all know it. The men around here don't tolerate any sort of abuse. Seems unlikely that there wouldn't be at least one bad egg in the bunch, but believe me when I say, there's a lot of land around here. No one's ever made bones about the fact, they could—and

would—hide a body where no one will ever find it. They're just that serious about protecting the females, local or visiting."

"Um...wow?" Madison's surprise came out as a question. "That's intense."

River shrugged. "But true. I mean they'll all try to court you and win you over until you've chosen someone—or someone makes it clear you're off-limits—but you're safe."

"Good to know." She hadn't felt truly safe for a while. Her parents wanted her to comply with whatever they wanted so they'd look good to their high-class circle. They weren't above some manipulation. It had been difficult, but Madison had written them off when they'd tried to coerce her into an abortion.

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And her ex...yes, he'd cheated on her and given her a good excuse to break off the engagement, but she'd gotten pregnant one night when he'd drunkenly accosted her. That was a different and wholly confusing story, one that both humiliated and frightened her.

Maybe, it explained her reluctance to "have dinner" with the Quists. Sometimes, no wasn't enough.

"Do you mind if I take my lunch?" She could head over to her room at the B&B and hide out until they guys had finished the appointment and gone back to wherever they lived. Since she was moving upstairs once Riv left tonight, she could get herself packed up and ready for the move.

River nodded. "Sure. Just know that hiding out won't solve your problem—not that I think it's really a problem. They're good men. Yeah, they've set their sights on you. Unless you give them a clear no, they won't stop courting. So...take a moment and get your head together. Decide what you really want."

"What do you think?" she asked, unable to help herself.

"Like I said, they're good guys. I've never seen any of them throw their hat into the proverbial ring, just so you know. They're heads down, running their business. Hard workers. Respectful whenever I see them."

They're good guys. Everyone thought Martin was a good guy, too. Looking back, Madison saw the signs that maybe that wasn't true. And she knew River had never really liked him.

She closed her eyes and took a shuddery inhale, pushing her asshole ex from her thoughts. You can't paint everyone with that brush, Mads. Not every guy is a douchebag abuser.

With that thought, she headed out, going toward the O'Keefes' to find a few moments of peace and gather her thoughts as River had suggested.

They're good guys.

I've never seen any of them throw their hat into the proverbial ring.

Decide what you want...

Problem was, she knew what she wanted. She just knew she couldn't say yes to it. Her hand flatten over her stomach, there was more at stake than just her, and after what she'd been through with Martin, she wasn't so sure she was ready to throw her own hat back in the ring. Ever.

## Chapter Five

She was a coward.

Madison doodled a circle on the steno pad beside her on the desk, thinking of the past two hours and waiting for five o'clock so the office could lock up for the weekend. River had gone home with her guys right after Madison had returned from lunch—not a big deal since the office didn't have anything on the books and Mads was perfectly capable of running the desk on her own, as well as doing any nursing duties that might come up. Certainly, as slow as it was, she almost wondered why Doc needed anyone beside himself. River assured her it was much busier in the spring and summer months.

Good thing or Mads might lose her mind—the part that wasn't fully consumed with what-ifs after the brief encounter with the Quists earlier today, anyway. When she'd gone home for lunch, Rayna had been puttering around the kitchen. She'd told Madison the same things as River: Daly had a practice called the Daly Way because there was a lack of women. The men stayed in line because of mob justice. The Quists were model citizens, overall nice guys and real catches as far as Rayna was concerned.

When Madison returned to the Daly Medical Center, a mere few minutes' walk from where she was staying, the paragons of virtue were gone, finished with Franklin's appointment and on their way back to wherever they lived or whatever they needed to do this afternoon. She couldn't help but be a little disappointed, though it was her own darn fault she hadn't been here when they were finished with Franklin's exam.

So she'd been thinking since then. About her fears. About what ifs. About what would have happened if she'd said yes.

“You make up your mind?”

She looked up, wide-eyed, at the deep voice that caressed over her like soft velvet. He stood just inside the doorway to the waiting room. The glass door was to his back, the setting sun haloing him with light and blurring his face to her vision.

“Connor,” she breathed in surprise.

“I like my name on your lips, darlin'. So...did you decide?”

She hadn't. Not completely. After they'd gone, she'd concluded it was too late, anyway, that she'd missed her chance. But now, one of them was here. Anticipation rebuilt in her middle, and she tried to rein it in.

“Just dinner?” she asked. Why did she sound breathless? Way to play it cool, Mads.

“Unless you want more.” He shrugged. “We’re okay with just dinner. We’ll go as slow or fast as you’re comfortable.” He raised an eyebrow at her. “As long as we’re the only ones you’re getting familiar with.”

“I don’t run around,” she said. “When I’m with someone, I’m with them.” That could be why the idea of being with more than one man, even if they were all in on it, seemed so foreign.

“Didn’t think you were a player, sweet thing. No worries there. You seem kind of...pure.”

“I’m not a virgin,” she snapped. Was that why they wanted her? They wanted to dirty up someone untouched. Jerks.

“Even better,” Connor replied calmly, derailing her mental tirade before it went too far. Okay, she was jumping to conclusions and obviously oversensitive. “Dinner?” he repeated. “At our place?”

At their place?

“If you’d feel more comfortable at Leena’s, that’s okay, too,” he added. “Zero privacy, but okay.”

That sealed it. They weren’t bent on getting her alone for something questionable. Beyond that, she believed Rayna and River and their assertions about the Quists. And she was unfathomably attracted to the four, mouthwatering, way-too-handsome men.

“Yes,” she said before she could chicken out again. “Dinner with the four of you sounds good. And I’d like to see your place. River told me you run a resort of sorts.”

He grinned. “Quist Encounters. We host destination vacations and retreats. I promise you won’t regret it.”

She wasn’t so sure of that, but if there were regrets, the fault would likely be on her. Madison’s attraction to them was too heady to ignore, and she had to fight to keep it in check. She worried that by the end of the evening, she might not want to, that she might dive head-first into whatever they offered.

And why not? a tiny rebellious voice inside her whispered.

Oh, about a million reasons...

Plus one big one that would be growing bigger and bigger over the next few months.

“What time?” she asked, derailing her second guessing. “Give me directions, and I’ll

be there.”

“You can ride out with me,” he offered, his smile seductive and suggestive.

She shook her head. “I need to move my stuff from the B&B to the apartment upstairs. It’s not much, and it won’t take me long. And...well, I’d rather have my car with me.”

“Need help moving?”

“No, it won’t be much.” Rayna’s husband Jamie and his brother, Patrick had already volunteered to lug any heavy stuff for her.

“Fair enough. You can meet us out there. Here... Give me paper and a pen, and I’ll write out directions for you.” He stepped closer to the desk, his enticing scent wafting toward her. It took everything in her not to lean closer to breathe it in. Oh, she was in big trouble.

“You sure I can’t help? I don’t feel right knowing you’ll be moving stuff on your own. Your men...” He trailed off, but she could tell he was holding back something. “Well, you should let the boys and me help you.”

Oh, this had to do with that claim thing, and wasn’t that just the sweetest? Chivalry wasn’t completely dead.

“Jamie and Patrick got tapped for the job,” she told him. “Wouldn’t want to disappoint them.”

“Nope.” But Connor was gritting his teeth, his jaw tense. “At least, they’re taken,” he muttered.



“Very.” She smiled. “And it frees you up to cook for me.”

Again, he looked as if he were holding something back, but this time, he just winked then left her alone with the kamikaze butterflies in her stomach.

## Chapter Six

Franklin paced the front room of the sprawling, one-story ranch house he shared with his brothers. Connor had gotten back a half hour ago and reported Madison had agreed to come to dinner. Since seeing her, she’d been all he could think of. Connor had been right. Doc’s new nurse was gorgeous, and Franklin didn’t need Connor’s gut feeling to know she belonged with them. He didn’t think it was wishful or mere lust. He just had this sense of rightness about her. Seeing her sent his nerve endings—and cock, to be truthful—jumping to attention. Conversely, around her everything calmed within him. It was a weird dichotomy he couldn’t explain.

Now, he worried. Would she really show up? Would she take a chance on them? Would she like the burgers they were grilling? Did she even like apple salad? Maybe, she was allergic. He should have asked. Should he have made more sides? What if she hated the homemade ranch dressing for the garden salad? Worse, what if she hated the four of them?

Connor’s heavy hand landed on Franklin’s shoulder. “Calm down. She’ll get here.”

“I know. I’m just uptight. I feel it too, you know? I feel the same thing you do. That she’s ours.”

Connor nodded slowly. “We’ll have to be careful not to scare her.”

“Yeah, that’s probably what has me all worked up. Overthinking things.”

“As usual,” Connor laughed.

“As usual,” Franklin echoed good-naturedly. “You’re not worried at all?”

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Connor crossed his arms over his chest and stared out the window with him. “Of course, I am. I don’t think a ménage relationship will be an easy sell to her.”

“At least, she knows about it going in. Ace told me Paisley had no idea and freaked right out.” Paisley was River’s sister, and Brant was the Quists good friend. “I remember the way she ran to the diner. Talk about out of the frying pan and into the fire.” It had been a mess. He and his companions hadn’t converged on her like so many others had, but he’d been ready to step in. Thankfully Ace, Brant and their cousins had shown up to rescue her.

“Worked out with her,” Connor said. “We’ve gotta focus on that part. There have been many successful matches the past few years. We could be another if we let her take the lead in deciding this and follow her cues so we don’t scare her.”

“You’re right.”

“Are we having a party in the front room?” Eds asked as he came in from his chores. Neal trailed behind him. Both paused to remove the boots they’d already cleaned on the scraper outside.

“Just waiting for Madison,” Connor replied.

“Good deal. I’m glad you talked her into coming out.”

“Me, too,” Neal enjoined. “I checked the guests over at the lodge. They’re good to go for the night. All fed and working on their evening team-building. Kinda funny seeing those big-time doctors out of their element here. Hope they don’t stay up too

late. We have that seven AM trail-ride tomorrow. Cranky city slickers will be a bitch, especially if this bunch has a God complex.”

“Hopefully, they’ll be ready and caffeinated,” Franklin said, not pointing out that Neal was as much a city slicker as the bunch of guests who’d come in. They’d grown up in an urban community and had only been here a few years. None of them were cowboys, born and bred. Everything they knew had been learned “on-the-job,” so to speak.

“Madison will be here any minute. You should get cleaned up,” Connor said.

“Okay, Dad,” Eds quipped, earning a growl from Connor. Franklin shook his head. It was always like this. They’d die for each other, but probably snipe at each other to their last breath. The two younger men traipsed toward their rooms while Franklin peeked out the window again.

“Looks like it’s going to storm.”

“Yeah?” Connor stepped up next to him and peered at the sky. “It does. Snow wasn’t in the forecast.”

“Those cloud are pretty damn thick,” Franklin said, eyeing the iron-gray clouds blotting out the last of the sunset. “I wouldn’t be surprised if that dumps several inches on us.”

“Think Madison will stay the night?” Connor asked, obviously hopeful. Franklin couldn’t deny the prospect enticed him. Madison under their roof, snowed in, forced to get to know them all better.

“She might have to. I’ll make sure the guest room is ready.” The old, sprawling house had eight bedrooms, four of which were in regular use since each of the men had their

own space.

He looked back toward the driveway.

“I know you want to be here when she arrives,” Connor said. “Don’t worry about the room. If we need it later, we’ll get it ready then.”

“Right.” He shoved his hand through his hair, his hand shaking slightly.

“You okay?” Connor asked

“Blood sugar’s fine,” Franklin replied, knowing that was the underlying question. Though he understood the worry, it still annoyed him a bit. He was an adult; he knew how to watch his levels, even if they’d been problematic lately. He and Doc had it in hand.

Connor studied him then nodded. Before he could say anything, two pinpoints of light pierced the darkness, then Madison’s little black car drove into sight, illuminated by the yard lights.

“She’s here,” Connor said, though Franklin saw the same thing he did. His excitement was palpable and matched Franklin’s. Franklin took a deep breath to calm his racing emotions then headed for the front door.

Minutes later, she parked at the top of the circle drive then emerged from her vehicle in slim jeans and a red, knit tunic top beneath her open navy-blue pea coat. Connor opened the door to wait for her—not overeager or anything, Franklin thought in amusement, rolling his eyes. Still, he moved to stand near Connor.

Despite the excitement vibrating around them, everything seemed stiff and uncertain. If either of the men had actually dated a girl before, rather than just meeting to hook-

up, this would probably be easier. Neither were remotely smooth.

“Hi,” he said then leaned in and kissed her cheek. A blush pinkened her cheeks when he pulled back and darkened when Connor followed Franklin’s lead.

“Hey!” Eds exclaimed, bounding into the room. Apparently lacking the nerves plaguing Connor and Franklin, he pulled her into a bear hug. “Glad you’re here. Come in and see the place.” He helped her out of her coat while the other two exchanged glances. In wonder, Franklin watched him drop the outer garment on a hook by the door then take her hand. Not only did the boy have no filter, but he had no worries about appearance or impressions. It was so Edison—and thank God for it, too, otherwise they’d still be standing in the foyer shuffling their feet.

Franklin grinned ruefully. He and Connor needed to up their game if they hoped to win over their woman.

## Chapter Seven

Madison shook her head slightly as whirlwind Edison took over greeting her. Neal gave her a small wave from the hallway entry, looking as uncomfortable as Connor and Franklin had. Clearly, the three of them didn’t quite know what to do. Whether that was from nerves or lack of experience with women, she wasn’t sure, but it sparked a tender sensation in her chest. Their ineptitude struck her as quite endearing. She liked that they weren’t skilled players. Edison on the other hand was an exuberant puppy. If he didn’t know what to do, he didn’t care and would barge forward anyway.

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The other three seemed content to let him take the lead right now, though she knew from brief experience that Connor was their true leader. They all followed behind Edison as he pointed out the north wing of the sprawling house, containing his and Neal's bedrooms. The opposite wing had Franklin and Connor's rooms. Without lingering, he pointed out the great room, an enormous family room, two offices with a reception area that could contain a secretarial office, the kitchen and the dining room.

The entire home was spacious and rustic, comfortable and well-kept. It reminded her of a fancy hunting lodge, full of room to stretch and outfitted in polished, warm wood.

All the while, Edison kept his fingers laced through hers as if it were nothing. And maybe, it wasn't. It didn't escape her attention that Connor had moved up beside them as they toured. His palm rested lightly on her lower back. Guiding her? Staking his claim? Anticipation fluttered through her again, her core knotting with need. Sharp, tingling waves through her center heightened her awareness.

Madison swallowed hard.

Play it cool. Don't rush forward.

Oh, lighten up. What will it hurt?

"And here's the kitchen," Edison announced, interrupting her inner argument. "Franklin's been at work getting stuff ready—he's the cook in the family."

“Hey,” Connor protested. “I’m grilling the burgers.”

Edison leaned into her. “He only knows how to grill. For real, the man has actually burned water.”

“Hey!” Connor protested again.

“It’s true,” Neal murmured, defending Edison.

“In my defense, I actually burned the pan, not water.”

“Because all the water had cooked away,” Edison argued, teasing him. “Oh my God, Madison! The smell.” He made a gagging sound.

Madison pressed her lips together to hold in her laugh, but a chuckle still escaped.

“You want something to drink?” Neal asked. “We have beer, water, wine, probably some juice, regular cola—no diet...”

“A water would be great,” she said. Wine would be better, but that was out of the question for four or so more months.

Minutes later, she had a bottle of water and was settled at the round table with Edison to her right and Neal to her left. Connor and Franklin were at work in the kitchen. Connor was indeed grilling but using the indoor grill since it had started snowing hard outside. The precipitation made Madison nervous. If it kept up, her drive home would be treacherous. Though she was used to navigating Michigan snow, she still needed to get her new car winterized.

Despite her concern, she couldn’t cut dinner short without being rude. She’d agreed to come, and they’d prepared for her.



Neal caught her gaze. “It’s probably a brief squall that’ll pass in a minute. If it gets too bad, we have lots of guest rooms.”

“That’s...um...” Tempting. Too tempting. Wayward visions of cuddling with them before the fireplace in the great room filled her thoughts before she could push them away.

“I’d love to whip up breakfast for you, and it’s the weekend so you don’t have to be back to the office until Monday,” Franklin blurted. “I mean...you know, if the snow gets too heavy.”

She grinned at him as he hurried out the words. There were far too many nerves in this room. It seemed a lot was at stake here. A new woman didn’t often come to Daly. She wasn’t sure how she felt about that. Did they like her or just her gender?

She glanced out the window again. True to what Neal said, it had slowed to flurries. A strange weight of disappointment settled over her. Gah! She needed to decide what she wanted.

She trusted them, and she’d be clear on their position before anything happened. If she’d been on edge before coming here, being in their house and witnessing how tentative they were, wanting to please her and not scare her off, told her she could relax a bit.

“That’s sweet,” she told Franklin.

“You guys can calm down,” she said. “I’m not sure I want to jump into anything, but if I do, you’re in the game, okay?”

“In the game?” Connor all-but-growled. “It’s not a game, Madison. We want you. We claimed you.”

“About that...” Okay, maybe, Connor had just been quiet and not nervous at all. “No one’s claiming me.”

Did she want to be claimed? No. But the idea of having fun with them was warming on her.

“Whatever you say, Mads,” Edison put in, and she warmed at the nickname, wondering if he’d heard River call her that.

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Clearly, he was on the same page as Connor, but the assertion didn't make her nervous, and she remained calm—well, as calm as someone could be with butterflies catapulting around their belly. These four definitely aroused her. Whatever happened, though, it had to be up to her.

“Tell me about you guys,” she said, changing the direction of the conversation. “Who's oldest? What parent do you take after? You all have a similar look, but if I didn't know you were brothers, I wouldn't guess it. Close friends, maybe, but not brothers.”

“That's because we're not related,” Connor said, setting a plate of burgers in buns on the table then taking a seat. Once the rest of the food was before them, Franklin sat, too.

“I don't understand,” Madison said. “Were you all adopted into the same family or something?”

“Or something,” Franklin said. “We were placed in the same foster family right around the same time. When we were old enough, we all took their last name. Connor and I are about the same age, and Neal and Eds are also the same age.”

“Actually, I'm the baby of the group. Cutest. Smartest. Lovable-est,” Edison quipped.

“Whatever!” Neal threw a potato chip at him.

“Youngest and most annoying, maybe,” Franklin grumbled good-naturedly.

“So much love,” Edison sighed, all the drama.

“You’re all kind of cute,” Madison placated him while she focused on doctoring her burger. She didn’t make eye contact with them, not wanting any of the guys to take her compliment as an invitation.

“So you were placed in the same home?” she prompted.

“Yep,” Edison said a little too nonchalantly as he scooped apple salad onto his plate. “Neal was orphaned, Connor was more-or-less orphaned, Franklin was abandoned and my parents were pretty much assholes.” He took a bite of food and blew out a hard breath through his nose. “Though...” he continued once he’d swallowed, “Franklin’s parents are assholes, too. Maybe, more than mine.”

“It’s a toss-up,” Franklin said. He pointed around the table, indicating Connor first. “Absentee mother; grandma who died.”

“No idea about my father or if my mother is alive now,” Connor put in.

“Neal had great parents but no other family to take him after the car accident,” Franklin continued. “Edison was removed from his home because of criminal neglect. My parents apparently didn’t give a shit about me because it wasn’t in their wheelhouse to deal with my diabetes. They’re wealthy; they could have hired someone to help rather than abandon their eight-year-old son.” He shrugged with the same nonchalance as Edison, but Madison saw right through it. “So...yeah. Gonna have to agree with Edison’s assessment. They’re assholes.”

There was a lot of pain in this room, yet from what she’d witnessed, they didn’t let it rule their lives. “You all seem... I mean, I don’t know you super well, but you all seem well-adjusted.”

“That’s ‘cause of Bethany, Desmond and Manny—the Quists. That’s who we ended up with, and without them, we’d all be screwed up.”

“They placed you in a ménage family?” That seemed...odd.

Connor nodded. “I’m sure it wasn’t on the books like that. And I’m pretty sure there was some looking the other way. Mom is a nurse, and Dad-Des is the chief surgeon at the local hospital. Dad-Man is one of the top corporate lawyers in the country. They have a lot of pull in the community, so the county chose to look the other way.”

“I think our social worker knew we’d be in the best hands with our mom and dads,” Franklin added.

“They didn’t let us get away with shit,” Edison agreed. “That’s for sure.”

“And Edison tried plenty of stunts,” Connor laughed.

Madison glanced at Neal, noting he was rather quiet, though he didn’t appear to disagree with what was said. A pale-pink tinge colored his cheeks when he noticed her looking at him. She gave him a small smile. He was a shy one, and it endeared him to her even more.

“So how did the four of you end up here?” she asked. “You’re not from Daly, right?”

“No, we’re from Michigan like you,” Franklin answered.

“Actually, I’m from Colorado,” she corrected. “I just worked in Detroit for a while. Went to school in Ann Arbor, too, so I’ve been there for eight years.”

“Landing here is sort of a long story,” Connor started.

She grinned, looking around the table. “We have time. Right? That’s what we’re doing? Getting to know each other?”

“Right. Well,” he sighed. “Apparently, I had family I didn’t know about. They didn’t claim me, yet left me an inheritance. This land and a hefty chunk of cash to develop it.”

“But why here? You could have sold the land and started something close to home.”

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Connor shrugged. “It’s something from family, I guess. My mom and dad might have sucked, but my Gram was awesome. And it seemed like a perfect opportunity to start a vacation adventures business.”

Even with great reasons, she could tell he was hedging.

“He gets feelings,” Neal said quietly. “Knowing. He and Franklin both did three years of college, and Eds and I were about to start. Then Connor got his inheritance and sensed he should be here and had a vision of what it could become.”

Her brows drew together. “You got a sense you were supposed to start a ranch-adventure business.” She held up her hand. “I’m not mocking that. Just trying to get clear.”

“Yeah, I guess. I can’t really explain it. Like Neal said, I get feelings—”

“And so far, they’ve never been wrong,” Edison put in. “If Connor says it’s so, we believe him.”

“Okay. Like what?”

“Sometimes, he knows when something bad is going to happen. He knew the land here would be good but that we shouldn’t ranch, that we’d be better off having a guest operation. He knew Neal and I were gonna show up at the Quists on the day we did. He started getting things ready before the state had even called Bethany to ask if the Quists could take us.”

“It’s more than that,” Connor added. “It’s being able to anticipate things—good and bad—and be ready for them. Not everything but plenty of important stuff. It’s seeing something and knowing I need to move in that direction. Sometimes, I can see a whole future lain out on that path.” He made a face. “I know it sounds crazy.”

“Actually, I get it. My grandma had the sight—that’s what she called it. I didn’t get to see her much. My parents thought she was too crazy to muddy up their blue-blood lives. I just figured she had really strong intuition.” She spread her hands. “So Daly is pretty far from where you’re from. I can’t imagine your parents—the Quists, I mean—were thrilled.”

“No. No, they weren’t, but they understood. Kind of. They made Franklin and me promise we’d finish school—which we did. And Neal and Eds had to promise to take classes, too. They have been, and they’re actually going back to Cranston next semester and enrolling full-time at the nearby university. Education’s a big deal to our mom and dads, as you can probably guess. They also made us promise to come home, no shame, no regrets, if things don’t work out. Dad-Man is friends with Robert Daly, so I’m sure he gets reports on us. Of course, we go home on the regular. If we didn’t Mom would be down here kicking our asses.”

“Language,” Neal muttered at Connor.

Madison chuckled. Realizing she’d finished the last of her food while they’d been talking, she wiped her hands on her napkin, dabbed her lips then put it beside her plate. She didn’t want to rush from the table. No, she wanted to sit here and learn more about these men—not because of her attraction but because they fascinated her.

“More,” Franklin asked.

“Goodness, no. I think I might burst. It was so good. Thank you all of you for having me over.”



“We’re glad you’re here,” he replied.

“So,” Connor said, leaning forward on his elbows, “tell us how you ended up in Daly.”

## Chapter Eight

Wasn’t that a long, sordid story?

“River asked me,” Madison hedged. “I mean...she needed a replacement, you know, because of her illness. Of course, I came when she called.”

“And...”

“What do you mean?” She knew exactly what Connor meant but didn’t want to tell him everything. Hell, that wasn’t fair of her. They’d been open with her about their past, so she could—should—do the same.

“No one just drops their life and moves across country to take a job, even for a friend—not unless they’re unhappy with where they are,” he said.

“You’re right. I wasn’t happy. Until six months ago, I was in a relationship—engaged, actually. He cheated on me, and we broke up. It was a stupid situation because I’d done something I never should have—got involved with a coworker. Afterward, we still worked in the same office. It was...difficult. Outside of the relationship, I could clearly see what an ass he is. I really dodged a bullet, and I am so over him. Not kidding. Over. Him. But...” She trailed off, the pain and fear behind her move stalking close to her. She’d tell them the sanitized, undetailed version. Talking about any of it was hard, but these cowboys needed to know they had no chance with her. “Well, one night, something happened.”

Something. Fuck, that was an understatement. Martin had been living with Flora, the girl he'd cheated on Madison with. When he'd come to Madison's apartment a few months ago, out of the blue, he'd been drunk. He'd been violent, too. "No" hadn't meant a thing to him, and he'd taken anyway. She'd quit her job the next day. She'd had to get away from Martin, zero question in the matter.

She closed her eyes, wishing again she'd pressed charges. She'd been humiliated and confused. She understood what had happened and that it wasn't her fault, but had she fought hard enough. Was it her fault? She knew him. Had there been something else she could have done? Most mortifying had been that she'd just lain there, head turned away, when it had been evident she could break from his hold, and that alone made her question everything.

Sure, she was a nurse and she knew there was evidence to be collected, but she knew him. She'd been engaged to him. It would be far too easy for insinuations to be made that she'd wanted it, that she wanted revenge.

The only revenge she wanted was living a good life and not letting him ruin her. It was what gave her the courage to be here, to give people a fair shot and not paint them with the "Asshole Martin" brush.

"Madison?" Neal asked, stroking his hand over her arm, and she realized she'd gotten lost in the past. Unshed tears burned in her eyes.

"I'm pregnant," she said bluntly. "He...doesn't know about it—he refuses to believe it's his, anyway." She'd never chance him getting his hands on her child. "And my family will never accept it, me being a single mother and all, so I wanted to come here and be with people who care about me. River is my best friend, though I have to say, she kept a really big secret from me about Daly—what did she call it? The Daly Way?"

“Yes. Right,” Edison said.

“And it’s not just Riv. I’m really close with her sisters, too. They’re like my family—no, they’re better than my family. They’d never treat me like a pariah for choosing nursing over something more prestigious like an important job in finance or a being lawyer or something. They’ll certainly be happy about the baby, though not the circumstance. They’d castrate the man, given the chance.” Around her, the men shifted uncomfortably. Good. Let them know they better not screw her over—screw her? Maybe. Screw her over? Her girls would avenge her.

She shrugged. “So...nutshell. That’s why I’m in Daly.”

“You’re pregnant?” Franklin asked, latching on to that part. Of course. Her condition changed everything. She wasn’t some girl they could hookup with and have this ménage thing with. She had baggage. That’s why she’d told them. So they’d know.

So why did she feel the horrible, empty loss of something she’d never even had? She’d allowed her attraction to build excitement she had no business feeling.

“Yes.” She met his gaze. “I’m pregnant.”

To her surprise, she didn’t see condemnation in his gaze. Concern clouded his eyes. But no disgust. No disapproval.

While she watched, a slow smile formed, and his concern faded into interest. Glancing around the table she saw the same mixture of concern and determination. Well, actually, Connor looked as if he might rip someone apart. It frightened her a

little. Was he angry at her? His look soften when she shrank back.

“Not mad at you, darlin’,” he said. “For you. Not at you,” he repeated. “I’m pretty sure you’re leaving out some stuff.”

“That was already too much information for dinner with friends,” she said, downplaying the moment.

“No,” Franklin replied. “It’s not.”

“Okay...so...well, now, you see why I can’t get involved with you. I mean that whole claiming thing...” She shook her head as if to shake away the idea. “My situation is a lot more complicated than you thought, right? I mean—”

Crap, she was babbling. She pressed her lips together then suddenly pushed back her chair and took her plate to the sink. She heard another seat scrape across the floor. A hard, warm body pressed to her back, and she tensed remembering the last time she’d been in this position.

“Shh...” Connor crooned in her ear. “You’re safe. I promise you.” He gently embraced her with one arm, taking the plate from her with the other hand. He set down the dish before wrapping that arm around her, too. The whole time, she knew she could move away from him if she wanted. He wasn’t restraining her. “You’re exactly what we want. What you’ve said doesn’t change things. Not for us. You’re just right for us. Meant to be.”

“How could I be?”

“Don’t you know? If you accept us, you’ll be the most precious thing in our lives. That baby will be, too. Spoiled and loved and protected like the treasures you are.”

Her breath caught, part of her melting at his tender words. How could it be? They might not be ranchers in the traditional sense, but they were still rough cowboys. Yet, everything in the way they treated her showed their care. They were never “rough” with her.

Franklin came up beside her and Connor, sliding his arms around her, too. He tipped his forehead to her shoulder. His warm breath blew across her neck, drawing a pleasant shiver from her. Prickles of awareness grew, drowning out any lingering poison of fear.

“It would be a gift,” he said simply.

“It all scares me,” she admitted. “Being vulnerable in any way.” Why was she telling them this? She couldn’t stop it. “The last time I was with someone—”

Connor growled, and his arms tightened, frightening her.

“That bastard,” he swore, and no one told him to watch his language this time. He was pissed at Martin, not at what she’d said. She relaxed again, letting them give her their comfort and strength.

Connor kissed her temple, seeming to realize her fear. “I promise, no matter what, we will never force you to do anything you don’t want to. We will never take anything you don’t freely give.”

“Promise,” Franklin echoed.

“Us, too,” Neal and Edison said from the table, sounding just as fierce and resolute as the two holding her.

“That claim...” she started.

“That’s different,” Connor said. “We want you, and everyone should know. It’s protection, too. No one will touch you if they believe you belong to us.”

“O-okay.”

“You accept it?”

“I...I guess, but...I don’t want...” Geez, how did she say it? She wasn’t a coward, but her recent past weighed heavily on her. It tainted everything and restrained her into behaving more tentatively than she ever would have. Martin had stolen her confidence, her fearlessness. She hated him for it, and in that very moment, she vowed to take back what he’d taken.

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“You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to,” Franklin repeated. “Just be ours, and let’s see what happens.”

“No sex is okay?”

Connor was so close she heard him swallow, and she knew it really wasn’t all right.

“Yes, if that’s...what you choose,” he said. “Guys?” he prompted.

“Of course,” Franklin answered without hesitation.

“If you need that,” Neal said.

“Like forever?” Edison protested.

“Eds,” the other men groaned.

She couldn’t hold back her giggle. “At least, you’re honest,” she said, her voice higher than usual.

He let out a harsh breath and came over to them. Gently, he cupped her cheek and turned her to look at him, though his words were addressed to the other men. “You all know I’d never do anything Madison doesn’t want.” And she saw the truth shining from his eyes. He smirked at her. “I was just checking on how much lotion I’ll need to stock up on.”

“Oh my God, you’re such a douche,” Neal groaned. It was probably the most

Madison had heard him say so far. She suppressed a smile, holding in her laugh until her chest hurt, and it just exploded out of her.

“We’ll see, okay?” she gasped, leaning back on Connor while she shook.

“Fair enough,” Eds replied.

Connor nuzzled her neck. “Are you okay?”

She nodded. “Yeah. You guys are just...”

“Too much?” he asked.

“No,” she said slowly. “No. Not too much. Perfect, actually.”

“So...what about snuggles?” Connor responded.

She narrowed her eyes, though laughter remained in her voice. “Is this a trick?”

“Why would it be?” he asked, all innocence.

“I’ve never met a man who cuddled without it being foreplay.”

His chest rumble against her back as he chuckled. “And maybe it is. But darlin’, foreplay can last for days. Weeks, even.”

“So can blue balls,” Edison muttered under his breath, as he walked away. He looked back at her quickly. “But for you, it’s okay. Amazon still delivers lube, right Neal?”

“Dick,” Neal muttered back, and she heard an oof as someone was shoved.



She swallowed hard, every breath filled with Connor and Franklin. She closed her eyes and tipped her head into Franklin where he still rested against her shoulder. His silky, dark curls were soft against her skin. She fought the urge to nuzzle against him as her body thrummed hard with just being near these two men. How much more intense would it be when it was all four?

## Chapter Nine

When...?

Madison was seriously considering it as a possibility, wasn't she? She took a deep breath knowing that right now, she'd agree to be with any of them or all of them. Was something wrong with her that she was attracted to four men at once? That she would sleep with all of them? Maybe, it was the lifestyle here in Daly that gave her permission and opened the prospect to possibility. And full truth...these four were the hottest men she'd ever seen. They'd walked into the doctor's office, and everything within her had stood up and taken notice.

Even better, they didn't care that she was pregnant. To them, it wasn't a problem. They'd take her as she was with no reservations. And they didn't want to rush her—no, that probably wasn't true. They wanted to rush her; they just wouldn't.

Deep down, she knew she'd be the one to hurry things along. Was that hypocritical? She told them she wanted to go slow, and now, she was considering being brave and trying to forget her past and all her hang-ups.

Gah! She was so confused.

She turned out of Connor and Franklin's embrace, noting they let her go immediately—huge points in their favor for that. Deep in her thoughts, she paced to the glass slider overlooking the back patio and the field beyond it. Her eyes widened with shock, the sight momentarily erasing all her other contemplations.

“Holy snow!” she exclaimed. When she'd driven here, there had been some flurries. That small squall before dinner hadn't been so small after all. With the outside light on, it looked as if they were inside a snow globe. Huge flakes swirled past the windows, and it appeared several inches had fallen while they'd been eating. With her back to the door, she hadn't noticed a full-blown blizzard.

“Was this in the forecast?” she asked, distressed at the prospect of being stranded.

“Nope,” Neal replied for everyone. “I've got three weather apps on my phone, and none of them predicted this.”

“Wait...” That brought her up short for a second. She shook her head. “You have three weather apps on your phone?”

“He's kind of a weather nerd,” Edison told her. “He used to have two more forecasting apps, but he deleted them to make room for audio books.”

The shy Quist was smart. Neal was quiet and intelligent—though she could tell they were all bright. She liked everything she was learning about these four. While Neal was the scholar, Connor was obviously the leader in the group. And trustworthy, too.

He had to be. They'd all followed him here, knowing he wouldn't steer them wrong, and they'd stuck with him. He seemed confident and determined, as well.

Edison... Without a doubt he was the smart aleck, jokester of the bunch. So far, he seemed quick-witted, with no filter whatsoever. She liked that a lot, his forthrightness. But he seemed kind, even while messing around.

Franklin was the hardest to grasp. He seemed a lot like Neal, but more confident in his skin and less shy. If there was an order of command here—and she supposed there must be an unspoken understanding for the household to work—then he was the second in charge. Even so, the other three men seemed protective of him. Maybe, that was because of his diabetes and its side effects.

As a whole, they attracted her. They each had irrefutable strengths, and she found herself interested in learning their weaknesses, too. Weird. She'd never wanted to know so much about anyone, even Martin. If she wasn't showing caution because of past experience, she might jump in with both feet to explore this thing.

"I should probably head home," she said with reluctance. "I hate to do that cliché eat and run, but this storm looks like it's not going to slow up and will turn bad. Worse than it already is, anyway. Looks pretty crappy even now."

"Then don't go," Connor said. "You can stay."

"Connor, I—"

He held up a hand to interrupt her. "We have eight bedrooms. There's plenty of room for you to stay over. No commitment and no pressure for anything beyond hanging out with us."

"I'll make waffles in the morning," Franklin offered. "Maybe, this will pass by then,

and we can plow out to the main road. We have to clear the path for our guests over at the lodge, anyway. The county truck probably won't be through for the highway, though. That usually takes a while. I'm not sure how your little car will do, even with the few inches we have now. The drifts get pretty bad, real quick."

Madison frowned, feeling as if she didn't have much choice. With being pregnant, she didn't want to take chances. True, her circumstances weren't ideal. Some might have told her to get an abortion, but there was no way she'd do that. To that point, there was no way she'd do anything that might harm her child.

"Connor? What do you think?" she asked, still eyeing the snowfall. "Do you have a feeling about the storm and whether or not, I should drive?"

"Wish I could say yes, but I don't. It's not a psychic thing, and it doesn't apply to everything."

"Okay then." She turned, putting her back to the glass and looking at Franklin. "Waffles sound good."

He did a little fist pump, and Connor grinned, looking relieved. "Want to watch a movie? We have a couple streaming services. You can pick whatever you want?"

"Even a chick flick? You guys will sit through that?" She had a vision of the little boy from Princess Bride groaning about the kissing book.

"Our favorite kind!" Edison quipped.

"Uh-huh," she said in disbelief. "Well, lucky for you, my favorites include natural disaster movies like Day After Tomorrow and San Andreas."

"I downloaded San Andreas, but we haven't had a chance to watch it yet. How about

that, then we'll get you settled?" Franklin said.

She glanced over her shoulder. Still snowing like wild. She nodded. "A movie it is. I hope one of you has a shirt I can borrow to sleep in."

Almost as one, they all announced that yes, they'd get her one.

"I'll get Madison a shirt and make sure the guest room is ready," Connor said. "Franklin, cue up the movie. Edison, popcorn—don't burn it this time! Neal, drinks."

Edison saluted him.

"What about me, Commander?" Madison joked.

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He smirked. His hand slid behind her neck, and he pulled her close. His mouth brushed ever-so-lightly over hers, sending hot waves of shuddering heat coursing through her. It was over too fast. She would have believed the touch was her imagination if not for her goosebumps and the tingling across her lips. The heat in his eyes said it had been entirely real.

He tipped his forehead to hers. “Soldier, you are to go with Franklin and relax on the couch. Maybe bundle up in the afghan. It’s a chilly night.”

“Aye-aye, sir.”

Franklin slung an arm around her as he herded her into the family room. He leaned over to speak in her ear. “Better watch it with that ‘sir’ stuff. He likes to be bossy.”

“Heard that,” Connor called.

“And?” Franklin hollered back, but Connor didn’t respond as he headed down the hallway.

“You guys might not be related, but you sure act like family. You’re a lot like the Szuzmans—River’s family.”

“But not yours?”

“Only child,” she said. And her parents... They definitely weren’t the bantering type.

“I was, too,” Neal said as he came in with an armful of drinks. He handed Franklin a

beer and set one aside for himself, as well. He offered her a water. “We have pop, too,” he said. “Or juice.”

“Water’s great, thanks,” she replied, taking the bottle from him. “I’m sorry you lost your parents. I take it they weren’t bad like the other guys’ families.”

“Nope. I had an awesome mom and dad. Really awesome,” he repeated, his eyes a little sad, though she knew from talking with them over dinner, the accident had been nearly twenty years ago. Some pains only dulled, but never went away. “But,” he added after a moment, “the Quists were awesome, too. I was fortunate to land with them right away. There are so many foster-home horror stories, but my experience was ideal. They’re really great people, and I’m glad to have them as my second parents.”

“Here-here,” Franklin agreed, lifting his bottle. He fiddled with the remote with his other hand.

“And I got brothers out of the deal, too,” Neal added.

“Yeah, lucky bastard,” Edison said, coming in with two large bowls of popcorn. “Who wouldn’t love me as their fucking, awesome relative?”

“Language!” Connor yelled from down the hallway.

“How the hell did he hear that?” Eds muttered. “Sound doesn’t travel that well in this house.”

“Lucky positioning?” Neal offered, flopping on the couch kitty-corner to where Franklin and Madison sat.

“He’s not much for cursing?” she asked as Eds set one of the bowls on her lap. “I’ve

heard him swear.”

“He’s trying to rein us in. When we first got here, before we started hosting guests, we developed quite the, um...”

“Potty mouths?” she supplied.

“Yeah, I guess that,” Eds agreed. “We shouldn’t curse around the guests, no matter how much they might swear. He reminds us, even when we’re off-duty, to keep it G-rated.”

“And Edison’s the worst,” Connor said as he came into the room. “But we love him all the same.”

“Aw... Love you too, big brother,” Edison gushed, sarcastically. Connor threw him the finger.

“Good thing you do,” she laughed as Connor sank down beside her so she was bookended by him and Franklin. His arm slung along the couch behind her. “It would be pretty harsh to cut off Edison for foul language.”

“Oh, he gives us more reasons than that,” he replied. The man in question choked out a laugh from where he’d settled near Neal. He threw a few pieces of popcorn at Connor.

“Jerk!” Edison snorted.

“Volunteering to vacuum?” Connor asked, nodding at the fallen pieces.

“Totally worth it,” the younger man replied.



“Remember that in the morning.”

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Connor turned his attention to the TV—or pretended to anyway. She wasn't so sure it really held his interest as his fingers trailed along her shoulder. A pleasant shiver ran through her. At the same time, Franklin started the movie, and after he'd adjusted the volume, he set aside the remote and twined his fingers through hers. His hand felt large and warm and a little rough against hers. As she watched the opening sequence of the film, waiting for The Rock to come onscreen, she wondered how Franklin's palm would feel elsewhere on her body.

Too soon, Madison, she reminded herself. Slow it on down. You're the one who wants to go slow. Truly, she couldn't believe how comfortable she was alone in the same room with four men, not a soul nearby.

She didn't want slow anymore.

They just felt...right. Safe. That was it. She felt safe.

With a deep, cleansing breath, she relaxed back into the couch. Her head leaned against Connor's large, muscular shoulder while the slow, soothing brush of Franklin's thumb over the top of her hand lulled her. Connor kissed the top of her head before resting his cheek against her crown.

So cozy. She understood why this multiple lover thing was so popular here. Several men doting on you, wanting to protect and spoil you, to give you more pleasure than you could handle? What wasn't to love? If it wasn't for her innate need for caution, she'd jump right into it with no reservations.

But as good as things felt right this moment, she did have niggling reservations. Very

small ones. Getting smaller by the second.

The biggest: how could something like this last?

Her mother's voice sounded in her head. It's all well and good right now, young lady, but how will it look?

Madison didn't give a fuck how it looked to anyone. What she did was her business alone. Her right hand settled on her belly. Okay, maybe not just her business. She had the wellbeing of two to worry about. With the baby, it wasn't just all about her.

"Are you okay?" Connor murmured, his head lifting slightly away. When she looked at him, he nodded once at her fingers on her stomach.

"Yeah," she said quietly. "Just thinking."

"About Daly and the decisions you'll make? What it would mean if you were with us?"

How did he know? That psychic thing?

"You seem deep in thought instead of watching the movie."

She nodded. "It's a lot, you know? I've never been with two, let alone four. I...um..."

"Let's go in the other room and talk while they watch the movie," he suggested against her ear.

Again, she nodded. He set the bowl of popcorn on the table then took her free hand, pulling her to standing. Franklin kissed the back of her fingers before he let go. When

she looked back, he gave her a smile and a nod as if he knew what she and Connor were about to do.

To her surprise, Connor led her down the hallway toward the bedrooms. She paused, tensing, and her arm stretched forward before he realized she'd stopped. He came back to her, wrapping his arms around her and tipping his forehead to hers like he had in the kitchen. His dark brown eyes stared into her gaze.

“Just talk,” he promised. “I don’t know what’s happened in your past, but I would never, ever force you into something. None of us would. It would never be acceptable to any of us, let alone anyone in the Daly community. Trust me when I say: if they strung us up, it would be the best scenario in the scheme of things that would happen. The cowboys here don’t put up with any kind of abuse.”

With that assurance, she relaxed a little and started down the hallway with him. He led her through the first doorway, the light already on in the room. Done in beige and light blue, it looked cozy enough with a quilt and fluffy pillows covering the bed. A chair sat near a large window, a table next to it. A frame sat on the surface with a message inside. When she squinted at it, she saw it was the Wi-Fi password in fancy script. Across from the bed was a dresser, the top empty save for a folded, dark-blue T-shirt.

“My room is the next door down on this side,” he said. “Franklin’s is across the hallway from it.”

Connor sat on the edge of the bed and gently pulled her to sit beside him. He laced his fingers through hers then played with the tips as if thinking. Silence surrounded them, the sounds from the action movie barely filtering down the passage to them.

“So...if you were with us, we’d want to take turns. Maybe have you with each of us on different nights. It sounds weird when I say it aloud, I suppose.”

“A little but everything is weird to me right now. So no multiples, huh? No ménage sex?” She bumped his shoulder, feeling comfortable enough to tease, especially since Riv had led her to believe that was the way around here.

“We never have. Not that the idea is unfamiliar. We live here, after all. And our parents live a trinogamous relationship. They shared a room and a bed, so I can only assume they were together.”

Seemed like a fair deduction. “What you’re suggesting...that’s more like I’d have a harem of men rather than being in a true ménage relationship—what?” she asked when he looked surprised. “I read. I’ve seen Big Love, but it would be the reverse of that without the polygamy.”

“What’s...Big Love?”

“An old HBO TV show. I used to watch it in college. The guy had three wives. He was with them on different days of the week.”

“You’d have four...men, that is. Unless you ask for something different.”

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“Different how?” She couldn’t believe how comfortable she was discussing this with him. It was strange but freeing. The more they spoke, the easier the idea became.

“Being with more than one of us at a time.”

“If I asked for that, who would you pick?” God! Why was she asking this? It sounded as if she’d already made a decision. Had she? “Wait. Back up a sec. You said if I ask for it. Is that even something you’d be interested in? I wouldn’t want to push something on any of you that you’d be uncomfortable with.”

He paused for a long moment. “Wouldn’t bother me,” he finally said. “It might bother me more to have you away from me for long periods of time because you were rotating through the other three, maybe liking them more.”

His open vulnerability surprised and touched her, especially coming from the big, tough leader of the group. She cupped his cheek. “Connor! No.”

“It could happen.”

“No. It won’t.”

His lips parted then shut as he held in whatever he was thinking. He shook his head. “The guys and I, we’ve always shared everything. For almost twenty years now. The idea of sharing you—with us all together, I mean—I like it. All of us giving you pleasure, watching each other fucking you. Seeing it would probably be headier than any porn I’ve ever seen, because it would be personal. My woman with another man.”

The idea titillated her more than she wanted to admit. All of them naked together, touching...tasting...loving...

“It wouldn’t bother you being naked with them?”

“All the questions,” he laughed.

She shrugged, making a face. “It’s how I am. Always wanting to know as much as I can before jumping in.”

“Smart.”

“I guess.” She shrugged again.

“I grew up with them. I’ve seen them naked plenty of times.”

She had more questions about that but would save them for later. “Okay, so if you had to choose one of them to be with—”

“First of all, it would be your decision, not mine. Second...Franklin. I’m closest to him, and he’s staying here at the ranch. The other two are leaving in a little less than two months. They don’t have an investment here, so I’m not sure if they’ll ever be back permanently, though they’d always be welcome. They’re family, but they have other interests. So, to my way of seeing, I’d definitely pick Franklin. Why are you asking me rather than anyone else?”

Why was she?

She started to lift a shoulder in a half-shrug but stopped herself, because she knew why and wasn’t going to blow it off. Admitting the truth took bravery she wasn’t sure she had though.

Madison glanced toward the doorway, not wanting to be overheard or to have anything misconstrued, then she looked back at the man beside her. “I’m attracted to you all, and I’m not sure how I feel about that. That’s the truth. But...it’s also the truth that you’re clearly the leader here, and that pulls me more than a little bit. I want you all equally; don’t get me wrong. I just know you’ll be primary in the mix.”

“So I’d get to be second fiddle?”

At the voice, her gaze shot back to the door. Franklin. Fuck! That’s what she’d been afraid of. “No!” she protested. “Nothing like that. I promise.”

Connor sighed. He got to his feet and went to his friend, placing his hands on the man’s shoulders. “Man, I was just telling her we share equally, but if we did the relationship like Mom, Dad-Man and Dad-Des, I’d choose to be partnered with you. Geez, who else is so close to me that he practically knows what’s in my mind?”

“Only me,” Franklin said quietly.

“Only you,” Connor confirmed.

“I’m just trying to figure everything out,” Madison defended. “Not leave anyone to the side. You’re all equals, and this is all brand new to me.”

“I know,” Franklin said, looking chagrined. “And I shouldn’t let old insecurities color my thinking. Sorry.”

“Nothing to apologize for. I can guess how it sounded. I also understand somewhat. I’ve never been good enough for my parents. My whole life, they’ve always found something to criticize me for, even when I thought I was doing well. It’s a real self-esteem killer. They were pissed when I went into nursing then basically disowned me because I’m pregnant and not married. How dare I, right?”



Connor hugged her, and Franklin came close behind her, holding her, too.

“I’m sorry, darlin’,” Connor soothed.

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“It’s okay. I just remind myself I have the opportunity to surround myself with the family I choose...like the Szuzmans. They’re as close to me as sisters would be.”

“I’m glad you have someone close,” Franklin told her. His hands smoothed along her arms, then his fingers linked through hers, holding them at her sides while he leaned in and kissed her neck.

“This okay?” he asked.

She tilted her head to the side to give him room. “Mm-hmm,” she hummed.

Connor cupped her nape and angled his mouth to hers. He didn’t ask if it was okay. He just took, but she parted her lips, moaning to let him know permission was granted.

“Madison,” he whispered against her lips. “Tell me what you want. I don’t want to go too far. Just tell us what you want.”

She started to lift her hands to curl them into his shirt, but found herself still restrained by Franklin. It didn’t bother her as she would have thought it might. Instead moisture flooded her core as her need ramped up. She was safe with them. If she said no, they’d stop right now. But God, she didn’t want them to stop.

“Everything,” she gasped. “I want everything. I know it’s new to you, but I want...” She dragged in a breath. “All of you. Everything.”

If Connor got any harder, his dick would bust through his pants. When Madison started questioning him about being in a ménage, he'd had to be truthful that he'd never done that. Sure, he knew about it. Of course, he did. What he hadn't said was that he wanted one. It was exactly the relationship he desired but had been afraid to voice to his "brothers" who seemed content to go one-on-one with women. Connor was less vanilla. He wanted to share, in the same bed, together, he and his partner making their woman—one woman—scream with delight.

Franklin was his best friend. Connor probably should have discussed it with him.

Now, with Madison between them, it wasn't the time for talk. It was time for action. He continued kissing her, still cradling the nape of her neck. He groaned as Madison responded just as hungrily. Thank God she'd decided not to make them wait for ages to get together.

"Are you sure?" he still asked.

"I want tonight," she replied. "Let's go from there?"

"We can do that," Franklin said, from behind her. He met Connor's eyes. "Can't we, Connor?"

Connor wanted to say, hell, no, but restrained himself. "Yeah," he replied, glad the tone hadn't come out grudgingly. If she only wanted tonight, if she tried to walk away after this, he would do everything in his power to get her onboard with a hell of a lot longer—a hell of a lot longer than a one-night stand, that was.

Madison pinned him with a stare, obviously more attuned to him than he thought. Franklin sighed, cuing him in to the fact he'd been far more transparent than he'd thought.

“Don’t think like that,” she told him. “I’m not suggesting a one off. I just...need to make decisions carefully. And maybe, it’s not my best decision to leap into this right now, but...” She let out a little moan as she rubbed against him, no doubt taking in the rigid length of his cock pressed to her belly. “I know without a doubt that I want this now. I could think about it for months and still come to the same conclusion.”

“Good,” Connor replied, his voice a dark rumble of need. “But just so you know...if you need more convincing, I’m the man to do it. I’ll give you tonight, but I’m not going to let you walk away easily. I’ll work so hard to make it difficult for you because you’ll want us so much—that’s not a threat,” he went on as he palmed her breast, feeling her hard nipple against his fingers. He slipped his hand to the center of her chest. “You’ll know here, just as clearly as I do, that we belong together.”

She swallowed hard, looking up at him, understanding and desire in her gaze. She might not want to admit that this was right, that it should be a done deal, that anything could happen this quickly, but she knew it. He saw the knowledge in her eyes. It was there inside her, just as it was inside him—they belonged together and it didn’t matter how quickly things had happened. He and the guys just had to cement that for her, before something happened to knock them off-course.

“Okay,” she breathed. “I...I need to tell you the rest of what happened. When I got pregnant, I mean. I... In case I freak out or something.”

A dark feeling akin to rage clawed at him. He’d felt it earlier when she’d been telling them about the situation and pushed it away...somewhat, anyway. It had edged in again when she’d been fearful heading to the room. And he knew. He had to tread carefully, or it could create a deal breaker—for her, not for them. If he and his foster brothers had to back off and wait, they would, because to his marrow, he knew. He knew, and he wanted to kill someone over it.

“He forced you?” he asked, leading her toward the bed. He sat on the edge then

pulled her into his lap. She sat stiffly, and he slowly rubbed his palm up and down her back. Franklin sat beside them and took one of her hand in his.

“Yes,” she whispered. “That’s a pretty sanitized term for what he did, even though I didn’t want to admit it at the time.” Her head bowed, and he wanted to punch something—no, he wanted to punch someone. He wasn’t a violent man, per se, but some assholes deserved an unrelenting beating...or worse. “He came to my apartment, and I know I shouldn’t have let him in, but I did. He said he wanted to talk. He’d never apologized, so I thought he might want to do that finally. He started coming on to me, and I told him no. He didn’t listen...and he’s so much stronger than me. I...I...”

“Shh...” Connor said, gathering her close. “You don’t have to tell us.”

“I... For a long time, I thought it was my fault. I shouldn’t have let him in, you know. We knew each other. We’d been together many times, so it wasn’t...” She swallowed hard again, shaking so violently he was afraid she might fall off his lap. He wanted to hold her tighter, but didn’t want to frighten her. “Rape,” she finally whispered. “But it was. I was so confused... I didn’t report it. I didn’t think anyone would believe me. And we worked together, we had so much history, we have the same circle of peers...and he’s technically my superior—doctor to my nurse.”

“It’s okay, Mads,” Franklin murmured.

“But it’s not. I feel like I failed myself.”

“No,” Connor protested. “None of it is your fault. None of it.”

“And now, I’m afraid of him messing up the rest of my life. In here,” she tapped her temple, “not by doing something else. But with memories taking away who I am.”

“And that makes you afraid to be with us?” Franklin asked.

“I’m not afraid of you. And it makes me wonder if something is wrong with me. I mean...shouldn’t I be? Shouldn’t I have more self-preservation or something?”

“Everyone reacts to trauma differently,” Connor said.

“I know,” she sighed. “I’m a nurse. I’ve seen the gamut of people’s reaction to life-changing situations.”

“How you react, how you deal with things, that’s up to you,” Franklin said. “Don’t let anyone try to tell you how you should be.” He gave a self-deprecating laugh. “Even me, ‘cause I just did.”

She offered a wane smile.

“Just so you know, for your peace of mind,” Neal said from the doorway, he and Edison having apparently overheard the conversation, “to us, no means no. I mean it. You say it, and I don’t care if I just sank inside you to find paradise—and I’m sure it would be. You say it, and we’ll stop.”

“Guaranteed,” Edison put in. He came to kneel beside Connor’s legs and took her free hand. “I promise.”

“I promise, too,” Franklin vowed, lifting her fingers to his lips.

She looked to Connor, and he gave her a smile that he was sure appeared a little

despondent. He was sad that they had to have this conversation, but glad to have it out in the open. “Without question, darlin’,” he put in. “When it comes to sex, your word is our guide. Though I think your stop word shouldn’t be no or stop but something else unmistakable.”

“Like a safe word?” she asked, brows raised and looking so damned cute he wanted to kiss her again.

“Yeah. Kinda like,” he agreed. “Not like in the Fifty Shades of whatever the hell movie—”

Franklin gave him a shove. “You saw it.”

“Yeah, ‘cause Edison downloaded it for movie night thinking it would be funny,” Connor defended. He looked back to her, gaze sincere. “Not like that,” he repeated. “Just something that we’ll know definitely means stop right this second, and not stop, stop it feels so good and I’ll throttle you if you actually stop. None of us is into the whole whips and chains and whatever freaky stuff scene.”

“Speak for yourself,” Edison muttered. Connor shoved him with his foot, knowing the younger man wasn’t serious.

“I think you four will be good for me,” Madison sighed. She leaned her head on Connor’s shoulder, and a blanket of warm tenderness fell over him. He wanted to do everything for this woman, protect her, cherish her, provide for her, give her everything she needed.

“We can be,” he offered. “Give us a chance?”

She nodded. “I will. I want you—all of you. And I refuse to let him mess up my life and steal my joy. I can’t let him win.”

“He won’t,” Franklin vowed. The four of them knew about overcoming. Their pasts had all sucked epically, but they didn’t let that rule them. Connor understood how important it was, and Edison would understand more than any of them what Madison needed to move away from her past. Though he rarely spoke of it, his parents had been more than neglectful. Still, even if he knew why she needed to forge forward, Connor feared she might be rebounding, maybe using them as a leapfrog to her future by having a successful experience with them to prove she could then go on to someone else. Having the “knowing” or not, the fear still taunted him.

Madison stood and stepped a few feet away, leaving them all watching her. “No. He won’t. I’ll never let him have power over me again.” Her hands went to the bottom of her tunic, and without pausing, she whipped it up over her head. She stood there in only a red lacy bra from the waist up. She toed off her shoes and socks, then her fingers went to her waistband before anyone could move.

Connor leapt up. His hands covered hers. “Let me.”

“No,” she said, stepping a little farther back, and he froze. “I need to do this. And you need to get undressed. All of you do. We’re doing this. Now.”

Okay, his dick could get harder than before. It had deflated while she’d told her story, and now, it was back to full attention. He needed her bad.

“Safe word?” he rasped before anyone forgot.

She looked thoughtful, chewing on her bottom lip. “Um...Martin? Is that inappropriate?” she added quickly.

“Nope,” Edison told her. “If he’s that asshole, then it’s entirely fine. I should think it would be like a bucket of cold water on things.”



“You won’t need it,” Neal said. He’d already stripped off his shirt. He stepped into Connor’s line of vision, cupping Madison’s face and leaning in to kiss her. She must have been okay with it, because she wrapped her arms around his neck. Wanting to feel the same, her bare skin against him, Connor hurried out of his clothes but left on his boxer-briefs for now. To his right and left, Edison and Franklin did the same.

“You’re falling behind, Neal,” Edison teased since the man in question still had on his trousers.

Neal lifted his head. His thumbs traced along Madison’s jaw as he stared into her eyes. “I don’t think I’m behind at all.”

She smiled. “Get undressed.”

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“How do you want us?” Connor asked. “One by one?”

“Together,” she interrupted before he could offer the option. “Show me this Daly Way.”

“We’ll do our best. Like I said, we’ve never—”

“We have,” Edison cut in. “Neal and I have.”

“You have?” Franklin asked with a raised brow.

“Sure. Geez, man, you were raised in Cranston, too. You two have never been with the same girl together?”

“No,” Connor snapped, annoyed with the younger men for some reason. “And now isn’t the time.”

Eds held up his hands. “Just sayin’...”

“Just saying, get to it,” Madison teased. She’d moved around them to the bed and shucked off her jeans. Her firm, round ass taunted Connor, when she crawled to the middle of the bed. When she turned over, resting back on her elbows, his mouth was already watering.

“Fuck me,” he murmured, scanning his gaze over the expanse of lush creamy skin laid out before them. Her legs were slightly parted, her pussy covered with red lace matching that skimpy bra. Her belly had just the slightest bit of curve to it and if he

didn't know she was pregnant, he never would have guessed.

"That's really what I'd like you to do to me," Madison answered.

"You're perfection," Franklin told her. He climbed beside her on the bed and skimmed his hand along her torso. It didn't pass Connor's notice that his friend's touch lingered just a little over that tiny mound.

"Does it bother you?" she asked him.

"Not a bit. It's a gift," he murmured.

"I—" She cut off on a moan because Edison had caught one of her legs and started kissing the inside of her ankle. Neal was on the other side, pushing his palm up her leg and opening her as he licked and bit along her soft skin. Not to be left out, Franklin bent over her shoulder. His hand went to her breast, slipping beneath the cup from the bottom. Madison arched into his fingers as he played with her nipple, and for a moment, Connor felt completely left out. And frankly, a little jealous.

Dive in. You just need to dive in.

Madison's heavy-lidded gaze met him. Her lips parted, but she didn't utter a word as she gasped from what was happening. Her connection to Connor never severed. She held out her hand.

"Come here," she finally whispered. "I need you here."

## Chapter Eleven

When Connor settled to Madison's left, Franklin to her right, Neal and Franklin stroking and kissing her legs, she felt complete without an ounce of trepidation.

“Kiss me,” she told him. In this, Franklin held her steady, and Connor anchored her. Between them, she knew without doubt that she was safe. Neal and Edison only strengthened that resolve.

Someone was removing her bra and she figured it was Franklin, but it was two mouths that landed on her breasts. She almost came up off the mattress at the dual suction and the hands kneading the mounds along with it. Another hooked his fingers in her panties and dragged them down her thighs.

“Bare,” the man murmured, and she knew then that it was Edison between her legs and Neal at her other breast. She opened her eyes, looking up at Connor. He held her hand, watching her. He was almost like a protector, guarding her and making sure nothing occurred outside of what she wanted.

“Can I?” Edison asked, skimming his hand up her thighs. Reaction skated through her, an entirely pleasant rush of bliss tingling over her nerve endings. She felt her pussy growing wetter. He wanted to put his mouth on her. God, she wanted that, too!

Connor raised a brow at her, underlining the question.

“Yes,” she gasped. “Please.”

Edison pushed her legs farther apart to accommodate his shoulders, and she felt the slightest amount of worry for just a moment before she relaxed. It was all okay.

“Everything good?” Connor asked, stroking his thumb lightly along her jaw.

She nodded. “Yes.” The word hissed from her as Edison parted her and dragged his tongue along her slit from bottom to top. He lingered on her clit, drawing hard on the nub. That, along with the equal draw from the lips tugging on her nipples, strung together, yanking at her core. “Oh God!” she cried. She reached up with one hand and

buried her fingers in Connor's hair, using him as an anchor when the sensations tore at her, and she knew she'd fly apart.

"Let go, love," he murmured. "Let go. I'll catch you."

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That was all it took, and she careened over the edge, crying out in the first orgasm she'd had in months.

“So fucking beautiful,” Franklin said. When she opened her eyes, she saw he was watching her, too.

“Thank you,” she whispered, not for the compliment but for what he'd done.

He leaned back to her breast and lightly captured the nipple between his teeth. She bucked at the sensation, another wave of pleasure rolling over her. If they kept up, she'd orgasm again. She wasn't sure how many she could take, but she wanted everything from them—including their releases, too.

“Fuck, whatever you're doing, keep it up. You're getting her super aroused. Keep giving me that honey, honey,” Edison said before licking her again. “So fucking good. I could eat you all night.”

“Feels so good,” she cried, canting into him, wanting even more. “But I want to be fucked, too. I want all of you. In me.”

Edison pushed a finger into her pussy, and she groaned at the welcome intrusion. “It can be arranged,” he said, sliding his fingertip over her g-spot and making her jerk in response. “Fuck, honey, you're so tight around my finger. I can't imagine how it'll feel choking my cock.”

Neal left them, going to their clothes. He pulled out a fistful of condoms then returned to the bed. Um, handy? Edison took one, put it on then knelt between her

legs. Neal and Franklin each knelt beside her and rolled on protection. They were all going to fuck her. All of them. She'd never felt so wanton in her life. So out of control yet fully in control. So...sexual and free. In this moment, she had no problem being the center of their love circle.

She looked up at Connor who also knelt next to her. He hadn't taken off his underwear or put on a rubber. His cock tented the fabric, and she looked askance at him until he smiled. It was then she realized he was waiting, still in protector mode. So...honorable. So unacceptable. She wanted him part of this, too.

"After," he whispered.

She leaned up and grasped his waistband just above his erection and yanked down, exposing him, just as Edison pushed inside her.

"Yes," she gasped. "Oh, God!"

He felt so good, long and thick parting her walls as he thrust deep. She took only a moment to savor it before she sank her mouth over Connor's dick. She hummed as she took him then cried out with Edison's drives. She loved this, a cock on both sides, and she knew if she took off her reins, she might run with this and get lost in this sensual side of life.

Edison's fingers dug into her hips as he rightly took her moans as permission to fuck her hard and long. Other hands grasped her legs opening her up. A cock brushed her side, leaving a trail of pre-cum. The men seemed to be everywhere around her, and she let herself go, emptying her mind of everything but sensation.

With her free hand, she jacked Connor in time with her licks and the suction of her mouth. His fingers buried in her hair as she took him deep.

“Fuck, Madison,” he grunted. “Fuck, fuck, fuck.”

She pulled back and smiled against his glans, letting the damp head move against her lips as she spoke. “Language, baby,” she teased.

“Fuck that,” he growled. “Take me again with that sweet little mouth, and after I come, we can discuss my language.”

She did, repaying him for his dirty talk. She appreciated that her men were being careful but not treating her as if she were broken. Every moment with them, she felt stronger. Empowered.

Her men...

They were tonight, weren't they?

Yes, yes, they were. With that thought, she let herself sink deep into the pleasure of a cock fucking her pussy, another fucking her mouth, hands everywhere... It was as if she'd fallen into some sex nirvana.

She pulled Connor to lean over her and with one hand, pulled him toward her, silently urging him to actually fuck her mouth. Pressing her feet into the mattress, she met Edison's thrust and gloried in the sound of both men's groans as she brought them pleasure to match her own. Reaching out blindly with her one free hand, she found a third cock. Franklin... His length felt warm and perfect in her palm.

Lips closed around one of her nipples again, and she cried out around Connor. Above her, his breathing grew ragged, stuttering as he got close to losing control. Wanting to push him over the edge, she sucked harder. Her hand skimmed around his waist, and she reached between his legs to roll his balls in her fingers.



All the while, tension coiled inside her. Her release was drawing near, and she wanted to push one or both of the men inside her over the edge before that happened. She was close, so, so close. Everything felt tight, tingling, so warm and ready to explode. A mouth on her clit startled her, shoving her right over the edge of the precipice. She was falling, screaming and just barely realizing Connor had pulled free from her mouth.

Edison yelled, jerking above her, filling her with warmth. Through pleasure-hazed eyes, she saw Neal kissing him and realized he must have been the one sucking her clit. Before she processed it, Connor's cock was back at her lips.

"I'm about to come," he warned. "You want it all down that beautiful throat?"

In reply, she sucked him deep. Vaguely, she realized the other men had shifted places. A new, hard cock shoved into her. She arched, crying out around Connor's pistoning length as the new man fucked into her over-sensitized passage, scoring over passion swollen folds. She moaned, her vision blurring as she took everything they had to give.

"Now," Connor grunted. "Now..."

She swallowed convulsively, trying to take every bit of the salty spend he gave. She sighed when he pulled free and licked her lips, looking up at him. He kissed her then moved behind her, propping her against him as Franklin fucked her. All the while, Connor, kissed her neck, her shoulders the side of her head—anywhere he could reach it seemed. Now that he'd come, Edison knelt beside the bed. Neal sat on the edge with Edison between his legs. Twisting, he resumed his attention to her breasts, moaning between his licks, sucks and bites. She buried her fingers in his hair and turned her head to meet Connor's kiss.

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She groaned into his mouth almost overwhelmed with what was happening. The groan turned to a scream as her orgasm took her by surprise, clamping down on Franklin.

“Yeah, babe,” he grunted. “Oh... Fuck...”

Beside her, Neal practically came off the bed as he went off. From the corner of her eyes, she saw Edison’s hands were clamped on his lover’s hips while he took all Neal’s essence. Moments afterward, they were all flopped together on the bed—Neal next to her, his arm across her belly. Franklin was draped over her thigh. He curled into her, dropping kisses along her torso. Edison wedged up next to her, his legs partially over Neal. Eds also snuggled into her, while Connor remained where he was, holding her as if he was her foundation and would never let her be rocked.

His chin rested on her shoulder. “What the fuck was that?”

Startled, she turned her head and saw his stare was on Eds and Neal.

“What?” Edison asked. “We’ve been together since we were sixteen. How did you not know that?”

“How indeed?” Connor murmured.

“Aren’t you and Franklin?” Neal asked. “We always thought you were.”

“No,” Franklin answered.

“Hmm,” was the only reply from the younger men. Edison leaned up and crawled so his arms were on either side of Madison, and he could look down at her.

“Does it bother you?” he asked. “Me and Neal?”

“Not at all.”

“Good.” He dipped his head forward and brushed his lips over hers. “Thank you. I’m looking forward to many more nights like this one.”

She rolled her bottom lip between her teeth, holding back a smile. He kissed her nose and moved away. Neal immediately replaced him, repeating the sentiment and brushing his lips over hers, too.

“See you in the morning,” he whispered. “Sleep well.”

After he and Edison had gathered their clothes and gone, Connor shifted to lie beside her. “I can’t believe we didn’t know,” he muttered.

“Does it matter?” she asked.

“Yes.”

That surprised her. She wouldn’t have thought that of him.

Franklin laughed. “He doesn’t like not knowing things. Now, he’s going to obsess about what other stuff he might have missed.”

Connor growled in irritation, and Madison laughed.

“We should let you get to sleep,” he told her.

“You’re going?” she asked in surprise.

“Do you want us to stay?”

“Yes. I mean, I know sharing isn’t your thing—”

“I want it to be,” he interrupted. “If Franklin agrees.”

The man in question blew out a breath. “I’ve been waiting for you to admit you wanted it,” he scoffed.

“Seriously? What the hell is going on tonight? First, Neal and Eds; now this? Anything else? Are you going to tell me you’re secretly in to me?”

“Nope. I don’t mind being naked with you so we can make Madison scream, but I’m totally not into penis.”

“That’s a relief.”

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“Should I leave and let you guys hug it out?” she teased.

“Hush, you,” Connor laughed. He leaned over her and kissed her. What started out as a peck, quickly deepened, lingering.

“If we’re going there again,” Franklin started, “maybe we should move from the guest room with the queen bed to one of our rooms with a king.”

“Perfect idea,” Connor agreed. He was on his feet a moment later with Madison in his arms bridal style.

### Chapter Twelve

Madison leaned her head against Connor’s chest as he carried her into his bedroom. It was double the size of the guest room she’d been in and surprisingly sparse considering it was always in use. Done in dark blue and light wood, with large-scale furniture, it was wholly masculine. She didn’t have a chance to really look at the space before he placed her on the bed and headed into the en-suite bathroom.

Franklin had pulled down the blankets before Connor placed her on the mattress. Now, he climbed in beside her, his body heat warming her as he cuddled close to her side. In contrast, he drew his fingers lightly across her skin, lifting goosebumps and making her shiver. She watched his face as he drew small circles over her slightly convex belly, a belly she knew would soon pop with a much more pronounced baby bump. His serious expression seemed thoughtful and almost pained.

“Does it bother you?” she asked.

“No,” he said quickly, sounding surprised. “Not at all.”

“You seem...deep in thought.”

“I guess.” He shrugged. “I, um...I can’t have kids.”

“Oh,” she breathed. “Franklin.”

“It’s okay. I’ve known for a long time. But...” He shrugged again, his fingers tracing along her skin some more. “I guess it makes this extra special.” He made a face. “That probably sounds weird.”

She shook her head. “No. It doesn’t.”

“If you decide to be with us, then...well...we’ll be raising this child, too,” he said. His tone seemed thoughtful, his face almost wistful.

She supposed the Quists would be raising this baby, too, if she were with them, and truthfully, she kind of liked the idea of it. These strong, kind cowboys, who seemed to have a lot of integrity and work ethic. She could think of a million worse people to have in her baby’s life and very few better.

“How do you feel about that?” she asked.

“I like the idea.”

She leaned into him, and his lips brushed hers, so gentle and tender. His fingers stroked over her cheeks with the utmost care as their mouths moved, exploring, tasting, learning one another.

She felt Connor sit next to her, against her back as she leaned into Franklin. Warmth

touched her thighs, and she realized he'd brought a soft, wet cloth to clean her well-used pussy.

"Oh my God," she gasped, closing her eyes in embarrassment and leaning her forehead to Franklin's. "That's..."

"Shh..." Franklin crooned, his words a whisper. "Let us take care of you. You'll be our everything, Mads. We'll treat you like the most precious treasure. Nothing will be too intimate. We'll know and worship every part of you."

No one had ever made her feel so important to them. In her earliest days dating her ex, the man she'd once been engaged to, desire had run high, but not to this level of devotion and care. He'd never given much thought for what was inside her soul; he'd been more concerned about her body and how it meshed with his.

The cloth hit the floor beside them with a muted thud, then Connor was kissing her shoulder and down her spine. "Are you up for more?" he asked as he neared the small of her back.

"Yes," she breathed, the sound coming out like a long sigh as Franklin followed a similar path down her front side. He detoured to her breast, sucking the taut, throbbing tip between his lips while Connor lifted one of her legs over his shoulder. "Oh God!" she cried, when his mouth settled over her pussy. He licked along her folds up to her clit then drew hard on the little bud, while Franklin drew on her nipple. She bucked when his teeth sank lightly into the areola. His tongue lashed over the tormented flesh before he made his way to the other breast. Back and forth he went while Connor devoured her from below.

One of Connor's hands held her in place, keeping her prisoner to their ministrations. The immobility only heightened her arousal. Her head kicked back, her eyes squeezed shut as thready cries poured from her. Every cell within her seemed afire

with the pleasure singing through her. Her limbs shook, tension coiling inside her as she grew closer and closer to her release. Then Connor pushed two fingers inside her, at the same time rubbing that secret spot inside her that nearly shoved her over the edge.

“Oh, that’s right, darlin’,” Connor growled. “Come for me. Coat my hand with your sweet nectar. Fuck, you taste so good. Give me more.”

She couldn’t help but do exactly what he said. Her body was under their control. And to think she’d come here just for dinner...and now, she was coming in a whole different way.

“It’s Connor’s turn,” Franklin murmured.

“I don’t need to—” the man started, but she interrupted him.



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“I want you. Please.”

“Then you have me,” he said. She moaned as he moved up to spoon behind her, his hard body so warm and firm against her back, his chest hair slightly abrading her skin in the most pleasant, sensual way. He lifted her leg over his hip, and his cock probed her slit, sliding back and forth. She rocked against him, her little cries filling the quiet room. She gasped when Franklin took over massaging her clit. At the same time, his other hand continued working her breast, his mouth still in on the action.

She’d never imagined anything so sensual as being the center of two men’s attention. Yes, there had been four less than an hour ago, but this... It seemed different, like these two would cherish her forever. That it was more than sex.

With a small shake of her head, she pushed aside the fanciful thoughts and focused on this moment. Just on the sex. That was all she could count on. Their bodies coming together and this night—or possibly weekend, depending on how snowed in they were.

Arching, she reached down and guided Connor into her. They groaned in unison as his thick length parted her and shoved deep.

“Oh, God, so full,” she cried.

“Okay?”

“Yes, yes, don’t stop. Fuck me hard.”

He nipped her shoulder, causing her to shudder. “Naughty mouthed girl.” He started a driving, insistent rhythm inside her. “Have you fantasized about getting fucked like this?”

She shook her head. “I thought about it. But...nothing like this. This... It’s more.”

“You’re going to love your bad girl side.” His fingers skated along her hip, lifting goosebumps on her already aroused flesh.

“I already do.”

“Can’t wait to explore everything with you,” Franklin said against her neck while he skated his mouth up to hers. His fingers buried in her hair, pulling in the most sensual way before he kissed her hard, his tongue fucking her mouth as insistently as Connor’s cock took her pussy. His fingers pulled her head back, and he bit and licked his way down her throat to her chest. Franklin’s hands, Connor’s hands...they seemed to touch her everywhere. Their legs tangled, and her skin was afire with sensation.

If she weren’t careful she could get completely caught up in this, start thinking of forever when that wasn’t hers to have. Damn her head...

As if he sensed her worries forcing their way in, Franklin pinched her nipple, pulling, and dragged her back to the moment.

“Franklin!” she cried. Her back arched into him, her shoulders colliding with Connor’s hard chest. He grasped her chin, turning her into his kiss. She moaned into his mouth, letting everything overwhelm her in the best ways. Her thighs trembled as tension coiled in her center. Close, she was so close.

“I’m going to come,” she gasped.

“Yes, baby, come all over my cock,” Connor growled. “Squeeze me and take everything from me.”

Franklin redoubled his flicks over her clit then pinched, and she flew over the edge with a scream that Neal and Edison probably heard in the other wing of the house. Connor grunted behind her, his surges turning to shallow, jerking jabs as his release spilled into her.

Madison sighed, absolutely sated and replete. Her eyes drifted shut as exhaustion pulled her toward sleep. She vaguely felt the men moving around her, tending her and covering her up, but she couldn't rouse herself enough to pay attention or help. She grumbled happily, snuggling into the warm bodies as they climbed in on either side of her. And that was the last she remembered as sleep pulled her fully under its spell to dreams of long nights spent in these arms.

## Chapter Thirteen

Madison woke alone in the huge bed, with pillows and blankets tucked around her. Obviously, the guys hadn't wanted to wake her when they'd gotten up to tend their early morning ranch duties. She knew days started early for ranchers, so she wasn't surprised. It probably wasn't any different for those running a guest place like this one—plus guests. They'd need to take care of those people, too, especially if the visitors were freaked out or inconvenienced by being snowed in. She couldn't imagine the unpredicted storm had fit into their vacation plans.

After a long lazy stretch, she climbed from the soft, warm nest she'd been in and headed toward the bathroom. She needed to find some clothes then some coffee—even if it had to be decaf during her pregnancy. Hell, she could pretend it was the full-octane stuff for nine or so months. She just hoped the guys had the non-caffeine variety to fuel her fantasy. Her stomach growled, reminding her she needed food, too. Or the baby did. She never used to be this hungry in the mornings. Now,

she woke ravenous every day.

Connor had left her a T-shirt in the other room, so she didn't suppose he'd mind if she snaked one from in here. Once she'd finished in the bathroom, washed up then brushed her teeth with some of his paste and her finger, she headed to the dresser across from the huge bed. Taking the time to look around now, she took in more than its sparseness, which she'd briefly noticed yesterday. All the furniture was large scale, befitting the occupant of this room. Hell, she'd had to take a small jump to get off the bed. To get back in, if she ever did, she'd need a stool to climb up. And she wasn't short!

The dresser was constructed of the same heavy, dark wood as the bedframe and posters. The top left drawer yielded Connor's T-shirts and boxer-briefs. She snagged one of each and slipped into them, since there was no way she was wandering the house naked or even in just the shirt that hung down to mid-thigh. It didn't matter that she'd been intimate with all of the men who lived here.

At that last thought, her cheeks flamed, and a hot prickle spread across her shoulders. Oh gosh...she slept with four men last night. Four!

Some people might say, "When in Rome..."—or in this case, "When in Daly..."—but she wasn't usually one of those people. She wasn't promiscuous at all, to tell the truth. Though...she wasn't entirely sure this qualified as promiscuous.

God, she was so confused. Last night, everything had made sense. Of course, she'd just been going with the moment. Now...

Well, she wasn't sure where to go from here. Did she keep on with what they'd started last night? Pretend it hadn't happened? That seemed wrong. She couldn't pretend it didn't happen, and cutting things off as a one-night-stand sort of thing just seemed wrong, too. But maybe that's what they wanted...? They hadn't discussed the

future or what the intention was after last night. They'd just tumbled into bed.

Crap, she was so confused. She scrubbed her hands over her face and headed toward the kitchen, her head lost in her thoughts. Coffee...then she'd get dressed...then she'd try to figure out what the hell was happening.

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She liked them all—especially Franklin and Connor. A small smile tilted her lips as she recalled how tenderly Franklin had caressed her belly. It was as if having a baby and them helping to raise it would be a dream come true for him. Maybe, they were thinking of more than a night.

What had they said? She'd been in such a sensual fog...

You'll be our everything.

I'm not going to let you walk away easily...

If you decide to be with us...

We belong together.

So...not just one night in their heads. She just had to get her own head straight.

Coffee. Coffee first.

The welcome scent of it hit her as she entered the kitchen, and as she approached the pot, she saw a small folded card on the counter before it, her name scrawled across the cream-colored front in bold, black letters.

Good morning, love. We hope you slept well. This is decaf coffee. Figured that's what you'd want with the baby and all. Help yourself to anything in the fridge. We'll be back soon.

Yours,

Connor

Madison smiled, holding the card to her chest. Great sex. Tender. And they made her coffee. It all seemed too good to be true.

“It’s just coffee,” she reminded herself. “Get a grip.”

Opening the fridge, she found some half-and-half then headed back to prep her morning magic in a cup. They’d left an upside-down mug next to the note—probably so she wouldn’t have to search for one and she’d know this one was clean. Add thoughtful to that list.

Humming happily as she recalled the events of last night, all of it bringing a smile to her lips and sending warmth flowing through her, she poured herself a cup, stirred in her creamer then grabbed a muffin from the snap-lid container they’d left beside her mug. Turning toward the stools at the island, she let out a scream, hot coffee sloshing over her hand.

“Fuck,” she breathed quickly setting down her breakfast, never taking her eyes off the man who’d startled her. It wasn’t any of the Quists, but he wasn’t a stranger. What the fuck was he doing here?

“Martin,” she said, without an ounce of welcome in her flat voice. “What are you doing here?”

Without breaking her stare, she reached for a towel to wipe the coffee off her scalded hand, thankful the hot liquid hadn’t spilled on her shirt. Still, that was the least of her concerns right now.

“Is that any way to greet an old friend?” he asked, his arms spread wide, and he took a step toward her.

“Stay the fuck away from me,” she snapped. She edged toward the knife block, ready to defend herself however she needed to. She might have been confused about what had gone down before, but she had no such lack of clarity now. This man was a predator, and she wanted him gone. And...

“What the fuck are you doing here?” she repeated.

“I’m a guest; don’t you know? You’re being mighty rude to a paying customer,” his sharp-eyed gaze raked over her, making her skin crawl and feel decidedly unclean. He smirked, obviously aware of her discomfort.

“Not my guest,” she replied.

“No, I suppose not. Your boyfriend’s guest then. Don’t you want to be accommodating for him. Make his customer happy. Wouldn’t be the first time you spread your legs for me.”

“Fuck you.”

“Exactly what I’m going for.”

“Get out. I don’t care if you’re a guest or not. This isn’t the guest house. It’s their private quarters.”

“Their? Are you fucking all of them? I always knew you were a slut, just asking for it. Can’t get enough cock, can you? You going to try to foist your kid onto them, too.”



“I...” Her chest was so tight with rage she could barely speak. How was this man a doctor? He spoke and acted as if he lived in the gutter. Just a sleazy—

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An arm slid around her, sidetracking her thought and drawing a startled yelp. Half a moment later, she realized it was Franklin. She leaned into him, his safety, and he kissed her temple. Tension vibrated through him. He might act calm, but he wasn't. Not at all. From the corner of her eye, she saw his three brothers stood at his side, arms crossed as they all glared at Martin.

“Babe, you okay?” Franklin asked her.

“I am now.”

“Is this the gullible sucker you're planning to convince is your baby daddy?” Martin snorted. “Dude, you're—”

“Dude, you better shut the fuck up,” Connor interrupted.

“I'm a paying guest. I'll have—”

“Not anymore,” Connor interrupted again. “Pack your shit and get out.”

“You can't—”

“Can't I? You're trespassing in my home, and you came in here and started verbally assaulting my woman. This is my land; I can do whatever the hell I want—including burying you where no one will find you.”

Martin's eyes widened, but apparently, he was too stupid to shut up. “So now it's your baby?” he scoffed.

“No, it’s mine,” Franklin said. “We had one of those amnio-whatsits things to confirm DNA.” He looked at Madison.

“Amniocentesis,” she provided.

He looked at Martin. “Yes, that. It’s my kid.”

Martin’s eyes narrowed, and he looked from Connor to Franklin then to Eds and Neal before leering at her again. “I knew you were a slut.”

“That’s it,” Eds exploded as Franklin and Connor seemed to double in size, obviously ready to plow down the stupid asshole invading their kitchen. Tears filled Mads eyes, but not at her men’s anger or the nastiness spewed from Martin. Her chest tightened at Franklin’s claim on her baby, and if she couldn’t breathe before, she definitely couldn’t now. She turned her face into his chest, burrowing into him as Eds and Neal advanced on Martin. Each grabbed an upper arm. Martin bellowed as they pulled him toward the front door to evict him from the house—and she suspected from Daly altogether. Martin spewed nasty epitaphs the entire journey to the porch, and probably beyond, but the slamming door muffled him.

Franklin’s arms tightened around her, and Connor moved in to enclose her in his protection, too. She trembled, wishing she could shake off Martin’s words. Fear shook her, let loose now that she didn’t need to be strong before the man who’d assaulted her. She’d been in the same room alone with him again... Oh God. He could have...

And now, he knew where she was. She hadn’t told anyone where she was moving, but here he was. What were the chances of that?

“Shh,” Connor murmured and kissed the top of her head. “It’s okay. We won’t let him touch you.”

“Why was he here?” she asked, her face still pressed into Franklin. She was stronger than this, but right now, she didn’t have to be. Not with her men’s strength supporting her.

“Apparently, he’s with the group of doctors who are here for team building or personal development or some shit,” Connor answered.

“Obviously, it doesn’t work on him,” Franklin grunted.

Mads couldn’t help the snort that escaped her, though it sounded a little on the hysterical side when coupled with her hitching breath.

“I’m gonna have to go out there and have a chat with the leaders,” Connor grumbled. “You got this?”

“Yeah,” Franklin replied. “I’ll take care of her.”

“I’m fine,” she protested, trying to gather herself together.

“Darlin’, you’re still shaking like a leaf,” Connor said. He stroked his knuckles along the curve of her cheek. “Let Franklin take care of you. I’ll be back soon, and we can do something.”

“I still need to take a shower.”

“Sounds good,” Franklin said. “I’ll come with you.”

“Fuck, you get all the fun,” Connor complained.

Franklin shrugged. “That’s why you’re the boss.”

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Connor leaned in and brushed his lips over hers. “I just hope this isn’t a pain in the ass—more than it already is—and I can get back here quick. I want in on that sweet action, too.”

Madison laughed in amused disbelief. “I’m pretty sure the sweet action is snowed in here. Unless you’re telling me I got plowed out.”

“Oh, there will be plowing,” he promised with a wicked leer.

She rolled her eyes. These men... With them, she felt safe, despite barely knowing them for more than a day. And yet, there was Martin. She’d known him for years, been engaged to him, and he terrified her. She’d take any or all of the Quist men in place of her ex.

“Hurry back,” she told him, “and don’t get arrested because of that dick. He’s not worth it.”

“I don’t know about that,” Franklin replied. “I’m not much for fighting, but I’m thinking I’d really like to drive my fist right into him.”

“Good thing you’re staying with me.” She looked at Connor, taking in his determined expression. She pointed at him, narrowing her eyes. “You be good, too.”

“With you waiting here for me, that’s a promise. ‘Sides, the guys in charge seem like pretty straight-laced fellas. I’m fairly sure when I give them the lowdown, they’ll be happy to see your ex go.”

She hoped so. The last thing she wanted was to cause trouble for the Quists and their livelihood. “If it would be better if I go...” she started.

But Connor interrupted her. “Don’t even say it.” He came back to where she still stood in Franklin’s embrace, which had tightened again at her words. “Last night, we claimed you, Franklin and me. We’re not going back on that. We’re not letting you back out, either.”

“I—”

“No arguments.” He lifted his chin at Franklin in what seemed like a silent, watch her. Then he took off out the door.

“You might have figured out I’m a bit more laidback than Connor, but don’t say shit like that,” Franklin said when they were alone. “I can get just as uptight and demanding as he can when it comes to something important—or someone, you, in this case. Not letting you slip away, love.” His hand flattened over her small baby bump. “You or my baby.”

He really planned to claim this baby as his, to raise it with her. It warmed her heart to think he cared that much, that quickly. Conversely, she wasn’t so sure how she felt about that or if she could trust it. Because of how quick it was.

“How did you know about amniocentesis and DNA?” she asked.

“I got up last night and Googled how soon you can get DNA results to know parentage.”

“Why?”

“After you fell asleep, Connor and I were talking. He had a feeling...”

“That psychic thing? Heck, after what happened this morning, I have to say I’m a bigger believer in his abilities.”

“If we’d realized your ex was here...” He shook his head and sighed. “We wouldn’t have left you alone this morning.”

She made a small, noncommittal sound, unsure what to really say.

“So...” he ventured. “If you’re a bigger believer, then you believe you’re ours, just like Connor foresaw?”

Madison pulled out of his embrace, needing a little space—for her and her confusion. “I don’t know about that. It’s...so much. I mean I only got here a few days ago. I just met you guys yesterday. Oh God,” she slapped her hand over her mouth. “I met you yesterday and slept with you. All of you. Am I... Maybe Martin—”

“Don’t even say it,” Franklin growled, his less laidback side rearing its head. “Sometimes, things move fast. Especially when one party is already fully invested. Especially when it’s fate, because when it’s fate, everything feels right. I don’t think this relationship would have happened with anyone else. Not like this and not this fast.”

Was he merely justifying? Words were easy. Values and actions...not so much.

“Love,” Franklin interrupted, cupping her face. “Don’t spiral into that black hole. And don’t let that prick ruin something perfectly good. Don’t give him that control. If you run away because of some name he called you, you’re giving him power again.”

“What if I’m unsure of the situation. Even without Martin’s vitriol?”

Franklin smiled and laced his fingers through hers. With a tug, he started them toward

the bathroom and the shower. “Then we do our damndest to convince you and show you just how right it is.”

## Chapter Fourteen

There was shouting when Madison awoke again. Franklin had worn her out in the shower, touching and caressing. She'd been asleep in minutes after he'd carried her from the bathroom to the bed. Though they hadn't had penetrative sex, he'd brought her to orgasm enough times in the shower that her legs were weak and wobbly. And the man could kiss. She was sure she could lock lips with him for hours, but it would feel like minutes, and she'd want more.



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She smiled dreamily until another bellow traveled to her. Far from the quiet that had enveloped the house earlier, arguing filled the sanctuary of the Quist's home. She furrowed her brow confused by it. She didn't know them well, a fact that brought heat to her cheeks when she recalled last night...and this morning. But this seemed unlike the men she'd spent time with since yesterday. She didn't recognize the louder voice, but she heard Connor's calmer tone reply. She had a feeling this was one of the guests raising a stink.

Because of her. Martin had been evicted from the retreat because of her—well, in truth because he was an asshole, but she'd been the catalyst that had brought out his bad behavior. Not that she was to blame for that, but she still felt guilty that it might impact her men's—no not her men. The Quist's—business.

Heart heavy, she quickly located her clothes. All her things had been brought in here and neatly lain on the dresser. Her clothes, her purse... And her shoes were on the floor beside it. Shaking with disappointment, she redressed—in her own things this time—then headed for the bedroom door.

“You’ve got balls to kick one of my people off the ranch,” she heard yelled as she opened it.

“We’ve been over this,” Connor replied. “He was verbally abusing my woman and menacing her when I came into the kitchen and stopped him. I won’t have anyone behaving that way on my property.”

“She was coming on to him.”

At this, Connor growled. “Bullshit. It isn’t her word against his. My brothers and I witnessed it when we came in. Behavior like that won’t be tolerated from anyone—or to anyone. It’s in the paperwork each of you signed when you booked with the ranch.”

“Bullshit,” the man echoed. “I’m calling our lawyer.”

“You do that. I’ll be calling mine, as well. Will the rest of your party be leaving early or just Mr. Bradley?”

“Doctor Bradley,” the man corrected, conceit and self-importance clear in his tone.

“Well?” Connor prompted, still awaiting an answer.

There was a long pause. Madison crept down the hallway toward the kitchen. She was surprised to find it empty.

“No,” the other man growled. She turned her head toward the sound and realized they must be in a room off the living room or the other wing of the house. Jeez, and she could hear them? Off-hand, she wondered if Connor and the guys were in the office they’d shown her. Or possibly another space that allowed the voices to travel. They hadn’t shown her all the house, so it was possible. The question raised her guilt at not knowing them better before they all got intimate.

She almost growled at herself. She had no reason to feel guilty. Even if it was a one-night stand, she was a modern woman with needs and nobody had the right to tell her she couldn’t be with these guys after one night if she wanted that. The problem lay in that argument down the hallway, as well as the one this morning. She couldn’t ruin their business.

Sadness weighing heavier on her, she glanced toward the big living room window

overlooking the circle drive. Her car was brushed off, and someone had plowed while she'd been asleep. The blue sky was clear as far as the eye could see, and sunlight glinted off the fresh snow, almost blinding in its brightness.

She could go. Should she? Madison sighed. She'd never intended to stay longer than dinner. It was time to leave, get back to her life, let the guys get back to theirs.

Her pea coat hung by the front door, her keys in the pocket. Less than two minutes later, she was on her way, removing herself from the equation. She had too much baggage. Coming to Daly was supposed to bring her refuge, but it seemed as if she'd brought drama with her.

\* \* \* \*

"Well, good," Franklin said, his arms crossed as he glared at the Doctor. "We'll continue as scheduled. If we have another problem like this, we'll have to ask you all to leave."

"You can't do that."

"It's all lain out in the terms and conditions your group signed," Connor said, and Franklin was glad his brother backed him up. They both felt a deep need to protect Madison and lay down the law with anyone who might mess with her.

The doctor's jaw tightened as he obviously clenched his teeth. Without a word, he stormed out of the office, through the office door that led outside rather than into the house. Franklin locked the door behind him. The guests could freaking ring for them if they needed something. This was a ranch, not a hotel. On off hours, one of the brothers carried an emergency contact phone. The people here for the retreat this weekend could darn well use it.

“We have a problem,” Eds gasped as he ran into the office. His hair was wet with traces of snow still in it. Neal was on his heels.

Franklin glanced toward the door where Dr. Fields had just left. It seemed to be one thing after another today, and it was barely noon. “What now?”

“We were coming across the north field and saw Madison’s car heading toward the main road. I know you guys wouldn’t have let her just leave—”

“What!” Connor exclaimed, but Franklin was already heading for the living room. Sure enough through the window he saw a blank spot where her tiny car had been.

“Shit,” he cursed under his breath, and Connor didn’t even chide him. Probably because he felt the same way. “What the hell? She was sound asleep.”

“I’m sure Fields’ yelling woke her,” Connor growled.

“But why did she leave? She seemed perfectly happy.”

“Who the hell knows with women?” Connor glanced over. “We should follow her. I don’t trust that little roller skate to do anything but land her in a ditch.”

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“Yeah,” Franklin agreed. “And we need to find out what’s going on in her head.”

“We’ll stay here and hold down the fort,” Neal told them.

“Call me if any of them start up something. They’re already on thin ice,” Connor replied. Franklin frowned, knowing they had to deal with the crew of physicians until Wednesday. After them, they didn’t have any clients until a winter wedding around Thanksgiving. November tended to be slow, but things would pick up for the holiday season and then people came here, wanting to ice fish, ski and do other outdoorsy winter activities.

He shrugged on his jacket that had hung by the front door and made sure he had his gloves, phone and emergency insulin kit. Though chances were slim he’d need it, he never left home without it—especially lately with his levels out of control. The doctor was getting closer to figuring it out, but not enough for anyone in the family to feel secure.

Beside Franklin, Connor tugged on his coat, too. “Ready?”

“Ready?”

“Don’t rush back,” Eds called. “If you’re not back by dark, we’ll expect you worked your charms on your woman.”

Franklin narrowed his eyes at him, surprised.

“Oh come on,” Franklin laughed. “We all know she’s yours. Neal and I are down for

fun and her pleasure, but we have each other and we're both leaving. It's no different than most everyone else in Daly—they might start out as five, but they always whittle down to two or three.”

“What if Madison wants all of us?” Franklin asked, uneasy with her being disappointed with just him and Connor. “Maybe she doesn't want only two.”

Neal chuckled, something strange for him. He was always so serious. “Were you there last night? She enjoyed us, but she was totally into you. I don't know what happened before she left, but I bet she's not real happy right this second. What was happening between the three of you was pretty strong.”

Franklin had thought so. But she'd left.

Connor opened the door. “Let's go.”

Nodding, Franklin followed.

“You think Neal's right?” he asked once they were on the road. Neither of them had spoken since leaving a good ten minutes ago.

“About?”

“Madison being into us, the three of us together?”

Connor shrugged. “I want to believe it, but then, I remember she left. Just left. Why?”

“Maybe she got scared. It's a whole new lifestyle for her, and after what she's been through...” Franklin trailed off, rage spiking through him when he thought of what Dr. Asshole Bradley had done to her. It had taken everything in him not to kill the guy that morning. He was normally fairly laidback, but when they'd first come upon

the scene this morning, Eds had needed to hold him back for a minute while Connor had taken charge.

“Guess we’ll find out in a minute,” he said, nodding to the car a quarter mile ahead of them. She seemed to be going along okay, and the roads were thankfully fairly clear. Madison was crawling along in her vehicle, too.

“Yep,” Connor replied as he slowed the truck so they wouldn’t get too close to her. Neither spoke another word as they followed the tiny car, though they both sucked in worried breaths each time her vehicle fishtailed. Franklin wasn’t driving, but he was still white-knuckled when they pulled into the small lot beside the doctor’s office. Madison was already heading up the snow-covered steps. He and Connor exchanged a quick glance. Oh, hell no to those stairs!

They both bolted from the car, intent on getting to her before she slipped.

“Mads...” Franklin murmured behind her when he was close enough to steady her if she startled—not that she would. There was no way she hadn’t seen them pull in or heard them clomping up the wooden steps behind her.

“No,” she said.

No? What the hell did that mean?

“What do you mean, no?” Connor demanded as she tried to fit the key into the door. He took over then held the door for her to enter, making it clear they were coming in with her and there would be a discussion.

Madison huffed, yet she didn’t seem all that put out. More sad, truth be told. Franklin frowned as he followed Connor into the upstairs apartment after she’d entered.

“What’s going on?” he asked after he shut the door. They were all standing in the small entry vestibule, none of them moving to remove their coats. “Everything was fine when I was holding you and you fell asleep.”

She shook her head, her lips pressed together. She blinked as her eyes got glassy. “I made a mistake.”

“It’s no fucking mistake,” Connor growled.



Madison flinched.

“Don’t do that,” he snapped. “None of us would touch you in anger. None of us would hurt you.” He glanced at Franklin.

“Never,” Franklin gritted out.

She sucked in a deep breath then gave a single nod. “I’m sorry. I know you’re not like him. But that doesn’t... It doesn’t change the fact that I can’t do this,” she said while shaking her head. “I might be pregnant, but I’m not the kind of girl who sleeps around, who sleeps with lots of guys. It might be okay for some, but it’s just not me.”

“You don’t feel something for us—the same thing we feel for you? You didn’t feel it the second we looked at each other? That was more than interest we saw in your eyes. It was more than just...nothing...when we were together last night.”

“I made a mistake,” she repeated weakly.

“Was it so bad with us you don’t want to continue?”

“No, of course not—I mean, I rushed things...”

There was a moment of silence while they both digested the bullshit. Okay, maybe, it wasn’t completely. Things had moved quickly, and Franklin sensed that scared her. But it seemed like there might be more.

“Baby, you’re ours,” he said, “but we’ll go as slow as you need.”

Again she shook her head, her silky locks tumbling around her shoulders. “Being with me will only cause you trouble.”

“What the fuck?” Connor breathed.

“Why do you say that?” Franklin asked her. “Because let me tell you, that is far from true.”

“I heard what was happening today—”

“Because they’re all assholes,” his brother exclaimed. “Most of our guests are top-notch. None of them cause problems like these guys. The only reason they’re trouble is because one of them knew you—the guy who should be in prison for what he did.”

“I’d be on my way to prison if Eds hadn’t stopped me,” Franklin muttered, and Madison’s eyes went wide.

“What?”

“And they’re all out of here on Wednesday,” Connor continued as if she hadn’t spoken. “They could all leave today with full refunds, and I wouldn’t give a fuck. Good riddance to them. You’re more important.”

She lifted a hand and stared at Franklin. “What do you mean about jail?”

“He assaulted you. He was threatening you. He doesn’t deserve to live.”

“You can’t—”

“He won’t be around for long,” Connor said. His eyes closed as he inhaled. He was seeing something. Franklin had seen that expression before.

“You can’t do anything to him. If something happened to any of you...”

Franklin gathered her close. “We’re not going to do anything,” he whispered, inhaling her sweet scent. The feel of her soft body in his arms had him hard again. “Connor’s just seeing something.”

“Less seeing and more feeling,” Connor said. “It’s more of a knowing than a vision.” He moved close, hugging her from the other side.

She groaned. “We can’t.”

“We can,” Franklin countered. “But we won’t push you.”

“I just want to go slow. I just want... God! I hate that Martin is doing this to me. And I shouldn’t let him. But I need to go slow. I need to be sure. And...I know I won’t feel okay about anything until they’re gone—all of them are gone—on Wednesday. I just can’t mess things up for you guys. Even if most of those doctors don’t know me—which there’s a good chance they do—I don’t want to be around them or have them give you crap because of me. Ugh! What are the chances?” She growled the last bit then pressed her face into Franklin’s chest. He’d take it. His hand buried in her thick, silky hair, and he kissed the top of her head.

“We can wait until Wednesday,” he said.

“To clarify I meant that’s when you can start dating me. Not when I’m going to start sleeping with all of you.”

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Everything in him protested, and he met Connor's eyes over the top of her head. His brother shrugged, as if to say, What can we do?

"Whatever you need," Franklin told her, tamping down his own need. "We'll be ready when you are."

### Chapter Fifteen

The Quists had started a campaign of courtship. One or more of them was in the doctor's office or on Madison's doorstep every day since Saturday afternoon. That first day, Franklin and Connor had stayed with her for hours, the three of them talking and cuddling on her couch. She stopped the action whenever it seemed to be edging for more, though. And it wasn't without guilt. Neither were the next days guilt-free as they brought her gifts that ranged from baked goods to fancy coffee—decaf, Neal was quick to point out—to flowers to small thoughtful gifts, like a pregnancy notebook from Franklin and a funny mug from Eds.

She'd told them repeatedly that they didn't need to give her things, but they insisted they liked it. All she wanted was their time. Connor had let her know she'd get more than she could handle once Wednesday rolled around. That worried her a little. It excited her more.

And today, their ranch guests had left. Tonight, she was having dinner with them at Leena's Diner. Glancing up at the clock, she saw it was almost time for the medical center to close. Butterflies started in her belly. Sure, she'd seen her cowboys, but not like this, and not all at once. As much as she'd told them, she needed to go slow, she was anxious to see them.

“You’re practically bouncing in your seat,” Doc said, coming up behind her and laying a file on the desk. “There’s notes in here I need typed, but they can wait until tomorrow. Lock up your desk and get out of here before you make that baby seasick from your fidgeting. I can close up the place.”

Her hand rested on her belly. “You’re sure.”

“Completely. Go on.”

“Okay. Thanks!” She would have hugged him, but he was already headed back toward his office. Quickly, she closed down her workstation then grabbed her things. She had a date to get ready for!

Grinning, she headed out then hurried up the steps to her place. The stairs were perfectly clear. After that first day, when she’d come home to find them snow-covered, the guys had kept them cleared and so well-salted that ice wouldn’t dare form on them. She shook her head, touched by their thoughtfulness.

She’d just gotten inside when her phone pinged with a message. Thinking it was one of her guys, she pulled it out quickly. Her brow furrowed when she saw it was one of her old co-workers, Marmie.

You won’t even believe it! Dr. Bradley was fired today! No one knows why, but I thought you’d want to know.

Holy...

Madison’s fingers covered her open mouth as she stared at her phone screen. Martin got fired? Fired? She’d never thought it would happen.

Wow, she typed back. That’s a shock. Thanks for telling me.

Her old friend responded back, asking how things were with her new job. They chatted a few minutes while Madison leaned against her closed front door, still aghast at the news. Even with the time out to catch up, she was ready to go and meet Connor, Franklin, Neal and Eds twenty minutes later. It was still a little early, but she decided to head over to the diner. It was only half a block away, so she pulled on her coat and gloves to walk down there.

The weather had turned mild since the weekend, with temps reaching back toward the fifties, though it had never quite gotten there. Still, Madison was used to bitter, Michigan winters so the high forties felt almost balmy. She smiled up toward the orangey sun and wide blue skies. Daly, Wyoming was truly beautiful. She loved it here.

Other than the small speedbump this weekend, it had been quiet and peaceful. Everyone she'd met since arriving had been friendly. It wasn't the back-biting, dog-eat-dog world she was used to. The women were kind, and the men, despite barely veiled interest, were polite. She had a feeling that was because they all knew the Quists had put out their claim.

River had told her last week that everyone lived by a set of unwritten rules here—women were respected at the cost of disappearing somewhere on the thousands of acres of nearby land if one didn't. And you sure as hell didn't infringe on another man's property. She didn't so much appreciate being referred to as property, but it warmed her to belong to her strong men.

And they'd made it clear she was theirs, even with her request to slow things down. Her pregnancy hormones were screaming at her that it was the stupidest thing she'd ever asked for, but she couldn't regret her decision to know the Quist men better before moving forward.

She was drawn to Franklin and Connor, but she needed to develop her relationship

with Neal and Edison, too. If she was going to be with them, the bond needed to be fair. She wouldn't be the cause of a rift. But she would heed River's advice and not wait years either. If anything, her friend's situation drove home the reality of grabbing onto life and living, not waiting and thinking you had forever. Sometimes, you didn't.

The cheery façade of Leena's greeted Madison before she could get too far into thoughts of River and her situation. As the sun sank low in the sky, the lights of the diner shone like a beacon into the coming twilight. The red and white curtains lining the windows gave a homey feel, and everything inside was bright white and gleaming stainless. Somehow, the place still managed to have an old-fashioned soda-shop feel to it.

"Hey, hon," Leena greeted her as she'd entered. Madison had gotten to know the woman since she'd arrived, having eaten plenty of meals and gotten a coffee or two here. Leena's coffee could compete with and beat Starbucks any day of the week. Leena also carried some of the essentials a girl needed over in the small store attached to the eating area. "Your men called ahead, and I have a table ready for you. It's chicken-fried night so we tend to get pretty busy."

"Busy? That's an understatement," Devon scoffed, taking the menus from the owner. Devon had waited on Madison a few times and seemed to be Leena's only waitstaff, though Mads had seen Leena's husbands Brian and John in here helping a time or two.

"Even I've heard about the chicken-fried," Madison laughed. "I didn't realize it was today."

"Every Wednesday night," Devon confirmed. "We even have extra cooks come in to help and set up extra seating in the open space in the store. We have you five over here in the corner."

“Thank you.” Madison slid into the circular corner booth, set for five. She moved to the back, knowing she’d end up with two men on either side of her. Pretty soon, she wouldn’t be able to do that. Her baby belly would be in the way. Smiling, she rested her hand on the slight swell. She couldn’t wait. As each day passed, she got more excited for her little one.

Devon set down the menus. “Can I bring you anything besides water to drink?”

“No, water’s fine for now.”



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“Okay, I’ll be back in a little bit.”

But it was Leena who came back with the waters. “So how’re you settling in, hon?” she asked. “Everyone being good to you?”

“More than I can believe.”

“I’m sure those guys of yours helped it along. Not that the men here aren’t always gentlemen...” She rolled her eyes, indicating that it wasn’t always the case. “But no one wants to mess with another tribe’s woman.”

“You’re all so...nonchalant about it. It seems weird to me.” Weird but growing on her. She couldn’t separate Connor and Franklin in her mind. The idea of being with just one of them didn’t mesh. And there she went again, excluding Neal and Eds. Maybe, she wasn’t cut out for this life.

“Not weird,” Leena replied with a soft smile. “It’s a gift. It’s just not for everyone. It was strange to me when I first got together with my husbands, too, but I’ve never regretted a minute of it. It’s different, but that doesn’t mean it’s not right.”

“Oh, I didn’t mean that I think it’s wrong.”

The other woman shrugged with a bright smile. “It’s not for everyone; I get that. But I get the feeling it is for you.”

Heat flooded Madison’s face. She was getting that feeling, too. Every day, having the attention and affection from the four of them, the idea of this Daly Way grew on her.

“I think you may be right.”

“They’re good guys. Never had a whit of a problem with them. They don’t get in here much. Though lately, I’ve been seeing them quite a bit for a daily decaf almond milk, vanilla latte extra whip.”

She laughed. “You could probably lay off a little on the whip. Doc’s gonna nag me if I start gaining weight too fast.”

Leena’s gaze dropped to where Mads’ hand rested on her belly, and she smiled softly. “I will do that. Congratulations.”

“Thank you.”

“Hey, how’s my baby mama?” Franklin said, announcing the Quists’ arrival a moment before he slid into the booth beside her.

“Franklin,” she moaned. Connor sat next to him, while Eds and Neal flanked her other side.

“I’ll be right back with bread,” Leena told them.

“You should have waited for us. We would have brought you over,” Connor chided her.

“Well, hello to you, too.”

“Babe, you know we worry about you,” he continued, ever the leader of the group. Apparently chief worrier, as well.

“It’s right across the street. And it’s not even icy anymore. I can walk down the street

and cross over here without protection.”

Franklin kissed her temple. “We just want you to be safe.”

“I am.” And she was warm and fuzzy due to their solicitous nature, too.

“We don’t know for sure that all the assholes in town know you’re ours,” Connor grumbled.

“I don’t belong to anyone,” she scoffed.

Neal snorted and Eds made a show of picking up a menu. “So what’s for dinner?”

“Chicken fried,” everyone replied. Everyone but Connor, whose gaze bore into her.

“You sure as hell do,” he said. “You’re ours. I thought we had that cleared up.”

His intensity warmed her center, and she squirmed. What was she fighting this for. She knew the truth. She kind of like being chased, though. She’d gone into their arms too easily. She needed to know this was real interest. It was manipulative and definitely temporary. She wasn’t in for the long game when it came to the chase. Still, maybe she had some of her grandma’s sight because she could tell the guys genuinely enjoyed this chase. And despite anything she said, they knew that she knew she was theirs.

“Whatever you say,” she conceded, acting grudging.

“I would say so,” Connor growled. His hand tightened on her thigh while Franklin played with her fingers.

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“You coming home with us tonight?” Eds asked.

“Can’t. Work night,” she told him, feeling a little regret.

“Sounds like we’re going to your place then,” Connor said.

“I’ve missed my snuggle time,” Franklin added.

She huffed a laugh. “You mean foreplay? God, the other day I could barely walk. I passed out, and I never did get my waffles.”

“What did you do, Mr. Quist?” Eds demanded, his tone lined with laughter.

“Secret,” Franklin answer. “For you young ones to discover someday.”

“Whatever,” Neal replied. “We probably know stuff you haven’t dreamed of.”

“Well, you do watch a lot of porn,” Eds poked.

“Asshole. You’re sleeping in your own room tonight.”

Eds shrugged. “You’ll be in there by two.”

Connor looked at Franklin around her. “How did we not know this?” he queried again, obviously still perplexed by what had gone on under his nose without him realizing it.

“No clue.”

“So are we coming to your place?” Eds asked without missing a beat.

“Guess so. I’ve missed you all, too.” She really had. They’d had been one night and one morning, and afterward, her being had mourned for them as if they’d been parted for months. If they’d felt anything similar, she understood their eagerness.

“Hot damn,” the youngest exclaimed. “Check!”

Neal shoved him. “Don’t be stupid. Mads needs to eat. Just be patient.”

But she had a feeling none of them would be patient during this meal.

\* \* \* \*

The five of them practically fell into her apartment in what probably looked like an Abbott and Costello mixed with the Three Stooges pratfall. Though she didn’t fall or stumble at all. Franklin had his arm protectively around her. The man took his father role very seriously.

In fact, as soon as the door closed behind them, he lifted her in his arms and carried her toward the bedroom.

“You guys want coffee? Something to drink?” she asked weakly.

Connor leaned close. “We only want one thing to drink and you have it there between your thighs.”

Holy...flooded panties.

Was it healthy for her heart to race like this?

Franklin placed her on the queen-sized bed that would never fit them all and started working on her coat and shirt. Connor immediately started opening her pants. Near the door, Edison and Neal were already disrobing.

Franklin and Connor had her naked in moments and Connor dove between her legs. His fingers parted her while he licked. His moans of satisfaction combined with hers of pleasure. Franklin gathered her sensitive breast in his hand and bent over to suck and lave at the stiff nipple. Edison wasted no time coming over—naked—and lavishing attention on the other. Neal hung back. She met his eyes then beckoned him over with her fingers.

“I want to taste you,” she panted, Connor’s ministrations stealing her breath, as much as the insidious suckling at her breasts did. Biting his lip, Neal climbed onto the mattress. Leaning forward, he supported her shoulders, raising her, while she twisted as much as she was able. Opening wide, she took his thick length into her mouth.

Everything seemed so natural and right. She didn’t have to think much about what to do and that surprised her. It was only enjoy and take, and do whatever felt good. All of it delighted her, from the mouths on her to the rigid erection pressing deep between her lips. When Connor sucked her clit hard, she gasped around Neal’s dick, taking him even deeper, and he moaned. As she jerked, it pushed her chest closer to the mouths pleasuring her. Everything worked together, one action feeding into a chain reaction.

Her orgasm barreled into her and took her by surprise with how fast it came. She couldn’t do anything as it rolled toward her—not throw back her head, not scream. Neal’s hand held her where she was, him fucking her mouth. She stared wide-eyed up into his gaze, seeing his unswerving determination. A dark possession lingered there, a commanding presence not unlike what was inside Connor. Neal had an alpha buried

inside him. He just didn't show it. And being commanded as she was, just brought her closer to the edge of release.

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She breathed fast, practically panting through her nose, while he possessed her mouth.

Take it, he mouthed. She nodded as well as she could, aroused and unfrightened by this side of him. Then fingers pushed into her folds and her eyes closed as she was fucked from two directions. Hands stroked over her body. She eddied on a maelstrom of sensations, touched everywhere as they heightened her arousal. Then a wide head pushed at her opening. She drew her legs back and open wider to welcome Connor as he thrust deep. This time, she did scream around Neal's length, convulsing and careening over into her climax.

"God, you're so fucking tight!" Connor swore.

"I can't wait to fuck you again," Franklin gritted. He kissed her shoulder and around the mound he squeezed. His fingers returned back to her nipple, pinching hard while Connor pistoned with abandoned. It wasn't long before he came with a guttural grunt. There was no pause. Franklin took his place, while Connor ran his hands over her.

Edison pushed Neal from her mouth, and Connor kissed her, seemingly unconcerned that another man had been there. Peripherally, she saw Eds kneel before his lover and start sucking him deep. Neal's dick disappeared all the way into Edison's throat. And he fucked with even more vigor than he had Mads' mouth.

Franklin ran his hands over her belly. "Mine," he growled. "I'm going to fill you with all of me. Mark you. Claim you." He said claim like it was a challenge, but she didn't care. She was theirs. She needed to stop fighting it so hard.



“Do it,” she whispered. “Fuck me hard, Franklin.”

His pace increased, but not his ferocity. She knew he’d do nothing that could possibly hurt her. She squeezed down on him, meeting him thrust for thrust, now that she wasn’t distracted by sucking down Neal. Connor reached over and rubbed her clit. When he pinched, she yelled out again.

“Oh hell,” Franklin gritted out as she dragged him over the edge with her. Beside her, she heard Neal yell out. Eds stood, looking satisfied as Franklin crawled up beside her. She watched Edison wipe his mouth with the back of his hand as Connor and Franklin cuddled in to either side of her.

“Last man standing,” Edison quipped.

“Sounds like a personal flaw,” Connor growled, though he never stopped kissing every bit of her flesh he could reach. She felt her legs moved to drape over Franklin and Connor.

“My turn,” Edison declared, sinking into her. “Oh shit, you feel so good.”

Her walls clenched on him, and she sighed. “So good,” she echoed. “All of you.”

And as Edison took his turn giving her all the pleasure he could, she thought maybe she was the luckiest woman in Daly.

## Chapter Sixteen

“Why am I driving you to the airport instead of Seth and Tai? Or one of your sisters?” Mads asked River. She’d been stunned when her friend had called her to take her to the Gillette-Campbell County airport, and now, River sat quietly staring out the window. She silently cried, covertly swiping her hand over her cheek every so

often.

The inaudible grief broke Madison's heart.

"Talk to me," she urged when River didn't reply.

"There's a procedure. A surgery by a specialist my dad knows. The guy says he can operate and remove this tumor."

"But I thought it was inoperable. That's what all the specialists have said, right?"

"This guy has had lots of success."

So she was taking a chance, a chance no one in her family and neither of her men would approve of. And Madison was the chariot to deliver her. A knot formed in her stomach. Her insides churned in an act so close to morning sickness, she was afraid she might have to pull over. She knew River hadn't told her specifics on purpose, because River knew Madison would disagree as heartily as her family would have.

"River..." she started.

"Please don't," River begged. "Please just take me. This is hard enough. But it's my only chance. You know it's getting worse. The pain, the falling, not being able to do things."

It was true, Madison had been to River's place a few times now to care for her after an episode.

"So I can just stand by and let this happen, or I can do something. My dad trusts him. Apparently, the doctor is some wonder surgeon, doing things no one else can. I'm believing in that."

“But what if he’s not?” Madison asked as they were pulling into the drive for the airport.

“I’ll die either way,” River replied.

Tears blurred Madison’s vision and she blinked hard to clear it so she could drive. Nothing worked as the world washed into watery colors. Thankfully, she’d reached the drop-off. “Do you want me to come in with you?” she managed brokenly, feeling as if this were the very last time she’d see her best friend alive. Maybe, it was. Her heart felt as if it were ripping from her chest.

“No. I need to... Just, no, okay?”

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She was afraid she wouldn't go through with it, if Madison came in with her. That was it, wasn't it? Madison still got out of the car, and hugged River on the curb as if she'd never let go. "When is the surgery?" she asked.

"Tomorrow morning."

Tomorrow... "I could go with you."

"No, I need to do this myself."

"Why? Why do you want to be alone?"

"I need you to do something for me," River replied without answering. But Madison already knew the answer, because she knew her friend. River was afraid she wouldn't go through with the surgery if people were crying over her. It would make her more afraid than she already was.

"What? What do you need?"

River pulled an envelope from her purse. "I need you to give this to Seth and Tai. Tomorrow—not today. Please."

"Of course." Her fingers closed on the envelope. "River?"

"Yes?"

"I love you. I need you to come home to us."

River's lips struggled into a smile but never made it. "I need that, too."

\* \* \* \*

Madison's eyes burned from crying so much, feeling as if she'd been rubbing sand into them. Her chest ached from sobbing. She was wrecked. Overwhelmed with sorrow for her friend.

Thank God, she had no plans to see her cowboys today. She'd told them she had to see a doc in Gillette today, and she just wanted to rest tonight.

Judging from the pounding on her front door, she should have known better.

"Madison! Open up."

Oh, fuck. Not one of the Quists. That was River's Tai.

"What's going on?" she heard Connor demand. Okay, great. So there was a party out on the stairs.

"Madison," Tai bellowed again, pounding once more. The noise reverberated in her aching head. She had to answer; they needed to know, even if she had promised River she'd wait until tomorrow.

"Hey, leave my girl alone," Connor yelled just as she opened the door. He pushed past the two men on her doorstep and pulled her into his arms.

"Not your girl," she muttered.

"Yeah, whatever," he replied. "You know you are."

“Where’s River?” Seth demanded, unmoved by the moment.

“I dropped her at the airport this morning.” Madison reached to the table next to the door and held out the envelope Madison had given her. “She didn’t want to burden you with it, and she made me promise to bring this to you in the morning. I don’t agree with her, but she’s my best friend. I promised, and it might—” A sob caught her words, and her shoulders shook. God, this was so painful and overwhelming. Tears filled her eyes again, and she leaned into Connor for support. “It might be the last thing I can do for her, so I did. She loves you. She’s just doing what she thinks is best.”

“Where is she?” Tai ground out, wrenching the letter from her grasp.

“I don’t know. All I know is she had a flight to California, and she was meeting with some doctor there this afternoon.”

Both Seth and Tai blanched, all the color leaving their faces. Seth grasped the handrail beside him.

“I think she told you everything in the letter,” Madison rushed on. “I didn’t read it, but she said everything you needed to know is in there.”

Connor’s arms tightened.

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“Geez, get off me, you big buffoon,” she protested weakly. She didn’t really want that, and they both knew it. But it had become habit the past days—the only way to keep out of her cowboys’ bed every night, because she was weakening every time she saw them. She’d be back there soon; she knew it. And what was she waiting for? If River had taught her anything it was not to wait for what she thought was the perfect time.

His grip seemed to tighten. “I don’t like seeing you upset or these two harassing you.

“They’re not harassing me. I’ll explain it to you after they go.”

“You’re going to let me come in?”

“God, no. We can go to Leena’s,” Madison replied, as she watched Seth and Tai sprint down the steps without a goodbye. Not that she blamed them. They were men on a mission. She could only hope she was loved as much someday. She glanced up at Connor, knowing that was entirely possible, if she let it happen.

“We’re not going to Leena’s.”

Before she could protest, she saw Franklin heading up the steps toward them.

Grand Central Station...

“What the hell is going on?” he demanded, suddenly as pushy as Connor usually was.

“What were those guys doing here? Why are you crying?”

Franklin swept her up into his strong arms and carried her inside. But Madison was beyond speech, so Connor explained what had happened. The two of them held her while she cried throughout the night—they were her strength while she had none. Gazing at them through blurry eyes in the morning, she knew. She had to stop running. She had to stop saying no. Right now.

“Take me,” she whispered. They were still on the couch. She’d slept cradled half on each man.

Franklin blinked sleepily at her. “You sure? We don’t want to take advantage—”

“I’m sure,” she interrupted. “You wouldn’t be taking advantage. I’m yours. I belong to you. And you belong to me.”

She hated to admit it, but that feeling was strongest with these two Quists, and she worried about it. Was it unfair? Would her connection with the other two grow?

Connor took her at her word and undressed quickly. Madison surveyed his work-hardened body, taking in all the firm ridges of muscle. He had so much power in him, so many alpha traits, yet she knew she could command him with a crook of her finger. Franklin followed suit, disrobing, and she stared at his equally hard, yet leaner body. He wasn’t as big as Connor, but he’d put plenty of men to shame with his build and blatant masculinity. Realizing they were getting naked, and she wasn’t, she shrugged off her sweatshirt and bra, then wiggled out of her leggings and panties. Franklin dropped onto the sofa beside her and pulled her to straddle him.

“You ready for us both?” he asked.

“Both?”

Connor stroked his fingers along her ass. “Both,” he confirmed.



“I’ve never...”

“We’ll be careful,” Connor said. “We’ve been talking. We both want you. At the same time. Together.”

Madison took a shuddery breath, excited but nervous about the idea. She shifted on Franklin, her wetness sliding along his dick. Definitely more excitement than trepidation.

“You...know what to do?”

“Yeah, darlin’.” Connor kissed her shoulder. “I’ll be right back.”

Franklin took her mouth. His fingers speared into her hair while his lips skated over hers. They spread hers wide, and his tongue dipped in to slide along hers. She moaned into him. Enthralled, she rubbed up and down his rigid length, getting more and more aroused as the ridges of it tantalized her slick folds. She grasped his muscular shoulders as she lost herself in her man.

She startled at the feel of cool fingers moving along the crack of her ass.

Her other man...

She smiled against Franklin’s mouth and leaned more into him to allow Connor access. His hand was slick and frankly, a little cold as he stroked, focusing on her asshole. The digits disappeared, then returned a moment later with even more coating. She suspected he’d raided her bathroom for lotion, but she didn’t care as he kept working at her, gently pushing against her nether entrance.

“Relax,” he whispered, kissing her shoulder as he pushed just a bit harder and the tip of his finger popped into her. She gasped, everything tightening as a flash of red-hot

arousal burned through her. Undeterred, Connor pressed forward. She knew it was just his one finger fucking her, but already, it seemed so full.

Franklin stroked along her folds, focusing on the tiny bud of nerves that throbbed there at the top of her slit. She shook, overwhelmed by the two of them working her—and working her up. When Connor pushed in a second finger then soon after a third, she was so far gone into the pleasure, worry or nervousness were the farthest thing from her consciousness. She just wanted him. More pleasure. More fullness. More oneness.

She cried out into Franklin's mouth when Connor pulled away. Then Connor's hand was clamped on her waist, the head of his dick pressed firmly to her opening. She moaned as he pushed inside. Her body clenched and shuddered with the precursor to her orgasm, but he didn't pause. He slid smoothly, slowly forward until he was seated fully within.

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“Oh God,” she gasped, throwing her head back. Franklin cupped her breasts, rubbing his thumbs over the distended nipples.

“How do you feel, baby?”

“So...good. So good. So full.”

“Ready for more?”

She nodded. Actually, she wasn't sure she could take more, but she craved Franklin's length like an addict needed their fix.

When he started to push inside her, her vision grayed from the pleasure. Light flashed before her eyes. She shook, and he froze.

“Don't stop. More,” she begged.

Franklin groaned, dropping his head to her shoulder and pulling her toward him as he leaned back against the couch. As he moved, he pushed fully up into her until she was stuffed with both their cocks. As Franklin stayed still, Connor started fucking her, slowly at first and then harder. All three of their bodies shuddered with the intensity.

“This is it. This is all of us. We're one,” Connor breathed as he pummeled. One... She knew what he meant. They were a unit. Three parts that made a whole. She knew she'd never feel complete without them after this.

“And ours,” Franklin gritted, starting a counterrhythm beneath her. His pubis stroked

over her clit with each jerk.

Madison screamed. The wave of orgasm, more powerful than she'd ever felt, washed over her, dragging her far from the shore of sanity to tumble in a tide of pleasure that would forever change her.

"Yours," she whispered when she finally collapsed against Franklin. All her sadness had diluted away. She knew it would return, but right now, all she felt was the glory of being fully alive and the ecstasy of celebrating life with her men.

## Chapter Seventeen

Idyllic. It was the only way to describe the past weeks. She'd spent hours with her four men, either around town or at the ranch. After the night when Connor and Franklin had comforted her about Madison, they'd grown stronger. Closer. Madison had stopped trying to fight the inevitable. She belonged with the Quists. They were family.

When the news had come that Riv had survived the surgery and would be okay, they'd all rejoiced with her. And now, the four of them were at River's welcome home party. With the house decorated for Christmas, joy flooded the gathering. One of their own was coming home, and she would live. It was a real miracle, and something to celebrate.

It was more than that—not that Riv had known when they'd all surprised her. Seth and Tai were intent on binding her to them. Though it wasn't a strictly "street legal" wedding, they were having a ceremony to unite them all. Jax, the town's lawyer, would be overseeing it.

Madison watched with tears in her eyes as her best friend vowed forever with her men and they did the same with her.

Neal had explained it to Madison last week while they'd been out on a horse ride. In Daly, trios or quads or whatever the case was beyond couple, would have a unity ceremony. Vows were taken and rings were exchanged. Either before or after the ceremony, they'd sign legal paperwork that entwined all their property and rights. The entanglement was actually tighter and harder to sort out than that in a mainstream marriage.

Progressively, she could see that with her men.

"It's beautiful," she whispered to Connor, leaning into his chest. His hand rested on her belly as they watched the trio. He always felt so big and strong against her, and more and more, he was as protective of her baby as Franklin was. Franklin would be Dad on paper, but Connor would be a father, too.

"You're beautiful," he whispered back, kissing along the skin above her ear. She shivered as the sensual tremors rolled through her.

Franklin moved closer to her and kissed her temple on the other side. His lips trailed to her ear. "Marry us."

"What?"

"Marry. Us."

She bit her lip, wide-eyed as she stared at the trio up front, as Jax pronounced them united then River, Tai and Seth shared kisses. She joined everyone in congratulatory clapping, but her head wasn't there.

Marry the Quists?

Connor swung her away from where they'd stood to watch the ceremony. His three

brothers followed.

“You didn’t answer,” he said as he led her into the small sunroom off the kitchen. It was dark outside, but twinkle lights illuminated the empty area in a romantic glow.

“I...” Her words cut off as Franklin and Connor knelt before her, holding up a tiny open box together. A tri-colored twisted band and a huge solitaire twinkled inside.

“Marry us,” they said together.

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She shook her head, though she wasn't saying no. "But there are four of you."

"You want four, not two?" Franklin asked.

"I don't understand." Were they planning to leave out their brothers? She was close to them too, though not as close as she was to Franklin and Connor.

Neal chuckled. He seemed to have lightened up a bit since she'd known him. "Oh, Eds and I aren't in on this, Mads. We're just witnesses. We have each other, and we're leaving for school in a week."

"Yeah, we're not settling down," Edison added. "You're like our sister. Oh, wait! No!" he corrected himself. "Not that. That's gross. You're like our friend with benefits. Fun but not serious. We thought you felt the same way. We're like the side dish, but they're the main course."

"I do. I was just..."

"Thinking you needed to play fair with all of us?" Connor offered.

"Well, yeah."

He shook his head. "You're ours—mine and Franklin's. You're our love, our purpose and our forever. The mother of our children and companion for the rest of our lives."

"If you say yes," Franklin added, then whispered, "Say yes."

“Yes,” she whispered, feeling pure joy flood through her. She’d never felt the belonging she felt with these two. Nothing like this. Not with anyone she’d ever dated or even when she’d been engaged back in Michigan.

She pushed that all away, focusing on the now and these perfect men who loved her. Franklin held her hand, and Connor slipped on the solitaire. “I love you,” both men said in such near unison, she wondered if they’d rehearsed it.

“I love you, too.” She glanced at Edison and Neal. “Love you, too. As benefit friends.”

“Not anymore, babe,” Edison said, slinging an arm around her. “You’ll just have to live on the memories. We have a pact. You say yes, we step back.”

“One last kiss?” Madison asked.

“Of course.” Edison leaned forward and brushed his lips over hers, feathering and tasting, oh so gentle, then he turned her into Neal, who gave her the same.

“Welcome to the family,” he murmured.

Connor took her next. There was no featherlight touches in his claim, he kissed her long and deep until her legs were buckling. Franklin pulled her to him then and repeated the deep connection. Back and forth...the three of them lost themselves in each other, and when Madison finally surfaced, Neal and Edison had disappeared, stepping away physically just as they had verbally.

“Let’s go home,” Connor suggested against her lips. “I think we should celebrate with some engaged sex. I’d really like to see what it’s like to make love to my fiancée.”



“Me too,” Franklin agreed.

Madison bit her lip smiling. She never imagined coming to Daly would lead to her forever.

\* \* \* \*

Madison had been ignoring texts from Martin all week. She had more important things to do. Like planning her wedding and the coming of her baby. The first Quist baby. Just a couple weeks ago, she’d entered the third trimester. It wouldn’t be long now. She couldn’t wait to meet her baby girl. She, Connor and Franklin had all gone in for the sonogram a few weeks ago. She’d thought Franklin might fall to his knees when he’d watched the baby on the screen. His knees had buckled and his hands had clenched the edge of the exam table.

“Our daughter...” he’d whispered. All three of them had tears in their eyes as they watched her move. If Madison had ever doubted their connection to the child, that moment in the darkened room had proven both Connor and Franklin were fully invested in this. In their minds, this was their daughter as much as it was hers.

The only annoying fly in the whole thing was Martin.

She didn’t understand her ex’s hounding. He had wanted nothing to do with her. When he’d been at the ranch, he’d been threatening, but that was only because he saw an opportunity. Sex had always been his guiding principle—however he could get it, from whomever he could get it from. Sadly, she didn’t realize that until it was too late. Eventually, she’d been sidelined and he’d lost interest, save for that one drunken night.

And now, he suddenly had a hard-on to be with her. Hell no. He could just fuck off. Even if he wasn’t an abusive bastard, she’d say the same. She scrolled to the info on

the text and tried to block it, but he was somehow sending her messages from an unregistered number so there was nothing to block.

Growling, she hurled the phone onto her couch then finished gathering her things for the day. When Connor and Franklin found out about this, they'd go ballistic. Now that she'd be with them most of the time, other than work, there was no way they wouldn't see Asshole blowing up her phone. After how they'd reacted to him before, she was terrified what they'd do.

She'd deal with it after work. It had snowed again last night, so she needed to pull her heavy gear back out. Much to her guys' chagrin, she didn't wear it every day, but she supposed that would change since she'd be moving in with them come Friday. With them engaged, and Edison and Neal gone for school, they wanted her closer. She had a feeling that would entail Franklin mothering her and his baby.

Every day, she waited for the two guys to change their minds, to decide they didn't want to be the father to another man's child. But every day, they grew more and more attached and adamant. Franklin and Connor went to every doctor's appointment, and there had been genuine tears in their eyes when they'd seen their child on the sonogram screen. Franklin always checked that she was eating well, feeling well. That she had everything she needed. Not that Connor wasn't that way, but it was a whole different level with "Franklin the Dad".

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She needed to trust them more. And she thought she was, then her mind swung a different direction. Doc Walker told her it was a pregnancy thing, that her hormones were messing with her emotions and sometimes adjusting her rationality levels, too. Franklin and Connor weren't running out on her or their baby. They were in this whole-heartedly.

Shaking her head at herself, she looked around the apartment to see that she had everything. These days, going up and down the steps was tiring. She gathered the last of her things and scooped her phone off the couch and stuck it in her back pocket.

As expected, the stairs had been cleared and heavily salted, ready for her to take the short journey to her desk. What wasn't expected was the man leering at her from the bottom of the stairs.

"What do you want?" she demanded.

"What do you think I want? I've been telling you for days."

"No!" she screamed, backing up. Panicked, she tried to get away, but she was on the steps, with nowhere to go—not with as pregnant as she was. He was on her in an instant, his hand over her mouth while he dragged her away.

\* \* \* \*

"Something's wrong." Connor stared at Franklin, his face ashen. His stomach had suddenly hollowed out, a heavy panicked foreboding filling him. His limbs were cold as fear clenched over him. He tried to see what it was, to sense the reason for this

impending doom.

Madison...

“What?” Franklin asked.

“It’s something with Mads. Something bad. I don’t know what. I... Just...”

Franklin momentarily froze before he sprang into action. Obviously, he had zero doubt Connor was right, that something was wrong.

“The baby?”

“I don’t know.” Connor had no clue what direction to go. “Let’s call Doc’s and check with her.”

“No,” Doc said, a few minutes later when he answered. “I just got here, and she wasn’t in the office yet. I was about to go check on her.”

“Please do it now. Connor’s got a feeling,” Franklin begged over the speaker phone. The physician was familiar with Connor’s intuition. It had brought Franklin to the office more than once. Each time nothing had been apparent until Doc had checked deeper.

“Hang on.” They heard the phone knocking against the desk top then silence while the doctor went to check on Mads.

“She’s not in her place,” he panted when he returned to the line. “And her purse is on the ground by the door.”

“Call Sheriff Middleton. Tell Joe she’s missing. We’re heading toward Gillette to

look for her.”

“She’s missing,” Franklin rasped. They were already dashing toward the truck.

“That fuck took her.”

“That’s what I think.”

Connor gunned the truck, and snow, dirt and gravel sprayed from beneath the tires as they peeled out of the driveway. He was driving faster than he should on the snowy ranch road. Franklin didn’t say a word. They needed to get to Madison as fast as they could. They heard sirens as they approached the highway. The sheriff’s car sailed past.

Dread filled Connor as they turned out behind the cruiser. He drove just as fast to keep up. Then he saw it.

“No,” Franklin yelled at the smoke billowing up ahead. “No, no, no... God, no.”

As they got closer, they saw a dark blue sedan nose-down in the ditch. Likely, it had slid on the icy roads. The steam and gray smoke spewed from the mangled engine. Thankfully there were no flames, but they didn’t see any people moving, either.

No. They had a family. Their woman. Their baby. Madison and their child couldn’t be taken from them. From him and Franklin.

Franklin leapt from the truck before Connor had it in park.

“Franklin,” Connor yelled, but Franklin was already on the move.

“Stay back!” Sheriff Middleton hollered.

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Connor grabbed Franklin around the waist, holding him back when he ignored the officer.

“Is it Madison?” Franklin demanded, struggling to get free. “Is it Madison?”

“Fuck!” the man swore as he got to the upturned vehicle. He pressed the radio receiver clipped to his shoulder. “I need two ambulances on 59, five miles north of town. Possible fatality. Contact Robert Daly about bringing his chopper in. We need quick transport to the hospital in Gillette.”

Clicking off, he glanced up at the two brothers, shook his head then turned back to the car.

“No,” Franklin screamed. “No.”

“Fuck. No,” Connor panted, still not letting go. Both their knees buckled as Joe pulled Madison from the wreckage.

\* \* \* \*

What was that beeping? Gah. Her head hurt. Everything hurt.

“Shh, stay still,” a quiet voice murmured beside her. Madison forced her eyes open, squinting in the dim light that was still too bright.

“River?” she whispered, realizing her friend was holding her hand, her head leaned against Mads’ arm. IV lines and wires ran all over her, down to her chest, taped to her

arms. “What...?”

River gasped. “Oh my gosh, you really are awake. You’ve been so restless but didn’t wake. For so long.”

“What happened?” she rasped. Her throat was so dry. It hurt to talk.

“The guys just stepped out for a second. They’re talking to your doctor.”

“Martin?”

“Dead.”

Madison took a few breaths, digesting the info. She wasn’t happy for the life lost, but she wasn’t mournful for the loss either. He’d been an awful person. The whole while they’d been in the car he’d talked about what he planned to do to her—after he “cut that bastard out of” her. That he was a doctor and he knew how. And he’d laughed, fully under his sadistic god complex. He’d been cackling when the car had lost control. They’d careened into a ditch. She’d slammed into the dash then the door.

It was the last she remembered.

“The baby!” she gasped, her hand going to her belly. Her flat belly. “No!”

“Hey, hey, hey. It’s okay,” River tried to soothe her. Her hand brushed back Madison’s hair, gently stroking like she would a child.

“No, it’s not,” Madison wailed. “The baby—”

“Honey, Mandy’s okay.”

“What? But she’s... I’m...” Madison’s hand ran over her stomach again. Her head shook back and forth weakly.

“You’ve been in a coma. It was a miracle, but she survived the accident. The doctors delivered her last week. Not quite full-term but healthy enough. C-section.”

“Where is she?”

“With her daddy. You dark horse. You didn’t tell me you and Franklin got together at Moon’s wedding.”

Was that the story? “Surprise,” she said weakly.

“Riv,” Franklin said, coming into the room with Connor. A baby was cradled to the first man’s shoulder. Her fiancé... One of her fiancés. And her baby girl.”

“Mandy,” Madison whispered.

“Look who’s awake,” River sobbed, her emotions emerging now that the others had arrived and she didn’t have to be strong. She stood to give them room to approach, wiping her eyes.

“Oh my God! Call the doctor,” Franklin yelled.



“River,” Madison rasped.

“Yeah?”

“Hug.” It was hard to say more than a word or two.

River bent over her and embraced her gently. “I’m so glad you’re okay. I love you.”

“Love, too.”

Then all at once her men were there along with her baby girl. They were together. They’d all be okay. It would all be okay.

“Thank God, you’re back. The doctors kept saying there was no reason you couldn’t make a full recovery. But the head trauma... Head trauma is still an unknown,” Connor said, his voice trembling with emotion. “But you’re awake now. You’re going to be okay.”

She nodded, tears filling her eyes at his barely contained emotion. “I love you,” she told him.

“I love you, too. So much!”

“Do you want to see our daughter?” Franklin asked.

“Yes.”

Connor helped to prop her a little, and Franklin brought the baby—Mandy—close to her, so she almost cradled the child in her own weak arms. “She’s beautiful,” Madison whispered.

“She looks just like her mama,” Franklin said. “I love you, darlin’. You did so good. Now you just need to get better, so we can have that happily ever after we promised each other.”

“I will. I want to go home, and be with my cowboys and our daughter.”

“I know,” Connor said, kissing her temple. “You’re just mad about cowboys.”

“No, I’m just mad about you.” And she knew she would be for the rest of their lives.

## Epilogue

### Eleven Months Later

Madison watched Franklin as Mandy held his fingers and took stumbling little steps, moving fast in her haste to get to the dog a short distance away. She knew a few things full well. Mandy would drop down and crawl if Franklin wasn’t holding on to her. Madison had never seen a baby crawl so fast.

She also knew Buster would take off before Mandy got to him. The collie loved the baby, but more from a distance when she was laughing the way she was. It usually signaled she was wanting to play rough, and their gentle canine wasn’t down for that. It was part of why Franklin was taming their daughter right now. He had proven to be a great dad, one-hundred percent all in. In fact, in the first days after her birth, while Madison was still hospitalized, he’d insisted on being the baby’s caregiver while Connor took care of her.

She looked up at Connor who stood beside her. He smiled, shaking his head as he watched their daughter. “They say girls are sugar and spice and everything nice, but I have a feeling our daughter is sugar and cayenne pepper with a dash of jalapeno—sweet with a bite.”

“She’s perfect.”

“She is,” he agreed. His hand cupped her slightly rounded belly. “This one will be, too.”

“With you and Franklin as dads? He’ll probably be a super-protective brother, even though he’s younger.”

“Barely younger. They’ll be close.”

“They will be.” As for the parents, they were still in a little bit of shock that they were expecting another baby so soon after Mandy. They’d been careful. Connor had always worn a condom to make sure. Then she’d turned up pregnant. Turned out, Franklin’s swimmers weren’t as absent as he’d been told.

And none of them were unhappy about it. It was another miracle for them. They were racking them up and keeping track.

“The next one will be yours,” she said.

“All of them are mine,” he growled.

Madison grinned. They were. Sometimes, she wondered if that bothered him, that biologically he wasn’t the dad. But by blood didn’t really matter. Family came in many forms. The Quist family proved that; so did their own smaller portion of it.

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She leaned into him, turning her face up to stare adoringly at him. “By the way, happy birthday. I know it’s not until next week, but we have guests then. Riv is keeping Mandy overnight this evening, Doc gave me tomorrow off, and the three of us have reservations at a hotel in Gillette. Just you, me and Franklin. All night.”

“It’s been awhile since we’ve had that.”

“I know. I think we need some...special togetherness.” All three of them as one. Though they had sex often, going double was a less frequent occurrence.

Connor groaned, and one of his hands swept down to squeeze her ass. “This is mine tonight.”

“Hmm,” she hummed. “All yours. Just like me. All yours and Franklin’s.” She tilted her head to make room for his trail of kisses down her neck. She shivered, getting worked up even though they couldn’t do anything about it for hours.

“Maybe, we should cancel the reservation and stay here,” Connor suggested, somehow reading the direction of her thoughts. “Gillette’s two hours away.”

“But champagne and cake—”

“I don’t need anything but you.”

“Have I told you lately how glad I am that you guys claimed me?” The thought of being without them... She couldn’t even entertain it. It was too awful.

Franklin joined them, holding a squiggling Mandy in his arms. She reached for Madison who took her, then he wrapped his arm around her waist. “There wasn’t ever a question,” he said. “We didn’t even need to say claimed. You were ours the second you set foot in town. I might not have psychic feelings like Connor, but I believe in fate. You, me, Connor? Our kids. Staying here and not wasting hours going to Gillette and back, that’s fate, baby.”

Whatever it was, fate, destiny, coincidence, animal attraction or whatever? Madison didn’t care. She had her cowboys, her family and her happy future. As far as she was concerned, who could ask for more? Not her. She had everything she needed in this little, unconventional circle of love.