



# Roping The Virgin (Cowboys & Virgins 2)

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**Category:** Erotic, Romance, Western

**Description:** Blake Jennings has always wanted what his parents had: a sweet, simple love that lasts a lifetime. And when he meets Luciana, he knows she's the one.

Luciana Salazar comes from a tight-knit family that pushes her to follow her dreams. When she takes a job on the Braided Rope Ranch, the last thing she expects is to fall in love with its owner, the dark-haired man she's seen watching her in town.

Roping the Virgin is over-the-top sweet, with a heaping scoop of sexy steam. Blake sweeps Luciana off her feet and gives her the life she's always dreamed of.

Warning: Ridiculous is almost close enough to describe this irresistible short story. Come back to the Jennings farm and pull up a rocking chair. You'll like the way they treat you.

**Total Pages (Source):** 13

# Page 1

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## Chapter 1

Blake

I slam the door closed behind me as I enter my brother Ty's home, making his wife jump. Her hand flies to her chest, and her mouth drops open in surprise. She shakes her head at me then lets out a sigh. Everyone in the Jennings family is loud in some way. We've never been a quiet bunch.

"Little early to be mad," Mary-Jane says, going back to cutting something on the kitchen counter.

The smell of bacon and eggs fills the room and makes my mouth water. But she's right. It is too early to be as fucking pissed as I am. I'm more than pissed. I'm walking around in a state of agony and there is only one person who can fix it. And she won't give me the time of day.

This was the fourth morning in a row I'd woken up from a wet dream about her. This time it was of her riding me. Digging her nails into my chest as she took her pleasure and moaned my name. I had a vision of her dark hair, usually in a tight braid, spilling free and falling around her. I watched it bounce with every glide of her hips down on my cock.

"Fuck," I mumble, trying to push the thought from my head as my cock comes to life. It can't be normal for a guy to walk around like this. I'm constantly rock hard, and it never seems to ease. The smallest thought of her and he's throbbing, begging to have her. It's driving me fucking insane with need. It's eating at me, and I'm starting to

feel like I'm going to crack. I don't know what will happen when that time comes.

Mary-Jane rolls her eyes when what sounds like a bull comes stomping down the hallway. My older brother fills the room, and he's sporting a pissed-off face, too. I'm sure we look identical in our frustration.

"You fu-freaking knock when you come in here. You had no clue if my wife was even dressed," Ty barks, pointing at me.

I have to stifle a laugh at the correction of his own curse word. No one curses more than my brother. Well, like he used to. Now that their little boy, TJ, is here, Ty is trying to clean up his language. It's not working out so great.

"And you." He turns to look at his wife, who places her hands on her hips, clearly not intimidated by Ty in the least. Even if he is easily double her size. "Why was the door unlocked?"

"I fed little TJ out on the porch swing early this morning. When he fell back asleep, I put him back down," she tells him tartly.

Ty walks over to her, picking her up and placing her on the counter before stepping between her legs.

"I didn't even feel you get out of bed." He says it so softly I almost don't hear it.

"Cause you're not sleeping. You work this farm all day, then you try to get up with me for feedings."

"I worry about you getting worn out," he tells her.

"The only one getting worn out is you. I'm fine, Ty," she tells him as he drops his

head to hers and gives her a kiss.

I stand there and watch, so jealous my teeth hurt. I've always been the laidback one in the family, and now I feel like a live wire is shocking the shit out of anyone I come near. I never thought Ty would be the first one out of us to get married. Dolly's still a little young, so I'd always thought I'd be the first. Hell, before Mary-Jane showed up, Ty couldn't even get it up, compliments of a bull-riding accident a few years previous. I'm starting to wish I had the same problem. I never have any blood left in my brain with it all in my dick. Maybe that's why I always come across as an asshole, when before I was always the coolest of the Jennings.

Then there's Trace. He doesn't even know women exist. The only thing he looks at with doe eyes is food. Has been that way as long as I can remember.

Now me, I always knew I wanted what our parents had. But I didn't think that was possible. I'd never met a woman who even sparked an interest within me to head down that road. Not until the day I saw Luciana and I knew she was it. She was what I'd been waiting for. She hit me like a truck loaded down with bricks. Might sound crazy, but it was there and I knew it. One look and I knew she'd be mine. I felt it bone deep, something I'd never felt before in my life.

The first time I laid eyes on her, she was standing outside the veterinary office in town. I was across the road from her, talking to some tourists and giving them directions, when my eyes landed on her. I stopped mid-sentence and stared at her. When her eyes finally came to mine and she gave me a soft smile, all the air left my lungs. But it was gone as fast as she gave it, and she turned to walk inside the clinic. Since that day, I've been trying to get her attention and I'm failing miserably. I'm not used to this. I'm the light-hearted one in the family. The smooth talker. But Luciana wasn't having any of it. The most I could get out of her were one-word responses, no matter how hard I tried. But I've seen her with other people. With everyone else she laughs and smiles. I've even seen her giving people some sass. I want that aimed in

my direction, but I can't get it from her. When she sees me coming, a concrete wall falls into place and she does everything she can to avoid me. It's driving me fucking insane. At first I thought it was cute, but as time goes on, I feel like I'm going to explode from need f

or her. Like I'm running out of oxygen. If I don't have her soon, I feel like I'll die. And I don't mean beneath me in my bed. Don't get me wrong, I want that, too, but it's more than that. I need her. All of her.

"There are other girls in town, Blake. Plenty who have been trying to get with you for a while," Ty says, breaking into my thoughts once again. "It's not like you don't flirt with everyone."

"I don't flirt. You just think having manners is flirting."

Mary-Jane starts to giggle because I'm right. The thought of another woman only pisses me off. I already have one. I've had her from the moment I saw her. As far as I'm concerned, she's the only woman who exists for me.

I don't date girls from town. That's like shitting where you eat, but that rule went out the window with Luciana. None of the rules apply when it comes to her. She's the one. We aren't together and I'm already lost for her, thinking about how I'd never let her get away from me. She might not know it yet, but she's mine and there is no way in hell I'm ever letting her go. Maybe I should stop trying to be the nice guy. Moving in slow and trying to get her attention hasn't worked. I need another plan. One that works a whole lot faster. Otherwise I'll up in the loony bin or something. I feel like that's the direction I'm headed.

I move towards the kitchen breakfast bar and take a seat, knowing Mary-Jane will make me something to eat for breakfast. God knows I can't cook to save my life. Dolly, our little sister, will sometimes take pity on me and come over and make me

some meals, but she's been MIA a lot lately. I should probably look into that, make sure she isn't getting into trouble.

"Don't you have some land to tend?" my brother says.

"There is enough breakfast for everyone," Mary-Jane says in a chastising tone.

"He's not eating what I plan on eating," Ty growls, and Mary-Jane smacks his chest playfully. He smiles at her and they laugh. The change I've seen in my brother is crazy. He hasn't smiled this much since before we lost our parents and he took over watching out for all of us. Goes to show you what the love of a good woman can do for you.

"Besides, I've got a plan," Mary-Jane says, looking over her shoulder at me and then back to Ty. "Down." Ty gives her one last kiss before pulling her from the counter and placing her on her feet.

"A plan for me?" I question, not sure what she thinks she can do.

"Yep. I came up with it last night. It's perfect." She claps her hands excitedly, her dark curls bouncing with the motion. Ty reaches out and absently starts playing with one, not caring about our conversation in the least. "So I got an email from the Long View Veterinary Clinic yesterday."

With that, she has my full attention. I know that's where Luciana is working. The clinic has been in town for as long as I can remember, and Dr. Long is always hiring new people here and there to help with the workload. It can be hard to keep up with all the farms around here, not to mention the usual house pets.

"Well," Mary-Jane says, leaning in. "I guess Luciana wants her specialty to be in large farm animals and cattle, so she doesn't have to stay in the clinic. Dr. Long

asked if we could use her help. She wants to work some barns.” There aren’t a lot of vets who know how to treat horses. Dr. Long is one of them, but he’s a busy man and can’t always get out to the land fast enough. I could see why he’d hire someone with that interest. It’s much needed around here. “He’s been training her and thinks she’s ready to go out on her own. I was thinking I’d let her come out here, stay with Ty and me. Since this family has four farms between us, we have more than enough to keep her busy. Then you can finally try to get close with her. Maybe even—”

“Not happening,” Ty chimes in. Apparently he can twirl Mary-Jane’s hair and listen at the same time.

“No, it’s not,” I agree. I don’t like that idea one bit. Though I know her family probably isn’t going to like the idea I have, either. I know she lives with them still, ’cause I might have done some light stalking. Followed her home a few times when she left the clinic after dark on her long drive home.

“What? I just gave you a freaking gift.” Mary-Jane shakes her head like I’m crazy.

“She’s not staying here. I only have a couple of months left where I can fuc—bang my wife wherever I want without someone walking in on us.” Ty voice leaves no room for argument. He will give Mary-Jane just about anything she asks for. Unless he’s asked to sacrifice any time with her.

“She stays with me. Besides, I’ve got two wild horses I need a hand with. I can use all the help I can get and they’re over on my land.”

Mary-Jane studies me for a second.

“I don’t think she’s going to like that very much,” MJ says, making we wonder how close she and Luciana are. Hell, does she talk to everyone in this town but me?

“She doesn’t have a choice. She wants to work on Jennings land, then she only has one option: doing it from mine.” I know it’s a dick thing to demand, but I’m beyond caring. I know what would happen if she was staying here at Ty’s. I’d snap and end up showing up and throwing her over my shoulder and storming out, probably making things worse. It would be better if she stayed with me. Then I couldn’t just lose it one day.

Mary-Jane lets out a little huff, but I know she’s in. It’s the same sound she makes when Ty cavemans her into doing something. “All right, I’ll call Dr. Long. But I have a feeling you’re going to have a fight on your hands.”

I couldn’t agree more. Looks like I’ve now got three wild horses to break in.

## Chapter 2

### Luciana

“Are you going to take the job?”

I look over to my older sister Fernanda, who’s washing dishes. She points to the paper in my hands, and I fold it up, putting it in my back pocket. I grab a dish towel and dry the ones she’s finished with as her three kids run through the kitchen at full speed. She yells at them in Spanish and they stop in their tracks, then creep slowly away from us, not wanting to get into trouble.

“You sound exactly like Mom,” I say, elbowing her.

“I guess I’m on a roll tonight, so I’ll keep nagging like she used to. Are you going to take the job or not, Luciana?”

I sigh and shrug. “I don’t know.” I let out a long breath.



She dries her hands and then turns to me. I can feel her eyes boring into the side of my face, but I don't look up to meet them. She doesn't just sound like our mom, she can also cut you with a look, getting us spilling all our truths.

“Luciana,” she snaps, and my eyes come to hers. “This is your dream. You have to do this. You’ve been working in school for so long, and you were finally able to get into Dr. Long’s office. It’s over two hours one way for you to get there every day. If you were able to work on a farm full time, you’d get the clinical hours you need in no time. Then you’d be able to finish and become a vet. The real deal.”

I nod, knowing she’s right. But I look around the small house and think of all of my responsibilities here. Of leaving them. I might be gone a lot between the drive to the clinic, the hours there, and studying, but I do help as much as I can here. It might not be a ton, but it’s something, and a little goes a long way.

“Stop that. Stop it right now.” She points her finger at me. “I can see your brain already trying to talk yourself out of it. When Mama got sick you tried to give up on your dream, but we wouldn’t let you. And now that she’s gone you don’t have that excuse anymore. Mateo and I may not have much, but we work hard and we make it just fine. Don’t you dare use us as an excuse for quitting your dream.”

“Fernanda—” I try to speak, but she interrupts me.

“There’s nothing to say. You’re going. And when Dad gets home, you’re going to tell him. Don’t ask, tell. Lo entiendes?” She says it like a question, but it’s anything but.

I want to get mad and tell her she’s not the boss of me, but she’s only pushing for me to follow my dreams. How

can I be mad at her? I’d do the same thing if it were her. “Yes, I understand.”

Before I can say another word, Mateo and our dad come in the side door. Mateo immediately scoops up Fernanda and kisses her on the neck. She giggles, and I can see the blush on her cheeks as she closes her eyes and breathes him in. My heart aches at how in love they are. They have been since they were sixteen, and not a day has gone by since that he hasn't worshiped the ground she walks on.

"Hey pequeña," my dad says, coming over and kissing me on the cheek.

"Eat while it's still hot," Fernanda says, still blushing from Mateo's welcome.

The men sit down, and I go back to drying dishes and trying to think of a way to tell my father what I want to do.

"Luciana has some big news," Fernanda says, and I roll my eyes. Mateo grabs her, pulling her into his lap. Guess she took care of that for me.

I pull the letter out of my back pocket and hand it to my father. Dr. Long gave it to me before I left today and told me to have an answer by tomorrow. I'd wanted this so badly, but dreaming is a lot different than doing. And now that I've been given the chance to leave home and work on a farm full time, I'm scared.

I wait silently, watching my dad read the note and then pass it to Mateo. As much as my sister runs the house, we all respect our father's wishes. If he doesn't want me to go, then there is no discussion.

We all live in the house my father built when he and my mother came to America. He started saving as soon as he could work in Mexico, until he had enough money to come here and buy a piece of land. He and my mother made our home and had my sister and me a few years later. We grew up here, and when Mateo asked my father for permission to marry Fernanda, my father said yes, but on the condition that they live here. Our culture is very much about helping each other and living together as a

family unit, so the fact that I'm asking to leave home and live somewhere else is a big deal. My mother knew my dreams of working with animals and living on a farm. She always supported me in this, but when she died three years ago from breast cancer, I felt like a piece of that dream died with her.

## Page 2

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“You will live on this ranch full time?” my dad asks, and I nod. “What will you do when you finish your hours? Once you’ve lived on a farm and been given your dream? Will you come back here to this house with none of that and be happy, Luciana?”

“I don’t know,” I say. It’s my greatest fear. Living the life I want to but being afraid of where it will lead. I take a deep breath and look him in the eyes. “I know that I have to do it. And afterwards, I will do what I need to. This is one step. We’ll have to see where it goes.”

He and Mateo share a look, and then Mateo smiles at me. “Your mama would be so proud.”

I feel little tears sting my eyes, because he’s right. She would be jumping for joy right now. Probably packing my bag and running around getting everything together. I nod and look to my father for his answer.

“I think this is a good opportunity for you. And with as much as you commute to work now, you’re gone a lot of the time as it is. This is the next step.”

I feel a weight lift off my shoulders. I was so worried about what my dad would say that I didn’t allow myself to be excited about the possibility. Reaching out, I hug him and then my sister. They all talk excitedly about the job and how much experience I’ll be getting.

I think about the money I’ll be able to save and send back to them while I’m working. The letter said I’d be staying on the Braided Rope Ranch south of town. I’m not

familiar with all the farms yet, but Dr. Long said that this one was exactly what I was looking for. That I'd get experience with large animals and that there was plenty to look after.

For some reason the man with steel-blue eyes who always watches me comes to mind. I shake it off, not wanting to put that in my mind right now. Those eyes follow me every time I'm in town. And the way he tries to get my attention... I've had to focus on my family and on my work, and I don't have time for men, despite the feeling that always comes to life when I think about him or see him.

I'm twenty-three and have never been kissed, but there's time for that later. I can't keep daydreaming about the tall dark-haired beast of a man who won't stop smiling at me. The kind of smile that looks like he's been doing it his whole life. The kind of smile that makes my knees weak so all I can do is fall into his arms. His T-shirts stretched tight by those thick arms of his. His dirty jeans and boots that make him look like he's been in a field all day. His big hands that I'm sure would feel rough against my untouched skin.

"Luciana," my sister says, snapping her fingers in front of me.

"Oh, sorry," I say, trying to push away the lust fog I was in.

"Are you feeling okay? Your cheeks are flushed." She puts the back of her hand to my forehead, and I push it away.

"I'm fine. I'm just going to pack some of my things. The letter says I start as soon as possible."

I tell everyone good night and make my way up to my small room in the finished attic. I gave up my bedroom for the kids, and the third floor is more private, anyway. When I close the door behind me, I walk over and sit down on my bed, putting my

face in my hands.

I can't believe I got so lost thinking about him. I've never been so hung up on a man before. Any man before. I've never so much as given a thought to falling in love. Sure, I see what Fernanda and Mateo have, and I want it, but actually having that with someone wasn't part of my plan. My life has been about finishing school and helping my family as much as I can. But ever since those eyes saw me, I haven't been able to get them out of my mind.

Falling back on the bed, I close my eyes and see him. Standing there in the middle of town looking like a god among men. Looking like the type of man that would take what he wanted and ask questions later.

In my mind, a fantasy forms. The stranger stomping over to me and grabbing me by the waist. His full lips coming to mine, me being carried away by him. His size and strength no match for me. I feel the heat between my legs pulse.

I tell myself I'll pack later... This vision is too good to stop now.

## Chapter 3

Blake

“What the fuck is wrong with you?”

I stop in my tracks, turning to look at Ben, one of the hands who's been working for me for a few years now. He leans against one of the posts on my wraparound porch and stares at me. I've been pacing in this spot since the sun started to come up. It's all I can seem to do at the moment.

“You got a fucking shirt or something?” I toss my own question back. He glances

down at his bare chest. It's not uncommon to not have a shirt on around here, but it looks like I'm going to have to make a new rule or something. That shit won't be flying once Luciana gets here. Which should be any minute. I don't like the idea of her seeing anyone without a shirt besides me.

"That's actually why I came over. Ripped the shit out of mine on a fence and I wanted to see if you had one I could borrow. I'm doing field work today and don't want the sun on my back burning the hell out of me," he says, still eyeing me like I'm acting funny. Probably because I am. I've been acting funny since Luciana came into my life, and each day is getting worse. I'm hoping having her here will cool the edge and help me revert to not being an asshole. It's almost like Ty and I have switched spots. Now I'm the asshole and he's the one who can't stop smiling like he doesn't have a care in the world. I used to be like that carefree until the world showed me what I was missing.

It's then I see the ripped shirt in his hand. I shake my head and take another deep breath. Recently I've been trying it to calm myself. The counting thing wasn't working, but this doesn't seem to be either. Nothing is. One would have thought I'd cool down a little once Luciana took the job. But I haven't. In fact, I think I've only gotten worse knowing how close I am to having her under my roof. Knowing each night when I go to bed she's under my roof, and I have no intention of ever letting her leave.

I feel like a teenage boy who's never talked to a girl before. She's about to show up here and I'm probably going to make an ass out of myself. The always calm and collected me is anything but at this moment.

"Yeah, come on." I open the front door and head toward my room to grab the shirt. When I get back to the living room Ben's standing there looking all around. I hand him the shirt, but he's still not looking at me.

“What’s happening here?” he asks, motioning at the room. I feel myself actually start to fucking blush. I turn to mask it, walking over to the kitchen to get a cup of coffee. It’s the only thing in the kitchen I can make without burning, and that’s only because Dolly got me some fancy machine that pretty much works itself. It’s even on a timer.

I pause as I doctor my coffee. “Wanted a change,” I finally reply. I don’t offer him one because I don’t want him sticking around. People say I’m a flirt. Ben has me beat by a mile. I don’t think there’s a skirt in fifty miles he hasn’t lifted, or at least tried to.

I don’t really get that. Maybe when you’re young it isn’t so bad, but what happens when it’s time to settle down? You want your wife hearing that shit? Every day having to see women you fucked to get off? My ma would have skinned my dad alive. I smile thinking about the fire they always had for each other. Ma would get so worked up over something and Dad could cool her down in a second. I want that. To have someone who is your other half to balance you out. They needed each other to function. I want that. And I know Luciana is that person. I can feel it. I’ve always been this way. Can tell with one look what can and can’t work.

I wonder what kind of fire Luciana will have. I can tell by the way her dark eyes narrow on me that she has it in her, and I can’t wait to see that fire on full display, aimed my way.

“Are those flowers?” he asks, picking up a vase I’d filled this morning. It makes my hand tighten around my coffee cup. “Oh shit. Not you, too.” He looks over at me. “I remember when Mary-Jane got here, Ty decorated his house to try and win her over. I see you two have the same taste.” He laughs the last

words, and I can’t even argue with him.

I didn’t want this place to look like a man cave when she got here. There are already stupid rumors around town that I’d been with some women around here, which is



utter bullshit. It isn't a secret that our family has money and some want to sink their claws into us. I know one thing I'm going to have to show Luciana is that wasn't true about the women. If she's ever even heard the rumors. I thought it was best that the place didn't look like a bachelor pad when she showed up. I wanted to show her this was a home built for a family. A home that she could see herself in. I want to make her fall in love with it, make her never want to leave, and I'll do anything to make that happen. The more she loves being here, the harder it will be for her to try to leave.

She's already likely going to be pissed that she's staying with me and not with Mary-Jane and Ty. It's not proper for her to be staying with me, a single man. But I don't give two fucking shits. She's staying with me. Period. It isn't even up for discussion.

Sure, we have a few little houses I could maybe let her use while she's here, but her being all alone doesn't sit well with me. Some of the homes are separated by miles. If I thought I wasn't getting any sleep now, I would get absolutely none sleeping outside of whatever empty house we put her in. This is the only option. She belongs here with me, filling up my space and making it her own. Leaving her girly shit everywhere for me to trip over. I like the sound of that. Every part of me does. I didn't think someone could get turned on just thinking about a woman's mess in their house, but here I am, my cock trying to get free once again.

"You got the shirt," I tell Ben, finishing off my coffee and putting the cup down on the counter. He slides it over his head and I make my way back to the front door. My message is clear. It's time to go. I glance at the clock and see it's already ten after eight, meaning she's late. Worry hits me that something could've happened. There was a bad storm last night and some of the roads can get messy. Maybe I should have picked her up. Hell, why hadn't I thought of that? Then she wouldn't have a vehicle here. She'd really be stuck. Would need me to go anywhere. I'd be able to make sure she was always at my side no matter where she was going.

Ben follows me out the door. We both look when we hear the sound of gravel crunching to see a little beat-up blue VW Beetle coming down the driveway. I pray that's not her. Normally she drives a two-door truck. That car isn't fit to even be on the road. The way it's throwing up gravel, I know the tires are as bad as the rest of the car.

"Can't believe she still has that car," Ben says absently, taking me off guard. I pull my eyes from the car and over to him.

"Whose car is it?" I grit the question out, knowing I'm not going to like what I'm about to hear.

"Luciana." He looks at me, and I can't stop myself from grabbing him by the shirt and pushing him into the side of the house. He raises his hands in surrender, clearly not wanting to tangle with me right now.

"What the fuck, man?" he exclaims, but I can see the edge of fear run through his eyes.

"You touch her?" I growl. Ben touches fucking everything, and I don't like the idea of him having his hands on her. If that's the case, he's gone. I couldn't bear to have him around knowing something may have happened. I'd spend the rest of my life making her forget him, and that would be a hell of a lot easier if he wasn't around.

Ben starts to laugh. "I swear, I only touched her car. Once. When it broke down in town last week. She just got the thing and it's a piece of shit, as you can tell. I told her to take it back." I feel some of my anger start to drain away at that. "Hell, you're worse than Ty. Should I make sure I don't look at her either? We all know how Ty gets when anyone even looks at MJ."

I take a deep breath and let Ben go. He's got a fucking stupid smile across his face.

He might have only touched her car once, but I know he tried for more, and I'm guessing she shot him down. He still tried, and that chaps my ass. I narrow my eyes at him in warning, still not happy about this, and the smile drops away. I don't want him close enough to even talk to her. I also don't want him thinking this is some fucking funny game where he can poke the bear. That wouldn't end well for him. Then I remember how I'd done that to Ty the first day MJ showed up here. Karma is butting me right in the fucking ass for that.

"I'll leave you to it, man," Ben says as if reading my mind.

"Put the word out," I tell him as he heads around the other side of the porch. He knows not to go around the front where he can be seen. I don't know how I'm going to deal with all these men being around her. I'm either going to have to get a ring on her finger fast, or learn to deal with this jealousy I have. I wonder if that's even possible after witnessing my brother over the last year. Seems the Jennings men have a jealous streak a mile wide when it comes to their women.

When I turn, I see Luciana standing there looking at me, one hand on her little hip and her big brown eyes narrowed on me. Her hair is in a braid like always, and my fist clenches as I think about taking it down and running my hands through it.

She's so small it makes me wonder how she can handle some of these animals. How she'll handle me. She says something in Spanish, and that only makes me smile. No way am I telling her I understand every word she just said. I need every advantage I can get with her.

## Chapter 4

### Luciana

Curses fly out of my mouth as I stare into the steel-blue eyes that have been haunting

me. The eyes I see every time I close my eyes and think about my future. I've been doing that a lot lately, now that I've started down this new path.

I'd always has a small crush on Blake, which is why I avoided him, thinking nothing could come of it. We come from two different worlds that are literally miles and miles apart. It could never work between us, and I didn't want to walk down a path that led only to heartbreak. After losing my mom I knew I was still too fresh to take that kind of pain again. It was best to stay clear of it, but now it seems to be standing right in my path, and the look in his eyes says he's got no plans on moving anytime soon.

He leans against a post on the huge front porch of a beautiful farmhouse. It looks like something out of a magazine. There are rolling green hills all around us, with a big red barn close by. The place looks like something you'd dream of when you thought of a Texas ranch, and I fell in love the second I drove around the bend and saw it. It's everything I've ever wished for in a place to live and work. Including the dark blue eyes that don't ever seem to leave me when I'm working in town.

Maybe this is some kind of mistake. But my heart tells me that this is more than a coincidence. Like I always thought from the moment I'd seen Blake, if he wants something, he gets it, and I'm not naïve enough to think he had his sights set on me and I didn't know what to do with that and what it means to have a man like Blake set his sights on you. Is it for fun? To pass the time? Or is it something more? His eyes make me think it's more, but I don't know if that's the truth or what I want the truth to be.

"Welcome to the Braided Rope." he says, pushing off the porch and walking towards me.

His easy smile is there, even through the rough shadow of his short beard. The stubble does little to hide the deep dimples on either cheek, and the lines around his

mouth show that he smiles often. He's wearing a white T-shirt snug tight to his muscles, worn jeans, and tan boots that look perfectly broken in. But the worst part is his cowboy hat. It's black and pulled down low, and it makes him look like every cowboy wet dream come to life. If he were wearing a pair of chaps I might not be strong enough to keep from climbing on him. As it is, I'm having to hold myself back. It's like I've driven up to my own little fairy tale and I want to throw myself right into his arms and into that life. If only things in life were that easy. I know I have to work hard for everything I want in life...and there is no way this could be that easy.

"Don't tell me thi

s is your ranch," I say, looking around like someone else is going to pop up and tell me this is all a joke.

"It's yours now, too," he says, and for a second I think he means something much more than my home while I get my farm hours. The thought makes my heart miss a beat. Warmth floods my system. "I'm Blake Jennings, and I'm really happy you're here, Luciana."

He holds his hand out to me, and I look down at it. His deep voice rolls over my skin like a massage, and I lean towards him involuntarily. I reach out, placing my hand in his, and look up through my lashes to see his smile is gone and he's looking at me from under the brim of his hat with hard eyes. His jaw is clenched, and his grip on me tightens. For half a second I'm scared, but then that melts away into something so much more. The nervous feeling I had dissolves and a warm heat forms in my belly. I reach up to tuck a stray hair back behind my ear, and have to take discreet deep breaths to keep from passing out. The intensity of his presence is so intimidating yet comforting. He's like a stallion with all that muscle and restrained strength. He's holding back, I can feel it. But I don't know for how long. And that's what scares me, and attracts me to him.

The sound of a rooster crowing breaks the spell, and I look over to the barn.

“That would be Spartacus,” Blake says, still not letting go of my hand.

“You named your rooster Spartacus?” I can’t help the laugh in my voice.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 6:17 am*

“Sure. It fits him. He’s always going around telling everybody what to do.” He shrugs, and his soft smile is back. “Let me show you the house and we can talk about what you’ll be doing here.” A teasing glint hits his eyes.

“I didn’t say I was staying.” I pull my hand from his grip and take a step back. I need to get my head in control, and I can’t when he’s so close to me and giving me those panty-combusting smiles.

Ignoring me, Blake goes over to my car and opens the passenger door and takes out my bag. Yep, Blake does what he wants. I open my mouth to tell him to stop, but he turns around, puts my bag on his shoulder, and cuts me off.

“The way I see it, Lucy, you’ve got two choices. Stay here on the farm to do the work you need. Or stay here on the farm and do the work you need. Seems like an easy choice to me.”

I roll my eyes and watch him walk past me. “That’s not a choice. And my name isn’t Lucy,” I say, and then let loose some Spanish. I tell him just because he has a great ass doesn’t mean I’m going to do what he says. He stops on the porch and looks back at me, and for a second I worry he understood what I said because I see the heat in his eyes. But he simply winks at me and walks in the door, somehow knowing I’m following him. He does have my bag, after all.

I let out a frustrated grunt and follow him. It’s hot as hell outside, and I’ve got on jeans, boots, and a white tank top. I’m used to the Texas heat, but this much is only going to make me a sweaty mess in ten seconds flat. My long, dark, loose braid is flipped over one shoulder, and I brush my bangs out of my eyes as I step into the

shade of the porch.

Walking in, I see Blake standing in the living room. The house looks new, and I can't help but appreciate how nice it is. After living in a house built by my father, I appreciate the craftsmanship of building a home and notice all the details of the wood here. Someone took their time building this and their dedication shows.

"This is really beautiful," I say, looking at the stone fireplace.

"Thank you. I built it myself," he replies. I glance over at him, not sure if I believe that. "I swear." Something about that does something deep inside me. He's built a home. Not only a home for himself, but a home for a family. Showing me a part of who he is. What Blake wants out of life.

He laughs because he must see I'm skeptical about him building it. The place has a homey vibe to it, but it feels so spacious. I shared a room with my sister most of my life, and then moved to the attic when she got married and started making babies. Living with six other people in a house is cramped. All of a sudden, a wave of homesickness hits me. I miss the loud sounds of the kids and everybody yelling. This isn't forever, but it feels like a big step away from the life I knew.

"Hey," Blake says, coming up in front of me and taking my chin in his hand. "You okay?"

"Yeah. Sorry. Just the first time I'm away from home." I feel comforted by his touch and the wave passes. I feel silly for reacting childishly, but it's part of the reason I'm doing this. To grow up and experience the life I've always dreamed of. I'm so used to being home and surrounded by people, by family.

"Hopefully I can make that as easy as possible. Let me give you the grand tour." His steel-blue eyes sparkle with delight, and I can't help but smile at him in return. He



seems delighted to have me here. Excited even, like he's bursting to show me his home. Wanting me to like it.

He takes his hat off and tosses it on the couch, then runs his big hand through his dark locks. God, I didn't think he could get any hotter, but damn I was wrong. His hair is longer than I expected, and it falls into his eyes as he takes my hand again and leads me to the kitchen.

"This is the place I know nothing about. Apparently food comes out of it, but it only works for me if someone else is doing it."

I shake my head and laugh as I walk into the space and see how big and new it is. This is the kind of kitchen my mama would have killed for. I'm already thinking of all the breads I could roll out on that huge island.

"Dr. Long said I'd be here working with the animals until I reached my clinical hours. Then you'd possibly have a full-time position for me. Or at least enough work in this area to keep me from having to go back into town and to keep him from having to travel out this way so much."

"That's right," Blake says, leaning a hip on the counter. "I have two brothers and a sister, and we all have land out here with animals that need looking after. We need someone to do vaccination, well checks, and be on call if something goes wrong. We've had a couple of instances before where Dr. Long couldn't get here fast enough and we lost some animals. We don't want that happening again. It would be nice if we could do it all in-house."

I nod, understanding that it's a long way from town, and seconds count in emergencies. With this much land and this many animals, I could see why they'd want their own vet.

“Let me show you to your room and we can talk some more. Help you decide.”

His big body pushes away from the counter and he walks over to me. He surprises me by taking my hand again and leading me down a hall. As we pass a few doors, he explains they are empty rooms needing to be filled, bathrooms, and an office. His bedroom is at the end of the long hall, and there's a door beside it. He opens it and we step inside. It's full of light with a daybed against one wall. There are white pillows and soft blankets laid on it and it looks like someplace you'd want to lie down and take a nap. The room is cozy and smaller than I imagined.

“Sorry about the size, but the other guest rooms aren't done yet. I built this one as a nursery since it's close to the master.”

“A nursery?” I ask, looking up at him. “Do you plan on kids?”

The thought of him having a baby with someone makes a little green monster rumble inside me. I hadn't thought about him having a girlfriend, and suddenly I'm not liking the idea. But I was right. He'd built this home for a family. His family.

“Someday,” he says, reaching out and tucking my hair behind my ear. “As soon as I can.”

The tingle between my legs should be a warning sign. But for a moment I allow myself to pretend he means me.

## Chapter 5

Blake

I watch Lucy as she stares at the wild horses running through the field. I'm unable to take my eyes off her as she gazes at them in wonder. The wind blows locks of her

hair that have slowly escaped her braid throughout the day. She looks like she belongs here. That thought has been running through my mind all day.

She has a way with animals like I've never seen before. Her touch is always soft and calming, making them come easily to her. They do exactly what she wants them to. Even when I took her out to see our ornery goat Billy, who bites anyone that gets near him. He was rubbing against her like he was a fucking dog wanting attention. I'd started to get jealous a few times. She'd run her hands along their fur and speak to them sweetly in Spanish. I don't think she was meaning to ignore me, but this is how most of the day went - Luciana lost in the animals and me lost in her. She couldn't take her eyes from them, and I couldn't take my eyes from her. She's perfect. She has so much sweetness in her, and I want it. It shows in everything she does, and I can see why she became a veterinarian. She was born to love and heal. It's who she is down to her core. I didn't know such sweetness could even be real.

"Sun's starting to set and I really shoulda fed you," I tell her. She's so small, she shouldn't be skipping meals, and it makes me wonder if she does that often. Gets so wrapped up in everything around her, she forgets about herself. Well, that's fine by me. I'll make sure she's looked after. Make sure she gets anything she needs.

She turns to look at me, the sun lighting up her dark hair. I'm going to have to get her a hat if she plans on being out like this all day. I'd taken the Gator today instead of a four-wheeler or a horse. I'd wanted to give her some protection from the sun.

I reach out and rub my hand across the top of her head before sliding

it down her braid, feeling the heat from the sun on her black-as-night hair. Her eyes widen, probably shocked by my bold move, like I can touch her however I want, but I make no apologies for it. I've been trying to give her small touches all day. Get her used to me, little by little. Not only that, I need them. I don't think I could stop myself from touching her if I tried. It feels natural. Like I've been doing it my whole life.

“We’ll come back in the morning if you want,” I add, hating to take her from here if she doesn’t want to leave. Hell, if I’d planned it better we could have spent the night out here if she wanted. She likes being with the animals as much as I do. The thought of her and me out here under the stars makes my ever-present hard-on even harder.

“It’s so perfect here. Almost unreal.” Something passes between us, or maybe only I feel it, before her eyes move back to the horses. Instantly I miss them on me. It does feel almost unreal for as long as I’ve been waiting for this moment.

“He won’t leave her side.” Her full lips part, and she looks back at me, giving me what I love most. Her attention.

I nod towards the wild horses. “I know all I have to do is round her up and he’ll come, too.”

“Really?” Her eyebrows draw together in question, because this isn’t normal. Horses don’t mate for life. Usually stallions breed with one and are on to the next. But not him. Where she goes, he goes. No question. I’ve never seen anything like it in my life, and I’ve been around horses since I could walk. Been training them for as long as I can remember.

“I’ve never seen anything like it. It’s actually why I got them. The seller tried to break them apart, I was told, and he went nuts. Once they got him under control he wouldn’t eat. Wouldn’t do anything. They’d talked about putting him down.”

She gasps at that, already attached to the two horses she’s been watching for the last twenty minutes. I had been the same way when I’d seen the stallion. Felt a likeness to him. His devotion for the horse he felt was his. How he couldn’t bear living without her.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 6:17 am*

“I bought them right on the spot and brought them out here. Still not real sure what to do with them.”

Lucy’s reaches out and grabs my arm. Her little fingers are unable to fully reach around my forearm. It’s the first time she’s been the one to initiate the touch. It takes everything in me not to grab her and pull her towards me and mold her body against mine. Where it belongs.

“What do you mean do with them?” she asks, the concern clear in her voice.

“Well, normally my ranch breaks them in and then sells them.”

“You can’t split them up.” Her words are so fast I almost don’t catch them, her passion making her accent bleed through. Something about that turns me on even more. That fire lighting up her eyes.

“No. I can’t,” I confirm. “I’m not sure I can even part with them myself.” That makes her whole face light up, and I swear to Christ, my heart stops for a second. Fuck, I’ll let them move into the house if it keeps that look on her face.

“So then, you do know what you are doing with them?”

“No, I don’t know if I should leave them be, or break them in and try to train them.” She glances back to the horses, and I can’t read her expression. It bothers me that I can’t fully understand her every thought. Know all the little signs of what she’s thinking.

“They look happy out here.”

Luciana looks happy out here, too. It makes me believe that maybe she'd want to stay here too, because, like that wild horse, if someone tried to break us up I'm not sure I could go on either.

“I like watching them like this, too. It's why I haven't started to try. I've just let them be. I come out from time to time to check on them, but I have a feeling it won't be long until she's carrying a foal. Already might have one.”

Her hand on my arms slides down to my hand, her fingers lacing with mine. “I think we'll keep checking on them, see how things go,” she says, looking up at me. “I'd love to be here when she births.”

“I like the sound of that,” I confirm. I like the idea that every day we'll take a trip out here together. That she'll be here when the horse does foal, because that would mean she's planning to stay longer than her set farm hours. I wonder if she even realizes what she said. “Come on, let's get back. We barely covered any land today and have a lot to cover tomorrow. I'll get you fed and into bed.” I don't let her hand go as I walk back towards the Gator. I let her climb into the passenger's seat, and only then do I finally let her hand go. I walk around to the driver's side, hop in, and take off back towards the house.

When I pull up to the front of the house, I see Dolly leaning against her truck. My hackles start to rise when her mouth doesn't turn up into a smile like it usually does. Dolly's always happy, even when she's being a sassy pain in the ass.

“What's wrong?” I say, pulling up next to her.

“Ty called and said he hasn't gotten a hold of Trace all day. You talk to him?” she questions, her eyes going over to Luciana. Dolly gives her a small wave.

I'm not sure if they've met before or not, but normally no one is a stranger to Dolly if she has her way. So I'm guessing they've shared a hello or two.

"No, but that's Trace. He can go days without talking to anyone." It's not unheard of. Hell, a few times he's taken off camping on his own land for weeks on end. It's not news that he likes to be alone.

My dad struck oil long ago when we were kids, and all the rigs are on Trace's land. He just has to keep an eye out and run a few day-to-day things. We have an oil company that manages them for the most part. It's easy for him to come and go as he pleases. That's the way he likes it.

"Yeah, but I guess he was supposed to meet with Mr. Benson about some feed and never showed. Nor did he show to pick up the pies MJ made him."

Trace might like to be alone, but he's always punctual. If he says he'll be somewhere, he'll be there fifteen minutes before that time and then get pissed if you aren't there at that time, too.

"You didn't just drive over and check on him yourself?" I ask. Usually Dolly would be all in this wondering where Trace was and what he was doing.

"Ty called me not even two minutes ago. I was already here dropping off your pies from MJ. They're on the kitchen counter, by the way."

"All right. I'll drive over. His road can be a pain. Even more so after last night's storm. And the fact that he still hasn't laid new gravel this year." I sigh, not wanting to leave Luciana. I still haven't gotten to feed her yet, but I don't want Dolly getting herself stuck in the mud, not to mention if Trace is MIA, it's for a reason, and I'm guessing having Dolly ask him five million questions wouldn't help whatever it is.

I turn to look at Luciana. “I’ll be back as soon as I can. Make yourself at home.” I want to lean in and kiss her, but I don’t know how she’ll take it. Plus, Dolly is standing right here.

“I’m going to make something to eat and head to bed,” she tells me as she steps out of the Gator.

“I think I’ll join you. I haven’t eaten all day,” Dolly says, and I know that’s bullshit. Dolly can out-eat me and has probably already eaten three times today. She wants to get Luciana alone and dig. “Besides, I didn’t know you were staying out here, Luciana. I thought you worked at the vet office in town with Dr. Long.”

“She’s training here,” I tell Dolly, cutting in. I really don’t want to leave now. What if Dolly offers Lucy a place to stay? “Don’t you have school work or something?”

“Don’t you have a brother to check on?” she fires back, and I know I’m not going to win this. Dolly can be just like our ma. If she wants something, she’s getting it, and nothing will stand in her way. Hell, I think we all are like that. Right now she wants to talk to Luciana, preferably with me not around.

“I’d love if you’d join me,” Luciana says, and we both look over at her. “My sister and I normally cook dinn

er together if we can. I think it’s important for family to be as close as they can be.” She narrows her eyes at me, clearly not liking that I was trying to get my sister out of here.

Fucking shit.

“All right. Save me some,” I tell them, pulling my Stetson from my head and handing it to Luciana. “I’ll be back.”



“We really should save him something or he’ll starve. He can’t cook to save his life,” I hear Dolly say as I pick up the pace, almost running to my truck past Lucy’s beat-up little bug. I really need to get rid of that thing and another vehicle. The sooner I get gone, the sooner I can get back.

After hopping in my truck and taking off, I pull out my phone and call a dealer in town for a quick chat. I tell him what I want, what needs to be towed, and where the new truck should go. I know that’s probably going to be a fight. I don’t care. I’ll give Lucy anything she wants, unless that something puts her in danger. After spending the day with her, I know one thing: Lucy is always worried about the people around her. She likes to make sure everyone else has or gets what they need. Well, I’m going to make sure she’s the one getting what she needs.

## Chapter 6

### Luciana

We stand there as Blake takes off, nearly tearing up the gravel driveway as he goes. I hear Dolly laugh and I look over to see her shaking her head.

“I’m so excited. I finally found something to get under his skin about. Nothing ever gets to Blake. It all rolls off him. Or it did.” She puts her arm through mine and steers us towards the house. “Now let’s see what we can find in here to eat. I have groceries delivered once a week so I have something to cook when I come over. He should be pretty stocked up.”

Her red curls bounce as we enter the kitchen, and she goes to the fridge and starts pulling stuff out like she does this all the time. It’s sweet that she looks after Blake and that their family is close enough that they all watch out for each other. It reminds me of home, and I know not every family is like this. I go over to the sink and wash up, then move to the large island and start chopping some vegetables, thinking about

doing this every night for Blake. I love that he has his sister to help him, but I prefer the idea of filling this spot for him.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 6:17 am*

“So, you’re in school?” I ask, thinking about how I’m so glad to be done with classes. Only clinical hours left, and then taking my certification for my license.

“Yeah, I guess that’s what you’d call it. I’m taking a couple of classes to keep my brothers off my ass, but between me and you.” She looks up and we lock eyes. I give her a nod, telling her she can trust me. “I haven’t signed up for next semester. I don’t want to be in school. I want to do what I’ve wanted to do my entire life, work the farm and raise a family like my ma did.”

I smile, thinking she’s a lot like Fernanda. I can get that. If it’s what she wants, it’s what she should do. My sister is beyond happy and I wouldn’t take that away from her for anything in the whole world. “My sister was the same way. When we were growing up, I had big dreams of leaving home and working. Wanting to go to school and then have a career. My sister was the complete opposite. She fell in love with her husband at sixteen, and as soon as they could get married they did. Then they started making babies, and she’s the happiest I’ve ever seen her. She’s an incredible mother.”

Dolly sighs and puts her chin in her hands. “That sounds wonderful. I just need to convince my soon-to-be-baby daddy that he’s the one.” I think it sounds wonderful, too. I never thought that I could have both those things, a family of my own and my work but being here with Blake has me thinking differently. Maybe I could have both. Have it all. It all seems too good to be true.

“Baby daddy?” I ask, smiling. Wonder what her brothers would think of her using that term. I also wonder who this man is.

“Yeah, he doesn’t know it yet. But he’ll come around.” She winks at me and goes

back to cooking.

I pull out some ingredients I need for homemade tortillas and get to work. We're making Tex-Mex buffet-style so we can all pick what we want. It's an easy meal, one Dolly and I seem to know by heart, so we work well in the kitchen together. It reminds me of home and makes me feel at ease.

I felt it all day with Blake. The peace of the land and being beside him. Something about this place seems magical. I've never felt so calm and at home in a place I'd never been before. Seeing him out on his land and showing me the place, it was like I was meant to come here. I could see how much he cared about his animals and how easily he trusted me with them. It's as if I've been working towards this place all along. It's all new, yet so familiar. I have dreamed about this a thousand times, and recently he's started to appear in the dreams, too. How is it possible that it's all coming true so fast?

"So you and Blake?" Dolly asks, pulling me from my thoughts.

"I'm working here until I get my farm hours." I shrug noncommittally. I don't want to jinx it. It's so new and I don't have it fully in my grasp yet. I could lose it at any moment. The thought makes a rock sit deep in my stomach. "Once that's over, I'll see about working out this way full time. Blake told me that your family has a lot of land and a need for a vet out this way."

"We sure do. Ty has the most animals, but Blake seems to get the sick and injured ones the most. I think that man has a soft spot for the more delicate ones."

Warmth spreads in my chest. I've seen how tender and sweet he can be. But there is an undercurrent of strength there, too. I catch it every now and then when he looks at me. I get a sense he's holding something back, and I'm curious to see what would happen if that full intensity was unleashed. Has it ever been before?

“I’ve got dairy cows on my land. I’m a sucker for their big brown eyes. Think Blake might be, too.” She winks at me, and I can feel myself blush.

We talk about movies and books, and I find myself laughing with Dolly. We have a lot in common with our trashy romance tastes, and when she puts on some music, we start dancing as we cook in the kitchen. It’s a happy place here, and I’m falling more in love every second.

“Hey, we should go dancing in town. There’s a place with a live band and it’s a lot of fun. We could have a girls’ night.”

“That sounds like fun,” I say. I can’t remember the last time I went out for a girls’ night. If ever. If my sister and I ever went anywhere special, it was always something with the kids. Whenever she got free time she spent it with her husband, which I totally got. I’d want that too if I was married to Blake. The thought hits me hard, almost taking the breath from my lungs. It’s too overwhelming, so I push it aside.

“How about tomorrow night?” Dolly asks excitedly.

I get the feeling she is as starved for girly fun as I am. Living with my family, I never got to cut loose a lot, and I was always so focused on school I never took the time to party. This might be exactly what I need.

“I’m in,” I say, and we clink our tea glasses together. It sounds like a lot of fun. Maybe I can pull some more stuff about her brother from her.

We’re getting out our plates and making our food when the front door bangs open. We both turn and see Blake nearly running in, almost out of breath.

“Jesus, dude, did you run all the way home?” Dolly asks in surprise.

“No,” he says, looking over to me. “Just hungry is all.”

“Is everything okay?” I ask, wondering if his brother is okay.

“Don’t know. He was acting strange when I went to the door, and then he wouldn’t let me inside. It was weird, but I didn’t push it. I said I’d check on him again tomorrow, and he seemed even more mad about that. I finally left after he threatened to throw me off his land. It’s not like him, but he didn’t look hurt or anything.”

“That’s odd,” Dolly mumbles around a mouth full of food as she studies Blake.

I fix Blake a plate, and we sit down together at the table. He scoots his chair as close to me as possible. So close we are touching. But I don’t complain. I like having him with me. I keep telling myself that this can’t be real. No way is this guy so perfect and trying to give me his attention. Maybe he likes to flirt with everyone. I wasn’t in town long enough to hear any kind of talk about him, but I bet if I asked the right people next time I went in, I could find out some things. They may be things I don’t want to hear, but I may need to hear them right now. Before I get in way over my head.

Hell, who am I kidding. I’m already starting to fall for this guy.

“Time to go, Dolly,” Blake says after we finish eating and he’s cleaned up the dishes. I helped him as Dolly was picking at what was left of the food.

“Fine,” she huffs as she grabs her bag and heads to the front door. “See you tomorrow, Luciana,” she throws over her shoulder before shutting the door behind her.

“Why is she coming back tomorrow?” Blake asks, then shakes his head. “Why am I even asking? It’s probably to eat.”

I laugh, but decide not to tell him about our planned night out. I don't know why, but I feel like it's kind of our secret. Girls' night with no boys allowed. It feels fun and sneaky.

After the kitchen is cleaned up, I have to stifle a yawn with the back of my hand. Blake watches me, then laces his fingers with mine, leading me down the hallway.

When we get to my bedroom, he leans against the doorframe as I step in. This moment feels so intimate, like he's walking me home after a date. I guess in a way, he is.

"So I'll see you in the morning?" I say, then I feel dumb. Of course I'll see him in the morning. This is his house.

"As soon as the sun comes up." He reaches out and brushes a stray lock of hair from my cheek, and for a moment I think he's going to lean in and kiss me.

But to my disappointment he takes his hand away and steps back.

I don't want this to be over. I know we are just a door apart, but I still don't want to break this moment.

"Sleep sweet, Lucy."

As he closes the door, I fall back on my bed and put my hands over my face. I've never wanted a man to grab me up and kiss me so bad in my life.

I lie there for what feels like forever. Sleep doesn't come as my

mind churns with thoughts of Blake and this day. I've never had a more perfect day in my life. I'm scared if I close my eyes I'll wake up and this will all have been a

dream.

I toss and turn to no avail. Giving up on sleep, I pull myself from the bed and open my bedroom door to see Blake standing there. His eyes widen with surprise.

“I was just going to check on you,” he tells me, making me smile. I’ve been noticing he’s always worried about me. It’s nice to be someone’s sole focus. It’s different.

“Couldn’t sleep,” I admit.

He grabs my hand, pulling me from my doorway and down the hall and into the kitchen. He lifts me up, taking me by surprise as he sits me on the counter. Then he starts pulling stuff from the fridge and cupboard.

“My ma used to make this for me when I couldn’t sleep,” he tells me, taking the cup he prepared from the microwave. “It’s pretty much the only thing I know how to cook being as I don’t sleep that well. My mind doesn’t want to shut off when it gets going about things.”

I take the cup from his hand and bring it to my lips. A warm caramel taste fills my mouth.

“Wow. That’s wonderful.”



## Page 6

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He leans up against the counter across from me, his hands gripping the edge like he's trying to keep himself in place.

"What's your mind going about tonight?" I ask, taking another sip of the comforting drink. I look at him over the rim of the cup. He's only got on a pair of low-riding pajama bottoms, and it takes everything in me to not run my eyes all over him. Or throw myself at him. 'Cause while he's said flirty things and implied a few others, he still hasn't acted on anything. Only a few small touches here and there, nothing more. I'm starting to think I'm going insane.

"I was worried you weren't sleeping all right, wanted to make sure you're good here." He pauses for a moment and I see him swallow. "You're good here, right? You're not going anywhere?" I can see the tension in his body.

"Blake, I'm perfect. Today was wonderful. I felt a little homesick for a moment, but you and this place wiped that away. This place is more than I could have dreamed of." I watch the tension leave his body. "You sure I'm not taking up your space or something? I know you might have other things you need to do besides watch over me."

"There is nowhere else I need to be," he says, letting go of the counter and standing to his full height. I can tell he wants to say more. I want him to say more, but his jaw is locked.

"Okay. Than that's settled. I'm staying and I'm good. That mean you can sleep now?" I tease, but I like the idea of him so worried about me leaving it was keeping him from sleeping.

“For tonight,” he replies, taking the cup from me and finishing my drink before putting it in the sink. “I have a feeling I won’t be sleeping tomorrow night for a whole other reason.”

## Chapter 7

Blake

I wrap my rough hand around my cock, wishing it was Luciana’s soft hand instead of mine. I start to pump, and it’s almost sad that it only takes three pumps and I’m cumming. I moan out her name, thinking about her on her knees in front of me in the shower. I’d been fantasizing about that image all day.

What it would be like if we were really a couple. We’d spend our days out in the field, and afterwards I’d bring her home and wash every inch of her. Along with her dark, silky locks. Then I’d make love to her in the shower before we made dinner. I’d take her to bed and fuck her until she passed out. Dirtying her up all over again, only to wash her again in the morning to do it all over again. Thoughts like that have been running through my mind all day, and I can’t seem to control them anymore. But maybe it’s because I’ve stopped trying to. Fuck, I don’t know how much longer I can last doing this.

Being this close to her is slowly driving me insane. Smelling her, touching her, listening to her laugh and talk. It’s taken everything in me to not grab her and take her to the ground. I feel like one of the wild horses.

After rinsing my release from my body I turn the shower off and step out to dry myself. My cock swiftly comes back to life when I hear Luciana singing in the other room. She does that a lot, I’ve noticed. I close my eyes and listen, wondering what she’s doing right now.

My phone rings, breaking me from the spell. Wrapping the towel around my waist, I walk into my bedroom, grabbing it off my nightstand when I see it's my brother Ty.

"Hey," I say placing the phone to my ear.

"Trace canceled all his shit this weekend and was MIA again all day."

"Fucking hell," I mutter. I don't want to deal with this. I know he's fine. I saw him last night and it seemed like he wanted to be left alone. Not my job to make sure he's doing what he needs to be doing.

"Yeah, well, MJ isn't feeling too good, and Dolly said she had plans, so that leaves you."

"You try to call him?" I ask, already knowing the answer.

"Yeah," he sighs, and I can hear he's tired by the tone of his voice.

"All right. I'll run over there again and check in," I tell him before saying my goodbyes. I'm sure Ty has his hands full tonight with a sick pregnant wife and a little one. Going to check on my brother should be no big deal. Maybe Luciana can come with me. We can go to town and grab dinner or something.

I quickly get dressed and make my way to her room, knocking softly on her door. It swings open on its own, and her scent fills my lungs. God, I can't wait for that smell to be all over this house. All over my bed and me.

Not seeing her in the room, I hear her singing again and follow the sound into the kitchen. She's sitting at the kitchen island, her bare tan feet swinging away. She's dressed in a robe. The sight has me stopping in my tracks. She looks so comfortable and at home. She stops singing, a small smile pulling at her lips. Her hair is out of its

braid and hangs in wet locks all around her. It looks even longer when it's down, I think absently.

She stares back at me for God knows how long before she breaks the silence.

"You hungry?" she asks, her eyes roaming over me.

Yeah, but probably not for what she's thinking. I can't help but wonder if she's completely bare under there. If I could drop to my knees and feast on her. Finally fill the hunger that's been eating me alive for months. But I have a feeling that won't sate it either.

"Yeah, I need to run over to my brother's." I walk over to the other side of the kitchen island, wanting to hide my erection. "Was thinking you could come and we could grab something to eat in town after."

"Dolly is coming over," she reminds me. As much as I like that Dolly is trying to make Luciana feel welcome, I want her to myself. But I can tell Luciana isn't the type to break her plans.

"All right," I tell her. I know I'll get to my brother's and back as soon as possible. I'll have dinner with them, then push Dolly out the door as fast as I can. After that maybe I can talk Lucy into a movie or take her down to the pond or something. Anything. It's Friday and we don't need to be up early tomorrow. I smile, liking that idea.

I come around the island, making it clear I'm coming for her. Her feet stop swinging, and it's then I notice her toenails are painted a bright red. Jesus, even that's hot. I've never noticed polish on a woman before. Her eyes get big as I crowd into her space. The smell of her melon body wash hits me, and I lean down, wanting to breathe more of it in.

“I’ll be back in a little bit,” I tell her before I place my lips to hers in a soft kiss. Her mouth opens in surprise, and I let my tongue slide in for a moment. Getting a taste of her to hold me over until I get back. When she moans, I pull back fast, knowing this would only go one way if I stayed even a moment longer.

Without another word, I grab my keys and head out the door. I don’t turn back to look at her because I know I wouldn’t be able to close the door behind me if I did. I turn and lock the door before heading to my truck and hopping in to drive to my brother’s place.

&nbsp;

; I feel like I took a shot of whiskey, and the buzz doesn’t lessen by the time I finally make it over to Trace’s.

When I pull up, he’s out his door before I can even exit my truck.

“What’s the problem?” he barks, coming down off his porch and straight to me.

“You tell me,” I toss back at him. Movement at one of his windows catches my eyes, drawing them there. But Trace steps into my line of sight.

“I can take days off if I want. It’s my ranch. I can do whatever I like.”

“Not saying you can’t, just saying you’re not acting like yourself is all.”

“Well, I’m telling you I’m fine.” His words are final, and I know he wants me to leave. It’s written in his stance. Then it hits me. I see the possessive glare in his eyes.

“That a woman you got in there?” I nod towards the window his big frame is blocking from my view.

“It’s best you mind your own business and head back out. I’ll call you if I need something. Until then, I’m busy.”

“All right,” I tell him easily, not wanting to fight with him. I want to be here right now as much as he wants me here.

“All right?” he repeats, shocked that I’m not pushing.

“You’re a grown man, Trace, and I don’t give two shits what you’re doing over here,” I tell him as I turn to leave. “Doesn’t mean Dolly will be so inclined.”

“Fuck,” I hear him mumble.

“I’ll tell them you’re fine, but you can only stay off the radar so long before Dolly comes poking. You know how she is. You’re lucky she’s busy poking me right now or she’d already be on you,” I tell him before I close my truck door. Trace shakes his head and turns to head back into his house.

## Page 7

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I drive back towards the ranch, but I get cut short when I get a call about a broken fence. It's a quick fix and I'm the closest and have the tools in my truck to get it done. But it takes longer than I expected. After a good hour, I finally pull back into my own driveway, and all the lights in the house are off.

Fuck. I hope she didn't go to bed already. I pull myself from the truck and make my way inside, flipping on the light in the kitchen. I see a note lying on the counter and go over to it.

Went to the Empty Bottle with Dolly. Left you something to eat in the microwave.

Night.

My fist crumples the letter as I think about Luciana going to the Empty Bottle. It's a hole-in-the-wall most nights, but on the weekends the place fills up. It's where everyone in town goes to have a drink and let loose from time to time, and I know my Luciana is going to be the center of every single man's attention in there.

## Chapter 8

Luciana

"Hey, Jimmy. We want two margaritas," Dolly says and winks at the bartender.

"You and I both know all three of your brothers would kick my ass for serving you, Dolly. You're underage," Jimmy replies, shooting her a soft smile.

“They're both for me,” I say, sliding some cash across the bar. I wink at Dolly and the guy rolls his eyes, muttering something about plausible deniability.

“Thanks,” Dolly says, elbowing me before leaning up against the bar.

“Just don't tell your brothers.”

I look around the place and see people everywhere. Looks like this is the place to be on a Friday night. It's a typical Texan bar with worn wood floors and animals hanging on the walls. There's a band playing some country music and people are line dancing on a stage. I like the feel of it. There's a buzz of excitement, and people are having a good time.

Jimmy comes back with my two drinks, and I slide one over to Dolly.

“She's just holding it for me,” I say, but we all know what's really happening. Small towns have rules all of their own. They make them up as they go and change them as they see fit.

“Hey, your family know anything about that missing girl?” Jimmy asks, placing both hands on the bar as he looks at Dolly.

“Not that I know of. Sheriff knocked on my door this morning asking about it,” Dolly says.

“What happened?” I say, leaning in.

“Probably nothing,” Jimmy says. “Someone found a beat-up truck washed out down one of the country roads close to the Jennings' Farms. Checked the tags and the owner isn't local. The sheriff said they're looking into it, but if you ask me it's probably some woman who got her truck stuck in the mud after that big storm the



other night and then hiked it out.”

Jimmy shakes his head before he heads to help someone else, and Dolly shrugs and takes a sip of her drink. “I’m sure it’s nothing. In small towns any news is big news.” I do the same and go back to enjoying my drink, loving the tangy, sweet mix.

I see couples on the dance floor laughing and having a good time together, and for a second I think about what it would be like to dance with Blake like that. Having a Friday night date night out together. Going out dancing. Knowing steps and having him lead me around, smiling so big his dimples show. I’ve never had a chance to experience something like that as I was always too busy putting everything into my family, work, and school. I knew I wanted a family of my own one day, but for some reason that need has started to pound down hard on me since I landed at Blake’s farm. I wasn’t sure it was something I thought I could ever have until now.

He’d caught me off guard with the kiss. I’d been hoping all day he’d give me one, but every time I thought he might, he’d seemed to change his mind. I wasn’t sure what to do myself. Most things in life I want, I go straight for, but I’ve always been uncertain about men. I didn’t know if I was reading him wrong. Had I built all this up in my head and read way too much into things?

Then he kissed me. It was like the world ignited around me. I wanted to grab a hold of him and pull him to me. Wrap myself around him, but he was gone so quick. I didn’t even have time to process what had happened. It left me feeling mixed up and confused, questioning once again if I was reading him wrong. It was almost like he couldn’t get away from me fast enough.

I’d heard some things about him around town, but I couldn’t connect the man from those stories to the man who had kissed me. A few girls had said they’d dated him. It was partly why I always stayed clear, even though I was always looking for him when I was in town. It did seem, however, like every time he was in town some girl

was trying to get his attention. So I'd always made sure I wasn't one of them. I didn't want to put myself out there with the odds already stacked against me. I lived so far away and every woman in town wanted a Jennings it felt as if the universe was telling me not to pursue anything.

With Ty being off the market, a lot of the women were thinking maybe the other brothers would settle down, too. Well, that's what the town gossip had been, and most were looking at Blake because Trace never talked to anyone or came to town. Seeing him in town was so rare I'd yet to spot him. That left Blake. The times I had seen him, been close to him when he was in town, I'd never thought he was with someone. At least he didn't behave with them like he's been behaving with me the past few days, with all the small touches and such. He was always polite and nice with others, but with me I could feel something more. Possession.

I was starting to think all those stories about him dating were bullshit because of how Blake spoke about the future. He talked about having a family of his own. How he'd take care of his woman. I was starting to think he was talking about me, but his departure after the kiss had left me confused.

How is it I've come to care for someone who is, on paper, a complete stranger to me? Sure, we talk nonstop when we're together and I know everything about him. He's told me about his family, his hopes for a family of his own, and his dream of raising kids on his land. But it's only been days. You can't fall for someone that fast. Can you? I don't even know why I'm questioning it, because I already know the answer. It can, because it's happened to me.

"Oh shit," Dolly says, looking past me.

I turn and see a man with a woman with bleached blonde hair at the end of the bar and then look back at Dolly. Her cheeks are red and she's gritting her teeth. She scrunches her nose a little, and the always happy smile she has on her face is long

gone.

“You okay?” I ask.

Her eyes come to mine and she seems to get control of herself. Her southern manners come back in a flash. “Yeah. Just some whore talking to my soon to be baby daddy. If you'll excuse me.” She downs the rest of her drink in one big gulp and slides off the stool.

I watch her walk over there and instantly the guy is standing up and going to her, getting between her and the bleached blonde. He looks surprised to see her as a half-smile pulls at his lips.

As I'm about to go over there with her, the blonde walks away and Dolly comes back to me. The guy takes a seat in his bar stool and watches her every step. He doesn't take his eyes off of her, even as she comes back and steals my drink, taking a sip.

“I guess you handled that,” I say, a little in awe of her sass. She keeps reminding me more and more of my own sister.

“Nobody fucks with what's mine,” she says, and I want to laugh at her face because she looks so much like Blake. She's totally ignoring the guy now, even though he can't take his eyes off of her. I can tell he wants to say something to her but is holding back.

I take the glass from her and then two more margaritas are brought over to us. Jimmy might not like breaking the law, but he's quick about it. He just shakes his head each time he gives us another one. He says something to the guy sitting next to Dolly. I can't hear what he says over the music, but I know it's something about him watching us.

We knock back our drinks and are on third and then fourth round when I finally feel brave e

nough—or maybe drunk enough—to try to talk to Dolly about her brother.

“So, I like your brother. Is that crazy? I just met him,” I say, laying the top half of my body on the bar because it’s cold and feels nice.

“Nah. When you know you know. You know?” Dolly hiccups and then laughs. “My parents knew each other a hot second before they got married. I’m the same way. I’m really starting to think it runs in the Jennings bloodline.”

“But you’re not married,” I say, giggling, then a half snort comes out, making me laugh even harder.

“I would be if baby daddy wasn’t tripping.” She does a dramatic eye-roll. The soon to be baby daddy moves in a little closer to her. He’s been doing it slowly for some time now, and I’m not sure he’s aware he’s doing it, but he’s almost caging her in. He’s giving a very clear sign that no other man can talk to her. Yet he doesn’t seem to be making a move himself. He just doesn’t want anyone else to, either.

She blows her hair out of her face, and I can’t hold back my laugh. At this rate my stomach is really going to hurt in the morning. Both from the drinks and laughing.

“I think Blake is amazing. And I want to throw a saddle on him.”

## Page 8

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“Gross. Too far, Luce,” Dolly says, holding up her hand in a stop motion. “I will say, I’ve never seen him smitten over a woman before. Not that many haven’t tried to get his attention, but he’s never responded. But you, oh, he’ll be having you it seems.”

I sit up and start to tell her something else, but I do it too fast and my head swims from all the quick tequila. As I’m about to tip out of my stool, a set of hands grabs my arms a little too tight and pulls me to stand before I can hit the ground.

I feel my stomach roll as I look up into the eyes of a stranger.

“I’ve got you, baby.” The man pulls me even snuggler to him. “Let’s dance.”

His whiskey-laced breath hits me, and I want to vomit. The stench of cigarettes comes second, and I don’t know how much longer I can keep the tequila down. He moves against me, and I shove at him, wanting him away from me. His hands are digging into my arms.

“Get your hands off me you—”

Before I can finish my sentence, I’m out of his grasp and safely beside Dolly. Blake is in front of me, and all I can hear is the sound of a loud crack and then a thud as the stranger hits the floor. He’s laid out cold. The band stops playing, and I see Blake’s back moving like he’s breathing hard. His shoulders rise and fall rapidly as he stares down at what he’s just done.

“Holy shit. I’ve never seen Blake lose his temper,” I hear Dolly say. “She as good as roped.” She giggles the last part. I don’t even look over at her. I’m unable to take my

eyes off Blake.

The whole room falls silent, and the bar patrons all look at Blake. When Blake turns around to face me, there is an edge of anger on his face, but it's not directed at me. When he reaches out I go to him without a second thought, knowing he can make me feel better. Simply being near him soothes me. Like coming home when you're not feeling good. I might have had too many margaritas, but my body knows he's a safe place.

"Jimmy. We're gonna talk later about you serving them," Blake says over the top of my head.

I glance over at Dolly, and the guy from earlier is behind her. "I'll give Dolly a ride home, Blake. Make sure she gets there safe."

"Thanks, Brandon, I'd appreciate it," Blake says to the guy, and I see Dolly cross her arms. "You sure it's not too far out of your way?"

"No, it's fine. Anything to get a break from the Johnson farm. You know how June is." Brandon rolls his eyes, and Dolly purses her lips at the mention of this June girl. Brandon grabs a hold of her and they walk away.

"Let me take you home," Blake says, making me looking up at him.

"Yeah. I think I've had enough fun for one night." I glance down at the guy on the floor. He's still out cold. Nobody has come over to help him up, and I can't say I'm sorry about it. The band starts playing again like nothing happened. Thank God Blake got here when he did.

To my surprise, Blake scoops me up in his arms, and I lean into his chest, smelling his familiar scent of leather and sunshine. It makes my head stop spinning, and

suddenly I'm so tired I can't hold my eyes open.

In fact, I'm not able to open them again until I feel Blake shifting me around and picking me up again. It's then I realize we're back at the farm and he's carrying me into the house.

"I don't feel so good, Blake. Can you lie down with me?" I don't know where my boldness comes from, but it's the truth. The tequila has gone straight to my head, and I don't want to be alone. I also know he doesn't want to, either.

I've only been drunk one other time, when Fernanda and I snuck some gin from my dad's liquor cabinet, and I swore I'd never drink again after I spent the next day throwing up. I guess I didn't learn my lesson so well.

"Wasn't planning on letting you be alone tonight, Lucy." The use of my nickname makes me smile. His jealousy tonight showed me one thing is certain. He wants me. Everyone always says Blake is the calm and funny one of the Jennings brothers, but tonight he snapped. He didn't like seeing another man touch me, and something in me liked that. I inspire passion in him, and he's doing the same to me. He's making me feel things I've never felt before.

"Nobody calls me Lucy but you," I mumble against his chest. My eyes are heavy again as I let him carry me.

But before sleep takes me fully, I feel his lips on my forehead. "I'm gonna be calling you more than that real soon."

## Chapter 9

Blake

“Oh God, are you naked?”

I close my eyes and then open them again, trying to see if I’m dreaming. I’ve been having trouble distinguishing with all the visions I’ve been having. The moon streams in from the windows and the glow lights up her skin. Her hair is undone and hanging all around her. She giggles a sweet throaty laugh as she leans down, pressing her bare body against me. I inwardly curse myself for not having at least taken my shirt off before I crawled into bed with her last night. I climbed in fully clothed and wrapped myself around her.

I thought the more I had separating us, the better. Now I’m questioning everything. I sure as hell didn’t expect to wake up to my woman straddling me. Naked. In fact, I thought I might wake to a hellcat who was pissed I stormed into the bar and punched someone just for touching her.

As if reading my mind, she slides her hands under my shirt and drags it up my torso. Her lips follow suit, trailing soft kisses as she works her way up my body. Tentative as first, but each one starts to linger longer, her tongue coming out for a taste of me. I reach out, wrapping one hand in her thick hair, grabbing as much of it as I can hold. I’ve fantasized about doing that from the first moment I saw her.

“Tell me I’m not dreaming.” My words sound pained. She takes a little bite of my chest, making me jerk. I close my eyes tight, trying to keep from cumming. It wouldn’t be the first time I’d woken up from a dream of her straddling me and discovering I’d cum on myself.

“That feel like a dream?” She looks up at me, and I hate that it’s dark and I can’t fully see her eyes. I bring my other hand to her hair and start to pull her towards me. I sit up to meet her halfway and our mouths connect, molding together like we’ve been doing it forever.



She moans into my mouth, and all control snaps. I have her on her back and beneath me before I even tell my body what to do. I can't stop myself. I deepen the kiss, wanting to get as far inside her as I can. Wanting to taste every inch of her. Needing it more than I've ever needed anything.

She grinds her body against me, making it clear what she wants. I pull back and look down at her. Her eyes are wide, and seeing her naked beneath me is almost my undoing.

"Más," she says, asking for more. Then she moves under me, moaning. I wonder if she's still a little drunk. We could have only been asleep a few hours. I want her to remember our f

irst time together, but I can give her more.

"I've got you, mi alma." She gasps as I call her my soul. "I know what you need, and I'll give it to you."

I take her nipple into my mouth as she digs her fingers into my hair. I suck and lick the tight peak before moving to the next. My hands roam her body, wanting to touch every part of her.

She says my name in breathy moans, and it makes cum leak out of my cock. He's begging for a taste of her for himself, but this is about her. My sweet Luciana. Everything would always be about making her happy, giving her anything she wants, to make her need me. I want her to crave my touch and to bind her to me so she'll never leave.

I make my way down her body, giving her small kisses like she did me. Her legs spread wide, but her hips keep moving. She wants this as much as I do. I curse myself again for not having flipped on the nightstand light. I want to see all of her. Every

inch exposed to me.

“Blake, please. I...” she trails off, the need thick in her voice.

I slide my hands under her ass, lifting her pussy to my mouth. I take one long lick, tasting every part of her, before circling her clit and taking it into my mouth. I suck gently and her body jerks as she screams out my name. Her legs tense, and she grips my hair tighter as she climaxes.

I grunt as I feel her release, and then I do the same, cumming in my jeans. We were both so close to the edge, this little taste was all it took to send us over. This has happened hard and fast with us, so I’m not surprised this was any different. It’s like we’ve been walking through the desert and we’re drinking water for the first time. I can’t get enough.

But what runs deeper between us has been building a lot longer than tonight. The tease of the last few months is crashing down around us. From the moment I laid eyes on her, I knew she was the one. All this waiting for her to get here has been torture. But as she cums against my mouth and I cum into my pants, I know it was all worth it. I hump the bed shamelessly, not caring how pathetic this might make me look, because it’s the best orgasm of my life.

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*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 6:17 am*

I could spend eternity between her legs.

When her body finally relaxes and all the soft pulses have stopped, I give her pussy one final kiss. I make my way up, running my lips over her curves along the way, enjoying the feel of her round hips and little tummy against my mouth. She makes humming sounds each time my lips touch her skin, until I'm finally at her mouth, taking another kiss.

When we are both breathless, I pull away and rest my forehead to hers. "Sleep, mi alma."

Her eyes stay closed as I pull her into my arms and wrap my body around hers. I never want to let her go.

## Chapter 10

Luciana

When I wake, I feel the warmth of the sun on my back and the warmth of Blake under me. I blush a little thinking about what we did last night. The leftover buzz from the tequila made me bold, but it was exactly what I'd wanted. What I'd been afraid to ask for sooner. I've wanted Blake since before I even knew who he was. When he was just a man who couldn't keep his eyes off me.

I'm sure I could have found out in town months ago who he was, but something about that didn't seem right. It was almost like I knew in my heart that one day I would find my way to him at the exact time I was supposed to. That things were

coming together as fate intended. And lying here in bed with him now, it feels as though the time has finally arrived. I'm done waiting. I'm taking what I want. No more soft touches or quick kisses. I want Blake, and he's going to be mine. All of him. I know this is where I belong, and we've waited long enough for this.

Blake's big hands squeeze my ass, and I smile to myself. He's had my cheeks gripped tight since I rolled over onto his chest. At some point I'd even stripped him of his shirt and jeans, leaving him only in his underwear. But now as I lie spread on top of him, I feel the naked head of his cock at my opening.

I look down and see that his hard cock has popped through the slit of his boxers, his wide girth no match for the tiny button. I spread my legs a little more and let his hard warmth press against my wetness. Oh God. That feels so good. So right.

"Lucy," Blake moans as I allow his tip to enter me.

I glance at his eyes and see they're still closed, so I decide to be a little bolder. I scoot down a tiny bit more, letting another inch of his massive length inside me. Wanting to feel as connected to him as possible. I want him in me, even if it's only this little bit.

When I feel a tightness, I stop my progress. My virginity is stopping him from entering me, so I wait, remaining still as I try to relax. I move slowly, letting his first two inches stretch me. I rotate my hips in a circle until I feel the pinch ease and I can slide down on him a little more. Taking another inch of his thickness, I hold my breath, glancing up again to see if he's still asleep and to check that his eyes haven't opened. He blinks a few times, almost like he thinks he's dreaming.

I feel his grip on my ass tighten, and I circle my hips again, loving the feel of him inside me. I bite my lip to keep from moaning, and then Blake tenses under me, his hips jerking. Suddenly there's warmth spreading inside me, and I realize he's just cum. I clench, trying to pull more of him into me, but he's only a couple of inches in,

and I feel his seed spill out between us and slide down his shaft.

“Luciana,” Blake says, and I look back to see his eyes full of so much pleasure. Want.

Before I can explain, he rolls us over and thrusts fully inside me. I moan at the fullness, glad the pain from before is gone.

Blake doesn’t move though, he reaches up and gently moves my hair out of my eyes.

“I’ve been dreaming about this moment since I laid eyes on you. I’m still not sure if this is real. Is this what you want?” I feel his cock flex inside me, and I nod. “Are you on anything, mi alma?”

For a second I want to kick myself, because I’m not. Not because I don’t want to have his babies, but because he may pull out and stop if I say that I’m not. But I tell him the truth, knowing I can’t lie to him. Not about something like this.

“No, I’m not protected. I’m a virgin. Well, I was,” I say, a blush hitting my cheeks. He leans down and softly kisses my lips. Then he pulls back to look at me.

“I was, too.” His smile is big, like he’s proud of it, and in a crazy way, my heart nearly bursts with excitement.

“Seriously? How is that even possible?”

“I just wanted to wait for the right one. I wanted to make love for the first time to my wife.” He moves slowly in and out of me, enunciating his words.

The weight of what he’s saying hits me, and love flows through me in waves.

“Blake,” I whisper, not sure what to say.

“I don’t want anything between us, and I don’t want anything stopping us from making a baby, Lucy. I’ll take you down to the courthouse first thing Monday morning and make this official. But first I’ll do right by you and ask your family. I know they’re important to you, and I want to respect that.”

I wrap my arms and legs around him, molding as much of my body to his as possible. It makes all of this seem even more right, because he understands what is important to me. I’m who I am today because of my family, and they’re the reason I had the courage to come here. To find him and to find my life.

“I love you, Luciana. I have since the second we locked eyes. Everything I’ve been telling you I want, it’s all been about you. All of it. The life I want out here, making babies, and raising them with you. Having beautiful girls with long dark hair that I can braid. Having little boys with your big brown eyes learning to care for the animals here. All of it, mi alma. All of it with you.”

“I love you, too, Blake. I knew you were the one the day I stepped on this ranch. This was it for me. You’re it for me.”

We kiss, and I feel both of us pour our hearts into it. He moves inside me, his hard length possessing every inch of my body. He’s owning me and making me his as he makes love to me.

This has been a whirlwind, coming here to the farm and falling in love with Blake. But all of it feels so incredibly right.

His thrusts speed up as my tongue sweeps into his mouth, and I moan at the possessiveness of his body over mine. His excitement fuels my own, and I feel myself build to an orgasm. The tension rolls over my arms and legs, and I raise my hips to meet his. I’m so close, and so is Blake. The big muscles of his arms tense, and he’s about to unleash inside me.

The thought has my orgasm rushing through me, and I cry out against his lips as it takes me over the edge.

“Luciana,” he growls, holding his cock deep inside me and filling me with his warm seed.

I cling to him as the pleasure pulses between us, and his soft lips press kisses to my neck. It’s an orgasm unlike anything I’ve ever felt, and I smile as I think about how I get to do this for the rest of my life.

## Chapter 11

Blake

“What wrong, mi alma?” I ask, stepping onto the porch with Luciana.

She shrugs, and I take her hand, pulling her over to the rocking chair with me.

I sit down and she sits on my lap, but it’s not close enough for me. I wrap my arms around her, burying my face in her hair and she curls up her legs, cuddling into my chest.

“Where did you learn mi alma?” she asks me against my chest. I was wondering when she was going to catch that. Her face always lights up when I call her my soul.

“I knew some light Spanish, but once I got my sights set on you I started listening to lessons when I could. My Spanish still isn't perfect, but it’s getting there.”

She pulls her head from against my chest and looks at me “Why?”

“I didn't ever want to miss a word you might say,” I admit. “And I figured you’d want

our children to speak Spanish, too, no? So it's best I speak it, too."

"God, you're so perfect," she says, her eyes watering as a smile lights up her face.

"Then now might be the time to tell you that little contraption you call a car is now pieces in a junkyard and

the truck over there is yours." I nod in the direction of her new vehicle and her mouth drops open. "Now before you get mad, think about it. That truck can haul anything and get you around these fields, no problem. You need it. It's safe and works better for our family."

She lays her head back down on me. "Okay," she says simply.

"That easy?" I ask warily.

"Yeah. You're right. I'm not going to fight about something that doesn't need a fight. The truck works better for what we need to do around here."

Well, that was easy, but I know why. She doesn't have it in her to fight with me right now, even if she wants to. She's worried. I can feel it in her little body as it's pressed against me. Too much tension.

"Talk to me, Lucy. Tell me what you're thinking."

She called her family yesterday and asked them to come over for dinner. It's Sunday, and I didn't want to wait any longer to speak to her father and tell him my intentions. It's out of respect that I'm asking them, but I'm going to marry her either way. Luciana is my soul, and when I call her that I don't mean it lightly. I couldn't live without her, and I don't plan on trying.



“Nothing. It’s so beautiful here.”

I look out onto the rolling hills with her and feel the peace that this land has always brought to me. And now brings to her. I know she’s worried about telling her family that she’s fallen in love and is getting married after only being away from home a week. But I thought that maybe letting them see this place would help convince them that this is everything she’s dreamed of. That I could give her this.

“Not as beautiful as you.” I nuzzle her neck and inhale her sweet melon scent.

My cock aches for her, but I’ll wait, knowing that we probably won’t get much sleep if tonight is anything like yesterday and this morning. We can’t seem to take more than a five-second break before we’re reaching for one another again.

She hums against me, and then I hear a vehicle off in the distance. I look to where the noise is coming from, and there’s a red truck headed our way.

“That’s them,” she says, standing from my lap. I reluctantly let her go, but I grip her hand tightly. I don’t want to give her any more distance.

The truck stops, and a man about my age gets out of the driver’s side and goes around to open the door for a woman who looks almost identical to my Luciana. An older man steps out of the back, followed by three kids, who immediately start running over to the barn.

Luciana and I walk out to greet them while her sister yells at the kids to come back.

“They’re fine, Fernanda. My foreman, Ben, is out there and he can show them around.” I extend my hand to her. “I’m Blake Jennings. It’s really nice to finally meet you.”

She reaches out for my hand, and her warm brown eyes look to me and then to Luciana. After a second she lets go and then moves to her sister, wrapping her in a motherly embrace.

I shake hands with Mateo, and his smile is kind. After Fernanda is finished with Luciana, he pulls her back to his side, wrapping a possessive arm around her. I like Mateo immediately.

Luciana's father waits silently, and then I turn to him, holding out my hand and speaking in Spanish to greet him. I welcome him to my land and invite him inside so that we can sit down and talk. No sense in beating around the bush. He looks at me with eyes like my Luciana’s and nods.

Once we’re inside, we go to the living room and sit down. I pull Luciana down on the couch beside me, taking her hand as her family sits across from us.

“There’s no sense in formalities. Luciana has told me how close she is to you, and I want to respect that. I’d like to ask for your daughter’s hand in marriage. We’ve fallen in love and I want to spend the rest of my life taking care of her. I’ve asked Luciana to invite you here so that I may ask for your blessing.”

Her father looks between us and then back to me. “You love her?”

“With all of my heart.”

He looks to Luciana, and no one says a word as they silently share a moment. “Mi pequeña, do you love him?”

“With all of my heart.” She repeats my words, but there is a small hint of sadness to them.

“Luciana, what’s wrong?” I say, turning her so she’s looking at me. I want her to forget everything else in the room.

“I’m just going to miss my family.” She shrugs, like it’s a fact of life. “That’s all.”

“Lucy, are you crazy? I would never take you away from your family. If you want to go back and live with them, we can. We don’t have to stay here on the farm. Where you go, I go. And if you want your family here, there are more than enough houses and land to make that happen. Whatever your heart desires, I’ll give that to you. From this day until the end of time. You say the word and it’s yours, mi alma,” I tell her. I’d never take her from her family. If that is what she wants, we will move to them or they can move here.

I hear a sniffing and look over to see Fernanda wiping away a tear. Luciana smiles at her and then lunges at me, kissing me and wrapping her arms around my neck. I pull her to me and kiss her back, not caring that her family is still sitting with us.

When she finally pulls back, she’s beaming at me, and I can see the light in her big brown eyes.

“We are happy to give our blessing and welcome you to our family. All I ever want is for my girls to be happy. If they are happy, I am happy,” her father says, standing up and offering his hand. I stand up and pull Luciana to my side as I use my free one to shake his.

“Who’s hungry?” Luciana asks, and she starts pulling Fernanda into the kitchen.

We have a great afternoon of eating and showing her family the land. I show them

some of the houses that are out here, though many are empty and in need of some repairs. Mateo and Luciana's father work in construction and offer to help. I tell them how hard it is to get anyone out here to work on things like this, and I have my hands full with the animals. We talk to them about coming and staying here while they do the work, and the kids are the most excited out of everyone. It's a beautiful day, and it's made even more special that I've got Luciana at my side.

Tomorrow, we go to town and get our marriage license, and I plan on tying her to me as soon as possible. It's amazing to see her family here, and how she lights up around them. Hearing her stories is one thing, but seeing her with them is truly heartwarming. I'm happy that I'm able to provide not only for her, but for them as well when the time comes. I'm not sure how fast her father will want to leave the house that he built for his family, but having all of them together is important to my Luciana. So it's important to me.

When we say our goodbyes to them, it's with promises of seeing each other again in a couple of days at the courthouse. Where I'll make Luciana Salazar Mrs. Luciana Jennings. And as eager as I am to give her my last name, I'm even more eager to get my baby inside her.

## Chapter 12

### Luciana

As the truck pulls out of the driveway and we watch my family leave, I let out a deep breath. I turn to Blake and jump into his arms.

He laughs as he easily catches me, and I wrap my legs around his waist and start kissing him.

"I want you. Now," I whisper as I pull my shirt over my head. He kicks the front door

closed, and suddenly my back is against it.

I'm undoing my bra as his lower half supports my body and he pulls his own shirt off. My naked breasts press against him, my hard nipples rub against his chest hair. Need is flooding between my legs, and Blake sets me on my feet barely long enough to strip me naked.

Once my panties are ripped from my body, he's hoisting me back up and pushing me against the door. His cock is out, and in one quick thrust he disappears into my heat. Filling me. Making me feel whole. Coming home.

"Fuck," he grunts and starts to thrust. He's moving fast this time, like he's as desperate as I am.

The banging of the door is sexy as hell as he fucks me against it. The lou

d sound echoes through the hallway, punctuated by my moans of his name and his growls of possession. He's finally let go of that restraint.

I score my nails down his back as he sucks on my neck. He's going to leave a mark there, but I'm okay with that. I want every part of me stamped by his ownership.

Our passion is thick and heavy between us. Our lust and love for one another circle our bodies and push us to our peaks. My orgasm is close, and I want him to cum with me.

"That's it, Blake. Fill me up."

The words are all it takes and he's holding himself still as his cock throbs. I clench around him as my own orgasm takes me. The pulsing of his cock and the heat of his cum makes my pleasure spike. Knowing that I'm his in every way imaginable and

will continue to stay that way has me melting against him.

I pant, trying to catch my breath as I feel myself being carried to the bedroom. I giggle as his cock moves inside me, but the giggles turn into a moan after he takes a few steps.

“Más?” Blake asks, thrusting into me.

“Sí,” I moan as he grips my hips and rocks into me.

By the time we make it to the bedroom, we’ve made love all over the house. We fall into the bed, both exhausted but not yet sated, because even though we can hardly move, we still reach for each other.

“I love you, mi alma,” Blake whispers as he enters me.

“I love you, too,” I answer, and let him make love to me slowly until the sun comes up.

Epilogue

Blake

One year later...

I squeeze Luciana’s ass while I cuddle into her neck, and she laughs. God, that sound drives me crazy. Our little girl reaches her chubby hand up and grips my shirt, tugging on me. I look down at her, cradled in Luciana’s arms, and nuzzle her neck, too. She lets out a giggle as my beard tickles her and my heart almost bursts from the joy of it.

## Page 11

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 6:17 am*

“She’s already a daddy’s girl,” Luciana says to me, and I give her a soft kiss on the lips.

We walk out to the pond and see Fernanda and her kids splashing and playing. Mateo and Luciana’s father feed apples to Peanut Butter and Jelly. I still laugh at the name Luciana gave the wild horses, but they’re always together. Like soul mates.

“We’re all so happy here,” Luciana says on a happy sigh, and I can’t help but smile because she means everyone. The horses, her family, us.

Right after we got married, I talked to Luciana’s father privately and we came to an agreement. He agreed to work on my land if I could move his house on it. He thought it was a ridiculous idea at first, but I couldn’t imagine building a home for my family and then being asked to leave it, so I couldn’t ask him to leave it behind. There wasn’t enough room for Luciana and me to move into it, so this was the best solution for everyone. I didn’t care how much the thing cost to move. I wanted it done.

Fernanda and Mateo ended up taking one of the other houses here on the property with the kids, to give themselves some privacy. But we’re all so close together that it feels like one big commune. And in a way, I guess it is.

We had our daughter, Amalia, two months ago, and I already want another. Seeing Luciana pregnant could only be topped by seeing her hold our daughter. I can’t wait to have a big family with her, watch our love grow.

Mateo comes over and takes Amalia from Luciana and holds her, humming softly. He goes over to the blanket with Fernanda and she gets out a bottle to feed her. Watching

our extended family care for our child makes me want to sneak away with Luciana.

She must have the same idea, because I feel a tug on my hand and I look over to see her winking at me. Fernanda silently waves us away, and I know we've got a short window of time before my family shows up. We're having a cookout this afternoon, and all my siblings and their babies are showing up.

Luciana and I half-run to the house and into our bedroom, locking the door behind us. Before I've even got the lock flipped tight, she's naked and on the bed. I do the same, stripping out of my clothes and climbing on with her. It hasn't been long since I've had her, but her body is always my weakness.

Seeing her breasts swollen with milk and her tummy soft from where she carried our baby has my cock pointing straight up and already glistening at the tip. I reach down between us and rub the head of it against her wet opening, moaning as her arousal coats me.

"Please, Blake. Don't make me wait," she moans, spreading her legs wider.

I look down to see little drops of milk leaking from her breasts because she's so turned on. "Fuck," I growl, leaning down and latching on to her, tasting the sweetness.

I thrust into her, giving her every hard, thick inch of me. She cries out from the pressure and from the pleasure of having me inside her. I still have a hard time fitting inside her tightness, but after a few hard thrusts, she's melting against me.

I lick one breast clean and then move to the next, suckling her and having my turn with her milk. Seeing her feed our baby makes me so hard because all I can think about is how sweet she tastes, and when I get my turn, I'll be inside her. Throbbing inside her warm pussy and filling her with my cum. Giving her another baby.



“More,” she moans, and I hear how wet she is for me.

Reaching down between us, I strum her hard nub, feeling her clench around me. I don’t take my mouth from her breast, knowing that when she cums, she’s going to drip a little more. And I want every drop.

My cock is begging for her to go over the edge so he can empty in her. The need to breed her bears down on my back and pushes me deeper inside her. I hold myself against her and grind, not wanting to leave her pussy even for a second.

Finally, I feel her blessed clenches as she cries out my name and cums on my cock. I spurt inside her in long hot waves, splashing into her unprotected womb, praying it takes root.

The feel of her soft body around me as she drips her sweetness onto my tongue strengthens and lengthens my own orgasm. I will never have enough of this woman.

“I love you,” I whisper against the tender curve of her breast.

“I love you,” she repeats, running her fingers through my hair and raising her hips under me. “Once more, mi amor.”

I pull my cock out a few inches and then slowly move back into her. It’s covered in both of us, creamy slick and sliding into her easily. We both moan as I start the process all over again. My need for her is never sated.

I’m thankful every day that I made her mine. That I brought her out here and made her see the beauty of the land, the life I dreamed we could have. All of my wishes have come true because she said yes, and I intend to show her how happy she’s made me for the rest of our lives.

## THE END

When Clare Stevens walked onto the McCallister ranch, she expected her life to be a certain way. She was the mail-order bride of the owner, and she was to fulfill her duties. Clean the house, cook for his men, and warm his bed at night. What she didn't expect was the beefy cowboy who walked in and literally swept her off her feet.

Cash McCallister didn't have time to date and find a wife. So a mail-order bride seemed the easiest way to find a partner. He thought he'd made a mistake until he laid eyes on the little piece of sunshine that lit up his life. He never imagined a true love like this. He never knew an obsession could take hold so tightly.

When drama hits the farm and their fast love is threatened, can Clare and Cash hold it together?

Warning: This is literally as cliché as it sounds...and just as awesome. It's country living with high-calorie foods and easy sunsets. Come sit on the porch and stay a while. You'll like what you see.

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Publisher's Note: This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents

are a product of the author's imagination. Locales and public names are sometimes used for atmospheric purposes. Any resemblance to actual people, living or dead, or to businesses, companies, events, institutions, or locales is completely coincidental.

Edited by Aquila Editing

This book is for those of us lucky enough to have a night under the stars while sipping Boone's Farm. Here's to the backs of trucks, cowboy hats, and tight jeans. Yeehaw!

## Chapter 1

Clare

"Miss Clare Stevens?" I turn my head to look at the man who said my name. The sun blocks my view until he takes another step forward, his cowboy boots tapping on the concrete of the train station's entryway. His movement gives me a clear view of him now, and I'm taken aback by the sight of him.

He looks like he could be my father's age. Not that I knew my father, but if I had to guess how old he was, he'd be around this old. Instantly, the little bit of the fear I'd been feeling slides away. The man looks nice. The laugh lines around his mouth are evident, even with all the wrinkles. His grey hair is cut short, his skin is deeply browned by the sun, probably from years of working out on the land.

"Yes, that's me." I rise from the bench I'd been sitting on for over an hour. I was starting to wonder if my soon-to-be husband was coming or if maybe he'd changed his mind. The worry had grown worse with each ticking minute that had gone by. I didn't even have enough money to catch a train back out of Lobo, Texas. I would have been stranded in a town in the middle of Nowheresville.

“Sorry about that, ma’am. One of the fences broke this morning and we had hogs all over the place. Had to round the bastards up.” He cringe

s slight at his own curse. “Excuse my language, ma’am.”

I smile, letting him know it doesn’t bother me “Don’t hold back on my account. I grew up on a farm with ten ranch hands. I’ve heard it all.”

“That so?”

I nod. “Yeah, until my mama got sick and we had to move to the city.” I can still hear the pain in my own voice. It’s still fresh. I can’t hide it, even if I wanted to. She left me all alone a little over a month ago, and I don’t have anyone now. The ranch I’d grown up on was gone. It wasn’t our ranch, but it felt like it after all the years we poured into working there. The ranch hands there were the only family I’d ever really known, but the Blackwells upped and sold the ranch last year and there wasn’t the option of going back to work there now.

I’d found myself up the creek with no paddle.

“Sorry about your loss.”

I just shrug my shoulder because I really don’t want to talk about it.

“That all you got?” He nods at the one bag I have sitting next to the bench. That all you got? The words burn.

“Yeah, that’s all I got.”

He studies me for a second, his eyes going soft.

“He’s never going to see you coming.” He laughs, and the lines around his mouth are more prominent now. I know he’s talking about my future husband, Cash McCallister.

“Pretty sure he knows I’m on my way.” I go to grab my bag, but the man beats me to it.

“Name’s Earl,” he says, picking up my bag and giving me a wink. “And no, I’m not sure he knows you’re coming.”

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*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 6:17 am*

With that, he turns, bag in hand, and starts heading out of the train station. I follow him as we make our way towards a black truck. He throws my bag into the back before opening the passenger door for me.

He actually has to give me a little boost to get inside. This thing needs a freaking stepladder or something.

Closing the door behind me, I slip on the seatbelt while he climbs in the driver's side. He buckles his own belt before he turns the key and the truck comes to life.

"It's about an hour's drive out to the ranch. It's nothing but farmland once we pull out of this town. You need anything before we go?"

"Where is he?" I don't know why that's my response, but I'm hurt that the man I'm supposed to be marrying isn't here to pick me up. I actually thought we'd be tying the knot before heading out to his ranch. That's what the email had said.

"Got held up," is his only reply as he pulls out of the train station, getting right on the road out of town.

I bite my lip as I look over at Earl, who shoots me another wink. I debate whether I should try to grill him for information about Cash or let it be. He'd probably tell him everything I'd said. Besides, Cash told me how this marriage was going to work and why he needed a wife.

A marriage of convenience. Someone to warm his bed and cook his meals. He hadn't said it in such blunt terms, but I could read between the lines. Though I didn't know

why a man as handsome as Cash needed a mail-order bride. Handsome was putting it mildly. He'd given me one picture of himself and said it was the only one he had. It looked like it was taken without him knowing. He was on top of a horse, a stern expression on his face.

I couldn't make out his hair with the Stetson on his head or his eye color, but there was no hiding he was attractive and massive. Intimidating was the best word I could use to describe him in the picture. I couldn't imagine a man like him needed to get a mail-order bride, but here I am. Something about not needing the tangles of love. This wasn't going to be hearts and flowers. We would each do our part.

His words were cold, and at that, I'd pushed the idea of finding my Prince Charming out the window. When I'd first found out about the Cowboy Mail-Order Bride Program, I'd let those little romantic ideas dance around in my head, but it was clear from the emails and the fact that he couldn't even bring himself to pick me up today that he hadn't been lying. This is all for convenience.

He didn't even ask for a picture of me. All he wanted to know was if I could cook, clean, and work a computer. That had pretty much been the gist of it. The agency did a background check, and I'm not sure what-all they'd given Cash of it.

I close my eyes, and soon the hum of the truck puts me to sleep. I don't know how long I drift, but the touch of a hand to mine wakes me from my sleep.

"We're here," Earl says. I look out at a large ranch-style home made completely out of wood. A deck wraps around the whole thing and I see white swings on the porch. The double front door is a dark blue, giving the home a welcoming feeling.

I open the truck door, wanting to see more, but Earl grabs me by the wrist.

"Wait for me." He exits the truck, coming around to my side to help me down.

There's land as far as I can see, with barns speckled here and there.

"It's beautiful here."

Earl just nods in agreement before going back to the truck and getting my bag. A few men step out of the white barn closest to the house. Both raise their hats, saying hi. I nod back at them.

One thing I'd always loved about growing up on a ranch was that there were always people around. And I love to cook. Mama and I could cook for hours for the men, and it was worth it to see their faces light up when they came in after a hard day of work. It made me feel needed, a part of something. I want that feeling again.

"Let me show you inside." I follow Earl up the porch stairs. He opens the doors to the house, leading right into the living room. Everything is minimal. It looks like a woman has never even stepped foot in here. The walls are bare, and the only furniture consists of three sofas facing a giant television screen. The living room is open and connected to the dining room and kitchen.

The dining room has a wooden table that could probably seat fifteen people at it, but the kitchen steals the show. I find myself standing in it, not even realizing I'd moved. The countertops are all granite. The island has a sink of its own. One wall has four ovens built into it. The stainless steel appliances practically sparkle. I think I'd marry Cash just for this kitchen alone.

"Brand new," Earl says, breaking through my kitchen high.

I turn to look at him still standing in the living room as he watches me.

"How many hands are here?"



“Total is eighteen people if you count yourself, ma’am.”

I could definitely handle eighteen people in a kitchen like this. I glance over at the clock. It’s already one in the afternoon.

“Dinner time?” I ask as I start to pull open drawers, looking to see where everything is.

“Six,” I hear him say from behind me as I find an apron and pull it on, tying it behind my neck and making sure not to catch any of the blonde spirals that have come loose from my ponytail.

“Well, I better hop to then if I want to have dinner done by then. I’m guessing that my adoring soon-to-be husband has no plans to marry me today since he couldn’t even be bothered to pick me up.” I turn, putting my hands on my hips.

Earl just smiles. Again.

“No, I don’t think he has plans to marry today.”

I give a curt nod before getting back to the task at hand. Not even married and I’m already mad at the man. But I think this is how our marriage will be. I’ll see him at meals and when he comes to bed. A bed I’m sure I’m supposed to be in. That was never outright said, but that is what married people do.

I’d made plans for that as well, making sure I’d gotten myself on the pill before I’d come out here. I might have landed myself in this situation, but I wouldn’t bring a child into it with me. This was about surviving, and Cash had never said anything about children.

I go to the pantry and look to see what I have that could feed almost twenty people.

After looking over the shelves in here and in the kitchen, I decide on burgers with baked fries and a pasta salad. I'll need to go to the store soon, but I have enough for tonight and breakfast tomorrow.

But I need to start with the pies to get them into the oven.

When I come out of the pantry, I scream. Caught off guard by a young man who looks to be about my age or maybe in his early twenties. I'm still a few days shy of my twentieth.

He holds his hands up at my shriek.

"Sorry, ma'am. I was just coming in for the first-aid kit." He wiggles the kit he has in his hand. "Barbed wire got his calf."

"Sorry, you just scared me. I didn't expect anyone."

He gives me a crooked smile. "So the boss went through with it. Got himself a wife."

"That's me," I confirm, though we aren't married yet. I go over to the sink and pull out a dish towel I saw in the drawer, wetting it with warm water.

"You might need this." I hand him the towel.

"You're mighty small." His eyes run over me like I'm hiding size somewhere. I am small. I'm barely five foot two, and I used to have a little more meat on my bones, but when money runs tight so does food.

"I think I can handle my chores while still being small." I reply, not sure where he's going with this.

“Oh, I’m sure you can. I just meant...” He looks back at the front door like he suddenly wants to leave and not finish what he was saying.

“Well?” I push, wanting to know.

“I should really go.” He backs up out of the kitchen, first-aid kit in one hand and towel in the other, before he darts out the front door. And I stand there, wondering what he meant.

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Everything For Her

by Alexa Riley

USA TODAY bestselling author Alexa Riley's first full-length novel shows just what happens when a strong, possessive man finds the woman of his dreams.

I'll never forget the way she looked, so confident and sure of herself. I watched her from a distance. She wasn't ready for me yet. I didn't approach her and I didn't disturb her, but I never once took my eyes off her.

Mallory Sullivan is ready to start her new life. After graduating at the top of her class, she's landed one of the most coveted internships in the United States. Hard work and determination have gotten her to this moment of living the life she only dreamed of while growing up in foster care.

From the start, I knew that she would be my greatest achievement, so the day I let her go, I set down a path for her. A path to me.

She never expected Oz to be the greatest culmination of those dreams. But sometimes fate determines who you fall in love with. Who makes you lose control. Who owns your soul.

And then you realize it wasn't fate at all...

I've wanted to care for and protect her since the first moment I saw her. I've constructed everything in our lives so that at the perfect moment, I could have her,

could give her the life she deserves.

The time has come.

Preface

Miles

I've watched her since the beginning.

It's funny, but I don't really remember much before her. It's as if I could split my life into two halves. Before her and after. I remember my life with my parents, and I remember getting into college, but it's all gray before her. Until the day I saw her, there was no color. But once my eyes landed on her for the first time, it was like when Dorothy landed in Oz and she opened the door. The world went technicolor, and she was my very own Glinda the Good Witch.

I was twenty-two years old the first time I saw her. She was seventeen and competing in a state-level high school math competition.

Yale University asked me to represent them as a student judge, and I nearly declined. The state of Connecticut is small but houses one of the greatest Ivy League colleges in the country. One that makes becoming a standout almost impossible. I was among the top one percent in my class as a senior at Yale, and my major being statistics.

The only reason I'd accepted the invitation was to play a part. Many expected me to follow in the footsteps of my father, and I wanted them to believe that, but my end goal was a little different than anyone knew. I was on the path of revenge, but playing a part would help me on that path. Rubbing shoulders with the same men my father did, even if it left a bitter taste in my mouth.

Agreeing to judge the competition was life-changing. The bitter taste in my mouth

altered that day. A sweetness took over. I wanted it. Needed it.

I'll never forget the way she looked, so confident and sure of herself. I watched her from a distance, like you would a lioness in the wild. I didn't approach her and I didn't disturb her, but I never once took my eyes off of her.

I found out later she was being sponsored by her high school so that she could attend the competition. She had no family and was being raised in a group foster home, so her school funded the trip. She was smart, and they wanted to see her succeed, which she did.

I saw so much in her as she competed. She knew all the answers and was absolutely sure each time. She trusted her instincts, and they didn't let her down. There was so much potential in her just waiting to be unleashed. I wanted to sit down and talk to her and have her tell me everything, anything, as long as she talked to me.

She swept the competition and won first place in her division. I was strangely proud of her.

When she walked out of the hotel ballroom after the competition was over, I let her go. It was the hardest thing I'd ever had to do. But I knew that if I went after her too soon, or too fast, she would run. Not only was she too young for me, but something about her told me she was the kind of woman who came along once in ten thousand lifetimes.

This wasn't to be rushed. It was to be savored.

I may hate my father, but I've learned from his mistakes. I'm going to use those mistakes for my own. He's smart but sloppy at the same time and it's been showing. But I know if you want something, you work hard for it, plan out all the details to make it yours.

From the beginning, I knew that she would be my greatest achievement, so the day I let her go, I set down a path for her.

A path to me.

No one knows it's been me behind the curtain, pulling the strings. I've constructed everything in our lives so that at the perfect moment, I could have her.

The time has come.

**\*\*STILL IN EDITS\*\***