



# Hooking Up (Menage a Trouble #3)

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**Category:** Action&Adventure

**Description:** She cant be tied downbut these rodeo partners have their eyes set on a new prize.

Bella's in a sticky situation in the middle of team roping partners Carter and Quint. And now that they know she's been toying with both, they share the same goals in and out of the arena—to have her. Together. Oh, she'll let them try, all right. But don't they realize she can't be bridled?

Time to get your YEEHAW on with two sexy cowboys who have all the right moves when it comes to pleasing their lady. Menage a trois and enough rope to keep you turning pages!

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## Page 1

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“I’d tell you to kiss my ass, but then you’d fall in love and I’d never get rid of you.” Bella sashayed away from the the men lined up at the fence watching her.

The cowboy she’d just put in his place doffed his hat and held it over his heart, staggering a bit as if she’d wounded him. “You didn’t even give me a chance to prove what I got.”

“She knows whatcha got, Barns—and it’s the equivalent of that cow flop over there. Now stop harassing the lady and let her practice,” another boots-and-hat-wearin’ rodeo man called.

Bella glanced at the lineup. If she were a betting woman, she’d lay her cards on the quiet one, on the far right. The quiet ones always tried the hardest to get her in their beds. Maybe they believed that observing her would provide them with answers the others could never learn.

His folded arms rested on the top fence rail, plaid cotton bulging around his forearms. With his deep tan and that scruff of black hair on his jaw, he was pretty enough, but she wasn’t interested.

Twisting away, she gave her admirers a sway of her hips, which earned more than one hoot. She strode across the paddock, and her horse trotted right to her. Bella pulled a treat from her pocket and offered it to her horse named Josey Wheels. Her horse wasn’t her first barrel racing horse by far. No, this was her fifth.

As a kid, she’d started off with a slower horse that didn’t turn so fast or abruptly, but through the years as her skills developed, so had her need for faster, more precise

animals to compete with. Josey Wheels handled like a luxury sports car—which reflected her name.

The mare was also as much of a diva as Bella herself. The proud toss of Josey Wheels' head earned another round of whistles from the guys at the fence.

“Let's give them a show, all right, my beauty?” Bella stroked her mane for a moment before launching herself into the saddle.

As soon as her behind hit the leather, she tuned out the racket the half dozen men made. She drank in the cool morning air and worked her animal. The barrels stood at intervals inside the paddock, and she took them slowly at first, giving Josey Wheels time to warm up. An injury wouldn't be good right now, especially with a big competition tonight.

Bella looped the barrel and Josey shot toward the next. Bella flexed her abs as she leaned slightly, directing her horse. At one with her animal. Out here, she didn't let anybody mess with her mind, which was how she'd won so many shiny belt buckles, ribbons and trophies.

Several racing schools had given her the skills, but mostly Bella ran on gut instinct. At the age of seven, she'd proven herself. By twelve, she'd set her sights on the rodeo and never looked back.

For her sixteenth birthday, her parents had scraped up enough cash to buy her a truck and trailer combo of her own and sent her off to competitions by herself.

That's where her love of the open road and freedom had begun. Then she'd met Frazer, and well, things had gotten serious fast.

At least on her end.

She squashed her mental boot heel all over thoughts of Frazer and spurred Josey Wheels faster. A slight breeze trickled over her face and slipped its fingers into her hair. The heavy mass was pulled back, a hot, thick tail on her nape. After Frazer, she'd gone a little crazy and taken a pair of kitchen scissors to the length.

A few hacks and she'd sported a riot of waves around her shoulders that had driven her nuts for most of a year before it grew out enough to harness in a hair-tie again. The change of appearance hadn't helped rid her mind of Frazer's shitty words that were etched deep inside her.

You're never gonna be better than me, Bella. Don't think you can do better.

How many times had she rolled those words around in her brain? She'd spoken them aloud and even written them down, but she still couldn't totally puzzle out his meaning.

At first she'd thought he meant she couldn't get a better man than him. Then she'd spent months watching video footage of Frazer on his own horse, trying to see if he was a better rider than she was. He was good—had even earned plenty of titles and endorsements for his prowess. But comparing her talent to his when it came to barrel racing was like holding apples and oranges.

No, she had no damn clue what the man meant. Her final conclusion was he was stupider than she'd first thought and couldn't string a coherent sentence together.

She pushed a breath out through her nostrils, feeling them flare. Josey Wheels snorted too, always attuned with her. She felt her horse's ribs expanding with exertion, but they weren't finished with this drill. Above all, she wanted that win tonight.

Frazer hadn't won in Henderson, Texas, but she was damn well going to.

After Texas, she was on to Alabama, Arkansas and Florida. Some women she competed against didn't travel as widely as she did, but she had nothing to tie her down.

Especially not a man.

She slowed her horse and made a few slow revolutions of the paddock before prancing down the line of guys at the fence. Their ranks had increased, and she offered them all a sassy smile, catching their gazes as she passed.

"Go out with me tonight, Bella." She might toy with a man with such a charming smile as long as he didn't expect more.

She swung back around to look at him a second time. She reined up. "You're Jeb Anderson."

His smile, slow and sugary, was exactly the type of thing she was drawn to time and again. "In the flesh," he drawled.

"I might let you buy me a drink."

He appraised her from the top of her cowgirl hat to the tips of her serviceable, not flashy, boots. She was a no-bullshit kind of girl.

"I bet you're mighty thirsty after that run. Put up your horse and we'll see about getting you a drink." He shot her a grin, turned and walked away.

She watched him go—broad shoulders, rounded ass in Wrangler jeans, arms swinging freely. He was a man who knew ladies fell at his feet by the heaps. She wasn't one of them, but she would let him buy her a drink and amuse her for a few minutes.

When she set Josey Wheels in motion again, she caught the glance of the man at the end. The quiet one. As she neared, he pushed off the fence, biceps bulging, his dark, intense stare following her.

Something stirred deep inside her. A much different feeling than what Jeb Anderson's cocky, self-assured smile did to her.

I'm always in control, she said to herself. With all men, she held the reins—period. She'd never find herself at the mercy of some asshole like Frazer again.

Finding someone better than you is easy, you son of a bitch. They're all better than you.

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This bulls and barrel event would be a total bore-fest if not for one smart-mouthed and sexy-as-sin contestant. Bella Roberts had them all sporting a set of blue balls, and Carter was no exception.

He watched her ride away, as tall and graceful in the saddle as a freaking rodeo queen. She'd been intriguing him since Fort Worth a month ago, and now he reckoned she was in his blood.

Only one way to get her out. I have to have her.

Gripping those trim hips of hers and pulling her down over his cock. Sliding into her from behind while he wrapped that long, thick ponytail of hers around his fist...

He clamped down on his rampant fantasies and focused on the things he knew about her.

Today was the first day he'd seen her agree to go out with any of the cowboys, fans or rodeo workers vying for her attention. He'd heard rumors of guys staying over in her trailer, but he scoffed them off as lies. A woman as cool and aloof as Bella Roberts wasn't bedding every Wayne, Vince and Austin.

The only guy who'd even given her pause was that goddamn Jeb Anderson. A man like Jeb had the brains of a cowpoke. He'd never hold Bella's interest. She was too smart for him.

Besides, he was trouble. If Carter had a buck for every time he'd seen Jeb in a bar fight, he wouldn't need to earn prize money in the team roping event.

Carter shook his head, walking in the opposite direction that the feisty cowgirl had gone. He didn't make it five steps before he stopped dead.

He'd changed his mind.

He swung around and strode right after her. Dammit, he was going to get some answers.

"Bella."

She glanced up from her task of removing her horse's saddle, a wary expression in her gray eyes. The mahogany highlights in her hair seemed to flicker like flames, echoed deep in his groin. God, he wanted her. Since Fort Worth, he'd thought of little else.

"What can I do for you, cowboy?"

"It's Carter Fallon."

“From Team Fallon-Lopez. I know.” The honeyed way she drawled his and his partner’s names kicked up his libido another notch. She didn’t meet his gaze but continued brushing her horse.

He sidled closer. “How ‘bout you let me buy you more than a drink.”

Was it his imagination, or had she just rolled her eyes? His ego wasn’t so fragile, however. He stepped closer.

Bella’s confidence was sexy as hell. Her sure, quick movements. The way she carried herself. Dayummm, she was prettier close-up. With wide-set eyes and the longest lashes he’d ever seen, one look from her was a shot straight to his heart.

When she gave him the full force of her stare, his throat closed off.

“What do you have in mind, cowboy?”

“A steak, for starters. I think you know my partner and I won the pot the last three events, and I can afford to buy you more than a measly drink like that bum Jeb Anderson.”

She blinked at him. Christ, she had freckles on the bridge of her nose and lightly spattered across each high cheekbone. Another body part, far more south this time, roused against his zipper.

Carter closed the gap between them.

“Whoa, watch it, Carter. My horse—”

He examined the black and brown mare with the white socks. “What about her?”



“She...” Bella’s lips fell open, the words dying on them. “That’s odd.”

“What is?” He caught a whiff of Bella’s sweet honeysuckle scent. His balls clenched tight and his cock swelled a little more.

“Josey Wheels doesn’t like men.”

He reached out and patted the horse’s flank. The animal didn’t budge. “She doesn’t like men or you don’t like men?”

She tossed her head back and loosed a tinkle of a laugh. If the freckles hadn’t done him in, the laugh would have. Dammit, he wasn’t leaving this barn without the promise of a date.

“Is that old rumor circulating again? What’s the pool up to now? Three hundred? Last I heard I was sleeping with Wynonna Calhoun.” She waved a hand and her horse, mirroring her actions, flicked its tail.

“Three-forty I think.”

She made a fizzing sound of mirth. “Men. Ya’ll think just because a woman doesn’t fall to her knees and beg for your attention that she’s got to be a lesbian.”

When she moved to the side, Carter blocked her with his body. A wall of heat washed over his skin, scorching through his plaid shirt and Wranglers. Jesus, she was going to give him third-degree burns. His cock battered his fly, demanding to be used as roughly and long as necessary to get this little vixen out of his system.

“You’re in my way, cowboy.” Was that a hitch he heard in her breath?

“I’m right where I belong. Now about that steak dinner...” He caught the delicate

point of her chin between his thumb and forefinger, gazed deep into her stormy gray eyes and lowered his mouth to hers.

The first brush of her lips sent his heart cartwheeling like an amateur falling off a bull. As her flavors permeated his head—cinnamon, honeysuckle, pure female goddess—a groan rumbled in his chest. Angling his head, he deepened the kiss.

Her quiet sigh filled his mouth. The heady sensation of falling took over, and he slid his arms around her, pulling her up against his body. Every curvy inch conformed to his muscle. So right, so perfect.

Probing the seam of her lips with his tongue, he molded her to fit his shape. Her lips parted with a gasp, and he didn't waste a second. He plunged his tongue inside.

Honey. Pure honey-cinnamon-honeysuckle goddess. He couldn't get enough. He hitched her against him, unapologetic for the state he was in. After all, it was her fault.

Need pulsed through his veins as he swept his tongue through her mouth. When she flipped her tongue against his, a primal roar boiled in his chest. He ran his fingers up the length of her spine and curled them around her ponytail. With a small tug, he tipped her head back and drank his fill.

Dizzy with need and the urge to possess her, he took what he wanted. And she gave back with as much fervor. Each nipping bite, every glide of her tongue spoke volumes about Miss Bella Roberts.

First of all, the rumors were false. And second, he was pretty sure his wallet was going to be lighter this evening after he bought her a steak dinner.

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The minute Quint walked into the arena and set eyes on the curvaceous cowgirl climbing into the chute, his heart did a Texas tango. He stopped in his tracks to watch. What the hell was she doing? She wasn't a bull rider.

Yet she'd just slung one round, denim-clad thigh over a two-ton beast with blood in its eyes.

"Holy fuck," he murmured, half prayer, half reverence for the woman with a set of balls big enough to think this was a good idea. There were women bull riders in the world, but most chicks stuck with gentler beasts.

Not Bella Roberts.

Quint issued a low whistle and folded his arms as someone opened the chute and the bull rushed out. As soon as Bella was whipped downward, her beautiful face nearly grazing the bull's body, which would surely bust her nose, he stopped admiring her guts and started worrying for her sanity.

"Dammit, who let her do this?" He was no bull fighter, but he'd seen it done enough times. He sprinted into the arena, waving his arms. The beast bucked. Bella was tossed.

When her perfect ass hit the dirt, he reached for her. She took his hand, and he yanked her out of the way seconds before hooves pummeled the earth where she'd been lying.

His heart thumped so hard, he had no recollection of taking her out of the arena. His chest felt too tight, his adrenaline running too fast through his veins. Focusing on the feel of her soft palm against his, he fought for calm.

"Well that went better than I imagined." Her voice was full of mischief, and she

tugged her hand from his grasp.

He grasped her by the shoulders and pressed her against the wall. The building wasn't well-lit, but a bare bulb somewhere down the passageway allowed him to see the laughter in Bella's eyes.

Dammit, the woman had no clue what danger she'd just put herself in. She might have been killed, maimed.

"I don't know what you were thinking getting on the back of that bull, but—"

"It was a dare."

Quint nearly choked. "Who the hell dared you to ride that bull?" He'd better grab a shovel, because he'd be digging a grave later tonight.

Her eyes flared at his tone. "One of the guys asked me to come to his trailer after the competition."

He dragged in a deep breath through his nose, battling fury. Bella didn't know him, and his anger was nothing short of intense on a good day. But after seeing her being whipped...

"I said the guy couldn't handle me. He asked who could. So I showed him." She doubled up in laughter.

Quint couldn't tear his gaze off her. God, she was breathtaking with those twinkling eyes and a strand of hair escaping her ponytail to graze her jaw.

Unable to resist, he pinched the tendril between his finger and thumb and swooped in to claim her lips. Her laugh died under his kiss. In a heartbeat, her surprise

transformed to something bigger, hungrier. It clawed at him too, an animal waiting to be unleashed.

He plunged his tongue into her mouth and kissed her like a woman who'd just scared five years off his life deserved to be kissed—with rough passion and a craving for more.

She responded with a soft moan, which only fed his need. He dug his fingers into her back, lifting her against him. She was soft in all the right places with an underlying strength born from years of hard training.

Voices echoed down the passage, and it took everything in him to lift his head and break away from her. The burning need to show everyone who was kissing Bella was a bright spotlight in his mind, but he knew she wouldn't respond well to being put in such a situation.

Panting, she fell back to the heels of her boots. He hadn't even realized she'd gone onto tiptoe to kiss him. A growl escaped him as he eased the errant strand of hair behind her ear.

"I'll meet you right here after the competition."

Some of her dazed expression vanished, and she shook her head. "What? No."

"I'm your date tonight, Bella. Sorry I didn't introduce myself before I saved you from being cut to ribbons by those hooves. I'm Quint Lopez, part of Team—"

"Fallon-Lopez, I know." She looked a little squeamish and forced some distance between them as the passage flooded with cowboys. One called some congratulations on her ride, and she threw him a wave.

Quint lowered his head and glared. He wanted to throat-punch him.

He followed the man with a glare for a second before turning his attention back to the stunning woman in front of him. “Bella, you don’t just share a kiss with sparks like that and not even have a date with him.”

She took a step backward. “I don’t know what you’re talking about, cowboy. It was just a kiss. Same as any other kiss I’ve had today.”

He moved to trap her, but she ducked beneath his arm and made a fast getaway, leaving him to ponder how those curves would feel under him all night long.

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Bella hadn’t been lying when she’d told Quint that his kiss was the same as any other she’d had that day—because his partner’s panty-melting assault had unraveled her the same exact way.

Dammit, she was slipping. Letting two guys corner her in the same day? And they were partners, for God’s sake.

She stopped walking. Had they teamed up on her ? Were they playing her?

The taste of each man danced in her head. Hell, she hadn’t even eaten or brushed her teeth since Carter’s kiss, so his flavors mingled with Quint’s. She ran her tongue over her lower lip, still wet with Quint’s kiss.

“Crap on toast.” As quickly as possible, she navigated the maze of passages through the building. She had to get her head on straight before her event. There wasn’t a man on the planet—let alone two—who could shake her from winning Henderson, Texas.

She brushed the loosened tendril of hair off her face and hurried deeper into the space where her horse was housed. What she needed was to find her center. Only Josey Wheels could do that for her. She needed a quiet moment with her animal, and she'd be fine.

Or not.

Her hands still trembled and she could practically feel the men's touch. Usually she reveled in leading a cowboy on, especially the cocky ones. She'd allowed Jeb to buy her that drink—a tall sweet tea—but after finishing the last drop, she'd thanked him and walked away. Knowing he was watching her leave gave her a little thrill.

Call it sick, but she liked the cat and mouse act. So what if guys wanted her? She was more than a firm body in tight-fitting jeans. She was toughened by years of training. She'd spent summers away from her family, learning how to lean only on herself, dealing with mean girls and guys like Frazer...

Fuck, how had that asshole wormed his way into her head again? She gave him a boot up the ass and rushed down the line of stalls to the one housing Josey Wheels. As soon as her horse heard her step, she gave a whinny that at once comforted and thrilled.

She reached up and encircled the horse's neck with her arms. Leaning her forehead against the furred one, she whispered, "We're going to be okay, girl. I'm ready. Are you?"

She hadn't given Carter a straight no about the steak dinner. The idea of sitting across from a man like him, so virile and commanding, made her panties start to steam. But knowing that Quint's touch affected her the same way only troubled her further.

Maybe she was just horny. She'd have to take care of that, but not with a rodeo guy.

She didn't want rumors to start flying that she was easy or available. Then she'd never get any rest from the men knocking on her trailer door.

No, she'd have to find some random Joe before she pulled out of town—with that shiny new win on her belt, of course. Slaking her lust with a one-night stand would surely exorcise the ghost touch of team ropers Fallon and Lopez.

Damn if she couldn't recall each and every spot they'd touched her, though. Spine, nape, hip, palm. A shiver that was all icy-heat ran through her, and she bit her lip to stop a small noise from escaping.

Just how close were the pair? Did they know each other had cornered her on the same day and kissed her? Or were there secrets separating them?

Either way, she wasn't about to find out. Not my bulls, not my rodeo.



## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:00 am*

“Carter Fallon.” The twangy drawl was one Carter knew all too well, and it also made his stomach crawl. Tammy Hope was the worst kind of Buckle Bunny—she was a Buckle Bunny with a video camera.

He continued to work the soap into his rope, letting the stickiness sink into the fibers so he could get a good grip. As “header” in the team roping competition, it was his job to lasso the escaped cow around the head while Quint secured its back legs. All this magic happened in as few seconds as they possibly could manage.

“How’s my favorite header?” Tammy held the camera up to catch his reaction. Sometimes her video clips got onto ESPN highlights, which only fueled her fire. She fancied herself the Diane Sawyer of the rodeo.

“I’m not sure who your favorite header is, Tammy, but I’m doin’ just fine.” He tested the rope, found it not quite to his standards and added more soap.

She dissolved into high-pitched giggles, her long blonde ringlets floating around her face. If she stopped playing Barbie doll, she might not be half bad-looking. Between too many rhinestones and the blue eyeshadow up to her perfect brows, she was far from his type.

In this game, he’d learned early on who to mess with and who not to. Actually, he hadn’t been interested in any of the women fans they called Buckle Bunnies, but Quint had messed with a few.

The corner of his lips tipped up at the idea of sic’ing Tammy on his partner. She loomed closer.

“Are you zooming in on my face?”

“You have the sexiest smile, Carter Fallon. Let your fans see it.”

“This is my best side.” He turned his jaw the other direction and continued to work his rope. The sticky residue on his gloves would work perfectly smeared across Tammy’s camera lens.

“Why don’t you answer some questions for me?” she asked, extending one thin leg showcased in a miniskirt. He suspected she was only so thin because she believed men wanted a woman like that. Maybe some did, but not him.

“Fine.” He pushed out a sigh, resigned to long minutes of his life eaten away by her interview questions.

“Great!” She bounced on her toes a moment before settling down to business. “So Team Fallon-Lopez is really ‘on’ this season. How do you see yourself performing tonight?”

“Same as always, I suspect. With a lotta luck and a pinch of skill.”

She chortled. As usual. So tiresome.

Get on with it.

Chances of this interview getting air time were slim—he and Quint weren’t big names. Not yet. But if they kept going like they were, they might see some big money. Right now he was happy to be paying cash for all their travel expenses and entry fees. Thankfully their truck and trailer were paid off, but it would be nice to start building a little emergency fund.

“The rodeo life is hard. You’re always on the road. How do you stay in touch with family and friends?” Tammy asked in a sultry voice.

“Same way anybody does. I call them. Text them.”

She sidled closer until he felt the press of her thigh against his. “Is there a special someone on that list?”

Immediately Bella’s face popped into his mind. Dark lashes fringing her wide gray eyes and all those tormenting freckles. Damn, he could still taste her. So much passion, barely harnessed. It didn’t surprise him that a woman as feisty as Bella would have such an untamed response to his kiss, but he couldn’t deny it stroked his ego too. He wanted her undone, panting, begging for him.

“Oh look, there’s Jeb Anderson. I hear he has someone special. Maybe you should ask him.” Carter barely got the words out before Tammy shot after Jeb.

Shaking his head, Carter returned to checking his gear for his upcoming performance. A bad start would mean he and Quint were pushed out of the standings today. The pressure to perform better and faster each time was like shaking a bottle of champagne—he felt about to burst after every ride.

He and Quint always vented their frustrations to each other, but what about Bella? Who did she confide to?

The jangle of spurs made him look up. His partner shot him a grin, and Carter returned it.

“Tammy get you?” Quint asked, arching one dark brow.

Carter shot him a look. “You sent her after me. Asshole. Jeb’s stuck with her now.”

They shared a chuckle.

“Are you ready for this?” Carter asked.

Quint knew exactly what he was talking about. After working together and being best friends for five years, there weren’t a lot of mysteries between them. “Yeah, I’m ready.”

Carter coiled his rope, whipped his arm and tossed it. The perfect circlet fell on the ears of the cow in his imagination. Quint took a couple practice throws too.

“Did you see Bella Roberts ride that bull? Fucking crazy woman.” Admiration infused Quint’s tone. From the corner of his eye, Carter studied his partner. Same old Quint—slightly mussed, looking as if he’d just rolled out of bed. Carter saw nothing in his expression to alert him to a crush.

Good thing. The last thing he needed was a pissed-off partner. They’d never found a woman to fight over and they had to keep it that way. One hiccup out in that arena would throw them off.

“No, I didn’t see her ride. Heard about it, though.” It was all the guys could talk about. How Bella had sworn only a bull could handle her, and she’d jumped on to prove it. Sure, she hadn’t made the full eight-second ride, but she hadn’t been killed.

“That wasn’t her first time on a bull,” Quint said, his thoughts running close to Carter’s. “I can’t imagine what her childhood musta been like.”

“Doesn’t she have a brother? He could probably tell you some stories.”

“Yeah, but he’s not a rodeo guy. I heard he’s a cattleman back in Arkansas.”

“Is that where Bella’s from?” Carter didn’t know nearly enough about her. He planned to uncover all her secrets tonight over dinner. Then later—right after he made her yodel at the ceiling in pleasure.

Quint lifted a shoulder in a half-shrug. “I don’t know exactly. She’s got some walls up, that woman.”

“I think it adds to her popularity.”

“Yeah, both with the guys and the fans.” Quint scuffed his knuckles over his jaw and tossed his rope at an invisible target again.

“Whatever her story is, she’s good at keeping it under wraps.”

“Tammy hasn’t gotten to her yet.”

They exchanged a look and burst into laughter. “Tammy’s afraid of Bella, I reckon,” Carter said.

“Why do you say that?”

“Haven’t you noticed how the other women give Bella such a wide berth?”

Quint crossed his arms over his chest and looked downright grumpy. Alarm bells sounded in Carter’s brain. When Quint found a cause worth championing, he didn’t back down easily. With him in Bella’s corner, Carter would have a harder time keeping anything from him. Like the fact that he planned to lasso Bella.

“I know she and Wynonna Calhoun don’t have any love between them.”

The Calhouns were a whole family of rodeo people. Five brothers and a little sister,

each of them neck-deep in competition. Since Wynonna competed directly against Bella, things were strained between them.

“But the Calhouns are all prickly. That doesn’t mean anything,” Carter offered. “Buck’s been giving us lip service for a year.” Buck Calhoun and his team roping partner, Asher Franklin, were at the top of their game—and his and Quint’s biggest challenger.

Quint shrugged as if his denim shirt was too tight. “Either way, I don’t think Bella should be treated badly.”

Uh-oh. Carter’s alarms blared now. “I don’t see any harm besides the normal teasing that goes on between rodeo people. Don’t get your thong up your ass.”

“Dickhead. You know I go commando.” He shifted as if swinging his free balls.

“Yeah, I’ve seen enough of you to last me a lifetime.” Carter threw the loop of rope over his shoulder and started walking away. “Going to check the horses.”

“I’ll come along.” As soon as Quint joined him, they settled into their old rhythm. Suddenly, Bella wasn’t a tension between them. They had a job to do, and Team Fallon-Lopez was going to kick ass.

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The Bella Roberts cheering section was out of control. She had so many cowboys lined up watching her, Quint thought he might need to apply for an official fan club membership card just to stand alongside them.

He hung off to the side. From her position, he knew she could see him. Good—he wanted his touch, his kiss, to be the last thing she thought about before she got into

the saddle.

Damn, she looked glorious tonight. Most of the girls primped themselves for the competition. Plenty of guys too. Bella didn't need much to bring out her natural beauty, though, and the way she held herself so gracefully commanded everyone's attention. Her freckles alone could bring a man to his knees, though.

Hell, even Carter stood a few feet away, observing her. His friend didn't think Quint knew, but Carter was as obvious as a dog with porcupine quills in its nose. He'd been sniffing around Bella a lot lately. Carter thought Quint didn't notice that he kept disappearing, but he knew Carter kept putting himself in Bella's path.

Let him try. He won't get anywhere.

Not when she'd already given Quint that stolen moment. And there were many more to come. He stared at her wiggling hips as she strutted to her horse and mounted with an ease only a true cowgirl could manage.

A knot in his chest tightened, tugging an invisible rope connected to his cock. Having her body molded to his while he kissed her wasn't something he'd forget easily.

"Come on, beautiful," he murmured.

She gave a saucy wave to the crowd, which erupted into cheers. The cowboys waved and shouted to her as she trotted past them. Then she stopped playing with her onlookers and got down to business.

Quint noted the set of her jaw and tilt of her head. The long lines of her back spoke of total dedication to her sport. She was going in with the gold buckle already fixed in her mind. Nobody was going to take it away from her.

The buzzer sounded, and she was off. Looping the barrels with such skill and speed that the knot in his chest broke free and he fist-punched the air. “Yahhh!”

Carter was grinning. A group of fans near the front was on their feet holding up individual letters that spelled Bella’s name.

She skidded to a stop and performed a magnificent and Disney-princess-like bow from the saddle that had everyone roaring. Quint looked around to see Carter leaving the arena.

Oh hell no.

He tailed him, closing the gap in seconds. They were almost of equal height, but Quint’s longer legs always run the races. “Where ya going, Carter?”

“Just getting a drink. I’m mighty thirsty.”

“I bet. Watching Bella probably does that to everybody.”

Carter’s bored expression was totally an act. “I reckon.”

Quint didn’t know whether he wanted to punch his friend or join him in finding Bella. “They got some of those power drinks back there by the gate. Want me to grab you one?”

Carter eyed him. All of a sudden, they were like two bulldogs circling the same little French poodle. Each aware of what the other was doing but not willing to take that first lunge at the other.

In the meantime, the poodle got away. Bella disappeared from the arena, along with her tooled-edge chaps and her horse sporting streamers on its tail.



Quint folded his arms, bracing his legs wide. He might not have gotten to her in time, but neither had Carter.

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Bella paced the passageway, trying to keep her mind off...well, everything. Her ride, her score that was about to be announced and especially that pair of ropers determined to drive her batty.

Last time she'd seen them, they were standing together. She hadn't known two solid walls of muscle could stare like that. How was a woman supposed to keep her wits about her with hunks like them giving her the come-hither look?

"Great ride, Bella!"

She glanced up to see a tall drink of water loping toward her flanked by giggling little girls. Bella dropped her personal life and smiled at the girls. They couldn't be more than eight years old, and they hid their smiles behind their hands.

"Well aren't you two ready for the rodeo? Look at all those rhinestones! And is that a turquoise ring I see on your finger, little one?" She crouched before the girls.

"Sarah and Beatrice were itching to meet their favorite barrel racer," the man drawled.

Bella fawned over silver rings and silky curls before standing again and looking at the man. "Do you have something I can autograph for them?"

"Sugar, I've got a lot of somethings you can lay your ink on."

After years of comments like this, Bella had her bored expression set on redial. She

conjured it now and stared at him until the tips of his ears reddened.

At least he has the grace to blush. The nerve—bringing his little girls as a reason to flirt with me. Or saying that in front of them.

“I’ve got a pen if you have some paper? A receipt or a business card?” She whipped a pen from her front pocket and held it up.

“Sure do, miss.” He rooted in his pocket and came out with a business card with an oily fingerprint on it. She didn’t bother reading the card—she just flipped it over and signed it to Sarah and Beatrice.

When she handed the token to the girls, they squealed. One tugged her hand, and Bella offered them each a big hug. As soon as she straightened again, the man extended his arms.

“Where’s my hug? A single dad doesn’t get many chances to touch a pretty woman such as yourself.”

Ugh. She was really running out of people she actually liked.

He reached for her, and she stepped back. “Why don’t you try and see how many women you get to touch with no hands?”

At her threat, a twinkle appeared in his eyes. Damn these men who thought she was just playing hard to get. They looked at her responses as a challenge, but she was no prize to be won.

“Sarah, Beatrice, follow your dreams, lovely girls. And enjoy the rest of the rodeo, you hear?”

Beaming, they nodded. She whirled and took off deeper into the building where nobody could find her. A few steps in, she realized she hadn't heard her score. Screw it. She knew she was right around the sixteen-second mark. Not her best time, but it would get her in the standings. Her only real competition was Wynonna Calhoun, and she wasn't here tonight.

A hand locked on her shoulder. Instinct made her whip around, her fist connecting with a hard jaw. Pain sliced through her knuckles and up her arm, along with a deep satisfaction. She couldn't believe that single dad had followed her. She couldn't believe—

She blinked at Carter, who was shaking off her punch. His hat sat askew on his head, giving her a glimpse of his jet black hair. When he met her gaze, amusement ringed his equally black eyes. All that Argentinian blood was no good for her libido. It purred like a big cat about to win a prized slab of meat.

“What the hell are you doing, sneaking up on me like that?” Her words came out too breathy, but none of them sounded like fear. And her racing heart definitely had nothing to do with it.

“I wanted to congratulate you on top score.”

“Top?” Her chances of winning this thing in Henderson were about to be realized. Only a few more competitors and none of them could throw her out of first place unless they got lucky and had the run of their lives.

He gave a cocky jerk of his head that was supposed to be a nod. To her, it was like a damn mating call. Her body geared up, and her fingers twitched to touch him. To feel the coarse stubble along his angular jaw and imagine how it felt between her thighs.

A shiver ran through her.

He mistook it as emotion about her standings. “I know you’re excited. Did you hear the place go crazy when they put your name on top?”

She couldn’t stop her grin from taking over her features. She’d walk out of here with a buckle that Frazer hadn’t gotten.

Without realizing what she was about to do, she hurled herself at Carter. He caught her against his broad chest. He braced himself and wrapped his arms around her.

“I beat him,” she said.

“You beat ’em all, gorgeous.” The rumble of his words stole her mind, and she made the mistake of looking into his eyes.

“Fuck, you’re more beautiful when you’re happy.” He palmed her cheek, and she resisted turning into his touch like a cat starved for affection.

Slowly, she pulled free of his hold and backed away two steps. She fought to control her breathing so he didn’t think she was struggling with total arousal. But she was. Carter was the stuff of fantasies, a calendar centerfold with a cocky grin. Cowboy crack.

She tucked a strand of hair under her hat and gave him a nod. “Thank you for delivering the news to me. I’d like to be alone for a bit if you don’t mind.”

He stood rooted in place, eyes darkening as he swept his gaze from the top of her hat to the tips of her boots. All the places in between tingled.

“I understand. This is your image—playing hard to get.”

She blinked. “I’m not playing hard to get. I am hard to get. Thanks again for

delivering the news, Carter.”

“Does this mean the steak dinner’s on hold?”

If she found herself within ten feet of this man and a prime cut of beef, she was a goner. And she’d worked too hard not to distance her heart from the bullshit men dished up.

“That’s right. Indefinitely on hold. Good luck with your ride, Cowboy.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“What the fuck’s your problem, Fallon?” Quint jabbed a finger into his chest. “Are you in this competition with me or not?”

“I’m in.” He just couldn’t concentrate very well after Bella’s rejection. He focused hard on the rope in his hands and evading all questioning from his partner. His very angry partner.

He hadn’t seen Quint with his chaps this bunched since the Calhouns bumped them from ranks and booted them from the national finals last fall.

“If you think you’re fooling anybody, you’re wrong.” Quint jerked his gloves down harder over his fingers, a sure sign he was about to curl his fists and punch something.

Carter met his gaze. “Fooling about what? I’m getting ready to compete, Quint. What the fuck are you talking about?”

“You keep disappearing. I know you’re prowling after a woman.” Quint didn’t look remotely happy about the thought, and it didn’t have anything to do with them being

thrown off their game.

“Since we’re discussing distractions, why don’t we talk about yours?”

Quint narrowed his eyes. “I’m dead focused on this win, Carter.”

“Until Bella Roberts walks by.”

His partner’s glare would have felled a weaker man. Besides, he could take Quint. They’d never gotten into a full-on brawl, but they’d thrown a punch or two in the heat of the moment. Carter squared his shoulders.

Quint took a big step toward him, bringing them nose-to-nose. Carter worked his jaw. “Dammit, I don’t wanna fuck up your pretty face, Lopez. Get out of my space.”

“Admit that you’ve been sniffing around Bella and I’ll back off.”

“Why’s it so important to you?”

“You know damn well that our rhythm is off if there’s shit between us. Spill it so we can go out and do the best damn run of our lives. I’m taking home a cash prize from Henderson.”

“Fine. I went and found her and congratulated her. Happy?”

The feverish light in Quint’s eyes deadened, and he sniffed. “Yeah. Now they’re about to call our names.”

“I’m ready.”

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Fucking hell, how was Quint going to concentrate when Bella stood off to the side watching the roping event?

Quint caught Bella's gaze and offered her a tip of his hat. She returned it with a saucy flick of her own that made his chest tight. What was her allure? She was beautiful, sure, but he'd seen plenty of pretty girls over the years. Her confidence was definitely sexy, but then again, he'd been around enough rodeo ladies to have seen this trait by the barrelful.

Something about those big gray eyes tugged at a man's innards and drew him closer.

Carter made a move beside him and when Quint looked over, he saw his partner was also tipping his hat to Bella.

Son of a bitch.

They'd never argued over a woman, but there was still plenty of time.

Quint nudged Carter with his elbow. His partner elbowed him right back—in the ribs. Hard.

“What the fuck's your problem, Fallon?”

“What's yours, Lopez?”

They glared at each other. When Quint broke the staring contest and returned his attention to the sidelines, Bella was gone.

If given the choice, who would she pick? Carter got his share of female attention. Quint supposed the jackass had all the things a woman wanted in the looks department. But hell, people sometimes asked if they were brothers. With their dark

hair, they could be. But Quint was pretty sure he had more in muscle.

And he was definitely packing more heat in his Wranglers. No question.

He faced the arena again, fuming. “If you fuck this up for us tonight because you’re distracted, I’m going to personally rearrange your teeth.”

“I won’t fuck it up. I’m more worried about you. Getting your rope knotted over a woman who won’t give you the time of day?”

“Fallon-Lopez. You’re in the pipeline.” The crusty cowboy’s announcement broke up their argument—for the time being. Quint mounted and looked at his partner in the same way he’d been doing for the past six years they’d competed together. When it came to Bella, may the best man win. But when it came to rodeo’ing, they were a team.

Seated on his horse with Carter several feet away on his own and a calf in its holding pen between them, Quint began to count backward in his mind. He’d always counted down and felt his thoughts click into place like the tumblers on a lock. Tick, tick, tick until everything aligned.

The buzzer sounded. His horse, well-trained and ready for the bag of hot oats he got as a treat after every ride, lunged out. The calf shot between him and Carter.

Carter threw his lasso and roped it across the horns with a precision born of years of experience. Quint released his rope at nearly the same time. The calf was pulled up between them, and the crowd cheered.

“Five. That felt like five seconds,” Carter called to him.

He gave a hasty nod as they released their lassos and someone came out to free the



calf. Quint brought his horse around to Carter's. They shared a grin and left the arena as their score of four-point-nine-seconds was announced.

Fist-punching the air, Quint scanned the sidelines and saw her—Bella balanced on the rails of a chute talking to Jeb Anderson. Not even giving him—or even Carter—a glance.

Tightening his lips, Quint tried not to feel as if she'd just punched him in the gut. He and his partner had just brought in one of the best scores of their careers.

And a lot of weight it carried with a woman like Bella. What did get her weak in the knees? He was damn well going to find out and make the most of it.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:00 am*

Bella navigated her truck and trailer into the rest stop and parked it between two other combos. After cutting the engine, she took a minute to check her cell. Usually her parents called while she drove and she was able to have long conversations through speakerphone, but she'd just gone six hours without a peep from them.

No texts either, so she shot one off to both parents, letting them know she was stopped just outside of Texas and on her way to Alabama for her next competition.

Times like these, she wished she was part of a team event. Traveling in pairs would be so much more interesting. The long, tedious drives alone with nobody to break the monotony wore on her after a while.

She climbed out and received a hoot for her trouble. Glaring at the offending cowboy, she tested her stiff legs to see if they'd support her. "Fuck off, Rigby," she called back.

She caught a flash of long red hair. "A sweet talker as always, Bella." The female drawl grated on Bella's last nerve. She and Wynonna had been butting heads for countless years, but there seemed to be no escaping the woman.

"If it isn't the charming Wynonna Calhoun." She settled her hand on her hip and leaned against her truck, allowing her lower back time to untighten after sitting in the same position for too long.

"You ladies inspire me," Rigby said, looking between them.

Bella laughed. "Save your wet dreams for somebody else, Rigby." She took off for

the rest stop, checking her pockets for quarters as she did. She needed the bathroom and then hopefully the vending machines boasted some coffee. She had a whole case of energy drinks in the trailer, but she hated the things. Give her the rich nectar of her people any day.

Most of the rodeo crowd traveled in caravan-style. Playing tag on the interstate, sharing meals when they stopped. But Bella was more of a solitary person. That was fine by her, when most of the women in her sport were like Wynonna.

Whatever rubbed her wrong about that woman Bella would never know. She suspected they'd hated each other in a past life and just carried it through to this one.

She washed her hands and splashed her face with water. As she exited the restroom, a woman frantically waved at her. Bella bit off a groan. Dammit, what did Wynonna want now?

"What's up?" Bella asked as she neared. Wynonna twisted the end of her braid that dangled over her shoulder. She was a true redhead, and because of that she got a lot of attention. Bella knew a lot of women were jealous of her looks, but Bella wasn't one of them.

"I ran into a couple of guys who're sick."

Bella stared at her. "So?"

Wynonna pushed out a hasty breath. "Honestly, Bella, don't you ever care about somebody besides yourself? We're like a big rodeo family here."

"I stick to myself." She started toward the vending machines, but Wynonna caught her forearm.

“Do you still drag around all those medicines in your trailer? I thought you might have something to fix up these guys.”

“Why don’t you nurse your own boyfriends back to health?”

Wynonna was a true redhead, all right, and she blushed like one. Her face scorched. “These aren’t my boyfriends. My brothers would tan my hide and make me go home faster than I could say eff off if I was seeing them.”

Bella rubbed the space between her eyes that was starting to ache. The last thing she wanted was to be mired in the Calhoun family politics. But she did feel a little bad for Wynonna. Having five older brothers couldn’t be good for the sex life.

“Fine. Who are they? Point me at them.”

“Those guys over there. The team ropers.” Wynonna, as tall as Bella, had the advantage of looking over much of the crowd. She pointed to the guys, and Bella swallowed a groan.

Dammit, couldn’t it be any other team roping pair? She didn’t want to help Carter or Quint. Not when she’d spent so much time lately avoiding both.

Wynonna gave her a tiny push in the direction of the gorgeous cowboys. “Go on. They’re not contagious.”

Bella shook off the woman and slowly approached the guys. Now that she got a good look at them, they did look under the weather.

The dark-haired pair was the most striking of all the cowboys in the rest stop. Tall and broad, one wearing a western shirt with white embroidery and the other sporting a ratty old plaid. Quint’s hat was tipped lower so she couldn’t see his eyes until she

stood before him.

“I hear you’re unwell. Come with me.” She didn’t wait for either set of surprised eyes to register her words—she turned on her heel and marched away.

Outside the building, they caught up and flanked her. It struck her that Wynonna might be playing some game. If Carter and Quint were fighting over Bella, they wouldn’t be at peak performance, and Wynonna’s brother wanted that top spot in the team roping event.

“How’d you hear we’re sick?” Carter’s deep voice buried itself somewhere deep inside her belly, entirely too low for her own peace of mind. Something warm and liquid broke open and flowed downward.

Damn them. And damn Wynonna.

Next time she got the woman alone, she was going to let her know she didn’t appreciate Wynonna butting into her personal life. Either that or she’d prank the hell out of her and see what her big brothers could do about it.

The idea brought a faint smile to her face as she looked over the two studs in front of her.

“Wynonna told me. Now what’s the matter?” She didn’t wait for their replies, just unlocked her trailer door and launched herself inside. When they didn’t follow, she poked her head out. “You coming?”

“Sure.”

“Much obliged.”

In seconds the trailer she comfortably inhabited while on the road was shrunken to fairy proportions. With Carter's height and Quint's thick shoulders, there wasn't a spare inch of space.

"Uh..." She looked around and her gaze landed on the small kitchen table and two stools her daddy had helped her bolt to the floor so they didn't roll around while she drove. "Have a seat, guys."

Carter moved toward the stool, but Quint stood his ground. "I'm fine here."

"Suit yourself. I'll just be a minute." She bent and rummaged under the little cabinet that housed odds and ends she might need on a long trip. Was it her imagination or were they staring at her ass?

She straightened, her hair flopping into one eye. She hadn't bothered with her hat after getting out of the truck, and it still lay on the passenger seat. Pressing her hair back, she looked between them.

They gaped at her as if she'd sprouted a tail and devil horns. The thought gave her a smile to match. With a grand gesture, she set the small, clear plastic box on the tabletop.

Carter leaned back to peer at the contents. "Whattaya got there?"

"Everything and anything to cure most human illnesses. Or at least relieve symptoms. Now tell me what's going on."

Carter rubbed his knuckles over his jaw, creating a rasping noise she felt deep in her core. That liquid heat inside her that hadn't gone away since those two amazing kisses seemed to go from a slow simmer to a boil in a blink. She dragged in a deep breath, but that just made it worse.

He smelled good. Real good.

“Think we picked up a bug after that last rodeo.”

“And you didn’t stop at a clinic or find the doc?” The rodeo doctor traveled along with them, seeing to strained muscles and broken bones. “He likes seeing cowboys come in with something wrong besides a dislocated shoulder. He’s pretty good at diagnosing and doling out medicine too.”

Carter raised a brow but Quint looked like a thundercloud scudding across the sky. “How well do you know the doc?”

Heat swept up her throat. “Well enough.” He might have been one of the guys who’d believed she just needed a soft touch early after her breakup. But the doctor had gotten a mouthful of her sassy barbs and run off with his tail tucked. Which was why she carried so much medicine now—she could take care of herself.

Quint snorted, and she waved him closer. “So you have a cold? Headache?”

“Throat’s a little sore,” he admitted. “And I feel a little hot and cold both.”

She wrinkled her nose. She’d take a handful of vitamin C and Echinacea after they left just to keep her own immune system in tip-top shape. “Okay, let’s see what I have.” She popped off the lid and the guys leaned to peer inside.

“What are you—a pharmacist in your spare time?” Carter asked.

“Nope. I make meth to supplement my rodeo winnings.”

Carter guffawed, and Quint moved a step closer. A wall of heat, starting at her ankles and rushing up to the top of her head, swept over her. Her nipples pinched hard, and

she sank her teeth into her lower lip.

Damn, being so close to them was reminding her why she'd let them kiss her in the first place. Pure, raw attraction. She wanted both Carter and Quint with an animalistic need that could only be quenched between the sheets.

But since she wasn't in the business of breaking up team roping champions, she'd opted to cut things off at one kiss apiece.

"Why do you have all this stuff?" Quint asked.

She set several boxes and bottles out on the table, looking for something in particular.

"My momma's a big one for home doctoring. And her mother before her. We hoard medicines like we're about to enter a zombie apocalypse."

"Have you heard Quint snoring then? He sounds like a damn zombie." Carter got elbowed in the arm for his quip.

"How would you know? You're too busy whistling Dixie through your nose on your side of the hotel room." Quint's dark eyes twinkled with merriment.

Bella found herself relaxing. While she lined up a few more bottles, she asked questions. Did either have an unbearable sore throat, a high fever?

"No," they said together.

Her body was doing a wild come-hither dance, each hormone a separate cheerleader waving pompons and shouting into a megaphone that she was ready and willing to let them touch her.



Carter's hard lips were too alluring for her sanity, and Quint kept tucking the corner of his wide lips in, entrancing her.

"Sleeping all right?" She looked from one to the other.

"Hell no. Quint won't quit snoring."

"And you've got a nose whistle."

"Shut the hell up, Quint."

She hid a smile by ducking her head and rooting through a few more packages and some wads of Ace bandages. "Aha! Just what you both need." She held up a decongestant.

"That's it? Does it come with a bottle of whiskey?"

"No, but I'm sure you can find some down the road. I don't suggest washing these down with alcohol, though. Sounds to me that you both have allergy flare-ups. Crossing Texas, I could feel the weather changing. I think ragweed's in season too."

She extended the box, and Carter took it from her, brushing his warm, dry fingers against hers as she did. Her inner exotic dancer did a naughty striptease for him.

When his gaze trapped hers, electricity zapped through her body. She pulled her hand back and threw a look at Quint.

Damn, that was almost worse. The man's eyes were hooded with desire. A thousand butterflies hatched in her stomach.

"Just...take those according to the directions on the box. Get some rest and drink

plenty.” She went to the door, indicating they should go.

Neither budged. Carter, still on the stool, leaned his big shoulders against the wall and crossed his legs. Quint hitched himself onto the arm of an old recliner she’d dragged out of her parents’ Goodwill pile. One scuffed boot dangled, an enticing line that led to his muscled, denim-covered thigh.

And the yummy bulge above.

She folded her arms over her chest, mostly to keep four roving eyes off her breasts, but also to hide her hard nipples. “We’d better get on the road again, boys.”

“Yeah,” Quint drawled, eyeing all the places her arms didn’t cover, “Alabama awaits.”

“That medicine shouldn’t make you too drowsy. It’s a daytime formula.”

“Thanks.” Carter didn’t make a move to get up. In fact, they looked as if they were settling in for the long haul.

“Great ride the other day, by the way. Your four-point-nine was a great score. Record-breaking?” she asked.

“For us.” Quint eyed his partner. “Why don’t you go on ahead of me and find us some drinks to swallow a coupla those pills?”

“Why don’t you?” Carter said with slow defiance.

She stepped between them. “Look, I’ve got to get on the road. And return a phone call.” Wash my hair. Finger my pussy. “So why don’t you both step on out of my trailer?”

“Or what?” The mischief in Carter’s eyes made her want to play long and hard and get sweaty and breathless.

She wasn’t about to let either man know it.

“Or you’ll let me kiss you again, Bella?”

She sucked in a gasp at Carter’s question. Quint’s answering growl filled the cramped space, and she had to take action.

“Get out!” Snatching up a set of spurs, she held them like ninja throwing stars, aimed at each handsome cowboy’s face.

“You kissed her? Hell, that’s nothing like the kiss I got,” Quint said as if she weren’t standing there wishing she’d given them each mouse poison.

Carter gained his feet. Quint straightened. All of a sudden, she pictured her whole trailer trashed by a brawling pair of team ropers.

“Enough! Take it outside and rest assured that neither of you will be laying a hand, lip—or any other body part you want to find still attached to your body—on me!” She twisted her hand in the cloth covering Quint’s chest. His warm, steely flesh beneath ignited her, but she managed to propel him toward the door, open it and shove him out.

When she returned for Carter, she found him grinning at her with that slow, bad-boy smile that made all her lady parts sit up and beg. Pushing through her need, she latched onto his ear.

He yowled. She tossed him out after his buddy and slammed the door. Then she whirled, panting, quivering with pent-up need to straddle not one cowboy but two,

and ride herself into a state of full exhaustion.

Her gaze settled on the box of medicine they hadn't taken with them.

Grabbing it, she stomped to the door and hurled it out at their astonished faces. When she slammed the door again, she couldn't stop a small giggle from escaping. Now that they knew she'd toyed with them both, they could go off and beat each other up. Or snore and nose-whistle each other to death.

Her laugh burst out, freeing some of her tension after being trapped with two sexy cowboys she couldn't decide between. Now she wouldn't have to make a choice, because they were both off the table. In one swoop, she'd ended things before they'd begun.

No, she didn't have a cure for what ailed them in her medicine box, but now she could set to work on fixing her messed-up head.

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Carter stared at Bella's door, a half-smile creeping over his face. "Damn, she's a tornado a man would want to roll around with for all his years."

"Too many bullets shooting out of that pretty lipstick-coated mouth, but damn if I don't want to stay here and take a few more hits." Quint shook himself and then looked at Carter—hard. "You finally going to admit you want her?"

"I never denied I do. I just don't think it's your business."

"It's my business when she's playing with both of us. She let you kiss her?"

"Yeah." Carter drew up to his full height, meeting his friend's challenging tone.

“What else did you do with her?”

Carter wasn't about to admit that Bella had shut him down and avoided him ever since. “None of your business.” He turned and started walking away.

Quint's strides ate up the distance in a blink. “Did you sleep with her?”

“You're not very bright, are you? I've been in that hotel room with you for weeks. Do you honestly think if I had Bella in my hands, I'd spend less than a full night loving her?”

Quint snorted. “So you haven't had her.”

Slowing his gait, Carter shot his friend a look. “Have you?” He didn't want to hear the answer, yet he wasn't about to chase a woman who was spoken for. If there was a glimmer of a chance with Bella, though...

“I'm of the same mind as you, bro. I wouldn't come back to a hotel room and listen to you snore if I had.”

They walked in silence for a minute, meandering through the parking lot to their truck. Carter glanced at the meds he'd scooped off the asphalt. “Think she means to kill us with these pills so we leave her alone?”

Quint's low chuckle echoed the amusement Carter felt. Their friendship had survived everything from losing streaks to injuries to bad attitudes. They wouldn't let a woman get between them.

Except she obviously liked both or she wouldn't have let them close enough to grab her and kiss her. Bella was savvy enough to evade them if she'd really wanted, and she didn't want to. Carter had detected the rapid rise and fall of her chest while in the

trailer. Her lowered lashes, the way she dashed her wet, pink tongue over her lower lip...

Unless he was totally off, she was turned on by them being there.

“Look, I’m not feeling great about any of this. Just keep your distance today, okay?” Quint tugged his cowboy hat lower over his eyes.

“Oh that’ll be easy considering we’re stuck in a truck together.” Carter tried to tip the scales of his partner’s grumpiness, but Quint just glared at him from under the brim of his battered hat.

“You can take the meds first. Hopefully Bella was wrong and you can knock yourself out.”

Irritation was a long snake slithering through Carter’s chest. “Fine by me.”

“Good.”

They climbed into the truck and slammed their doors. Carter popped two pills and chased them with a bottle of warm, flat soda. Then he settled down for a long drive with his moody friend. Unfortunately, Bella wasn’t wrong about the medication. Carter was wide awake and thinking very clearly—about Bella’s sweet lips and the way she’d looked into his eyes.

May the best man win.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:00 am*

The pretty bartender pushed an ice-cold longneck in Quint's direction with a wink. "Haven't seen you in here, Cowboy."

He tossed a bill onto the bar for the beer and hooked his finger around the bottle. "Just passin' through."

"With the rodeo? I see plenty of cowboy hats in here tonight." She glanced around.

He nodded. "You ever rodeo?"

A high-pitched laugh escaped her, the sound putting him off as fast as a case of crabs. He turned from the bar before she answered, but she called, "Never rodeo'd but I ride the mechanical bull like a pro!"

He waved and headed deep into the crowd. Yeah, she was cute enough. If he got past her laugh, he could score her. Trouble was, since he'd set his sights on Bella, no woman was good enough.

After a long, tense drive with Carter at his side, he was ready to cut loose a little. He couldn't really be angry with Carter, but he didn't feel all that friendly with him at the moment either.

He passed his buddy's table with a chin-nod of recognition. Carter returned it with a jerk of his head. Quint sauntered up to a few guys standing in a half-circle around the mechanical bull the bartender had mentioned.

"That thing looks rickety. I bet it breaks down in the first rotation." The low twang of

a true Colorado cowboy drew Quint's attention.

He thrust his hand at Buck Calhoun. "Haven't seen you in the past three towns. What the hell happened to you? We thought you fell out of rodeoing."

Buck gave him a crooked smile and shake of his hand. "Nah, just a hiatus. Had to take care of family business. We're back now and looking to win. Isn't that right, Ash?" He thumped his own team roping partner on the shoulder, and Asher nodded agreement.

Quint looked closer at Asher. The man's normally tanned face looked pale, and strain revealed itself around each eye in the form of dark shadows. Whatever that family business was must be on Asher's end, because Buck didn't look as affected as his friend. And the Calhouns were a tight group. Five brothers and a sister, all competing in different events. Rumor was they were trying to earn money to save their ranch.

Another guy in their ring hooted, and Quint turned his attention from the state of mind of his competitors to the mechanical bull. A spotlight lit the mangy leather hide covering the nuts and bolts of the bull.

"It's time to spice things up here tonight!" an unseen person announced through the speaker system. The country music was lowered, and women flocked to the area, nudging each other to get in line.

Quint brought his beer to his lips. This would be fun. He was never one to turn a blind eye to a pretty girl, even if none of them matched up to Bella's perfection.

"Best score of the night wins a Snappy's Bar T-shirt and free drinks for the rest of the night!"

Loud cheers.



“Oh fuck no.”

Quint looked up to see Carter beside him, his face mottled red with fury. Following Carter’s gaze, he felt his throat close around the beer he’d just swallowed. A violent cough erupted from him as he set eyes on Bella right at the head of the line.

In skin-tight jeans and a plaid top knotted at her midriff, she was striking. Add that sliver of tanned belly and a hint of cleavage and she was walking sex.

And she was about to compete. Every man in the joint would be drooling over her, but that couldn’t happen. Quint didn’t have enough stamina to beat the shit out of every man here.

I’ll give it the old cowboy try, though.

He set his beer on a table behind him and folded his arms across his chest. Carter issued a low growl. “Dammit, this can’t end well,” his friend said.

No, it would end very well, with Bella riding the bull with all the sex appeal of an exotic dancer. Which of course was the real problem. She was targeted enough without exploiting herself.

When she tossed her hair, laughing, Quint narrowed his eyes at her. She was a little too flushed, her eyes a little too bright.

“Is she drunk?”

“Tipsy, I’d say. Son of a bitch.” Carter’s jaw muscle worked as he looked on.

The muscles all the way down Quint’s spine tightened. If Bella wasn’t a hundred-percent in possession of her wits, she’d be hit on by more creeps than he’d be able to

fend off.

But Carter looked more than willing to take on a few.

“Our first rider is Miss Bella Roberts! This championship barrel racer has been known to ride a bull or two in her lifetime. Ready, Bella?”

She nodded, her hair tumbling around her shoulders. When she raised a hand to wave at the crowd gathered around the bull, her top pulled tight across her breasts, revealing a small opening big enough for Quint to slip his finger inside.

His cock hardened at the thought of all that warmth radiating off her skin. He tried to catch her eyes, but she wasn't paying attention to anything but the bull. With a sexy flip of her leg, she straddled the beast.

“Fucking hell,” Carter groaned.

I know the feeling. Quint's jeans were suddenly two sizes too small. His balls started to throb.

When she wiggled her fine little ass to situate herself on the back, Quint felt his eyes roll back in his head. If he looked around, he'd see every man in the same state. Well, except maybe Asher, who was married with two kids. But a man would have to be dead not to notice Bella.

She shimmied down toward the neck, which pointed sharply to the floor. Around the bull a bunch of foam cubes would cushion her fall, but he'd seen her ride a flesh and blood, pissed-off bull. She'd have to be a lot drunker to land in the foam.

The music started with the first whip of the bull. It swung backward, she compensated with one arm waving in the air. Her breasts pushed out. Her fucking

thighs gripping the sides like a champion.

Quint's need compounded, and he found himself grinding his teeth. The bull started whipping her, and Bella kept her seat, rocking up and down. Hell, an eighty-year-old woman would look sexy on a mechanical bull. The action was sexy as hell. But since it was Bella, every man—and probably a few women—were riveted on her.

Carter nudged his fly, adjusting his own boner. Fuck, this was bad. Real bad.

Quint's vocal chords ached to yell for the charade to stop, but Bella rode out her full eight seconds. Ten. Twelve.

"Time's up!" he hollered.

Someone elbowed him in the back. "Hey, buddy, don't make them stop her."

He turned to glare at the guy but had no idea which man in the sea of faces had struck him. Twisting back around, he welcomed the blare of the buzzer. Bella's hair trickled into her eyes, and she tossed it back like a fucking porn star.

To dismount, she lay back on the bull and made a show of rolling into the foam. A half dozen men rushed forward to offer her a hand up, but Quint and Carter were there first, hauling her bodily out of the foam pit and dragging her several feet away.

She focused on Quint and then Carter. "You guys better keep your distance."

It was on the tip of his tongue to ask why, but then the buzzer sounded and another woman was in the spotlight. She didn't ooze sex appeal like Bella or even stay on very long. When she was tossed into the foam, only one man was there to pick her up. Another took her place.

“How’d I do, boys?” Bella had another drink in her hand. Where had she gotten it?

Quint’s protective instincts were suddenly a wild animal, pacing back and forth in front of her. He stared down a man, daring him to try anything. When he glanced over at Carter, he saw him standing bodyguard too.

At least he had backup. The strangeness of the situation hit him—they both wanted Bella but in protecting her, they were a solid wall no one could breach. That familiar sense of camaraderie flooded Quint.

“You did fine, Bella,” Carter said tightly when she asked a second time.

“Just fine?” She swigged.

Quint had never seen her drink very much. What was bringing this on? It couldn’t be their encounter earlier and their admission that they’d both kissed her.

She was as effervescent as ever, fizzing with life and energy and liquid sex. “I kicked ass up there. I’m winning those free drinks.” She tipped her glass into her mouth and swallowed the contents in one big gulp.

Again, Quint’s balls clenched, but he ignored it. Someone else tried to put a fresh glass into her hand, but Quint knocked his hand aside. The drink sloshed onto the floor, and Bella pressed her beautiful lips into a pout. Each freckle seemed to beckon to him.

Jesus, she’s killing me.

Too easily he pictured her lips wrapped around his cock. Not tonight, though. When she came to his bed, she’d be totally sober.

“You don’t need any more drinks, Bella.” Carter’s rough tone suggested he wasn’t immune to her pout either. Damn, she was so cute.

And every grind of her pussy against that bull was emblazoned on his memory. He’d be beating off to it for a month.

So will every guy here.

She started to walk away, but Carter snaked his arm around her shoulders and tucked her solidly against his side. It would normally bug the shit out of Quint, but right now, he just wanted Bella safe from any predatory males who didn’t have the same morals they did. She was safe in their hands—at least until she had the wits to say yes. Then it was game on, and they’d love her long into the next morning. Hell, the next week.

Wait—what was he thinking? They weren’t a team when it came to the bedroom.

He shot Carter a glare for having his arm around Bella, but he didn’t remove it. She wiggled out from under his arm, and Quint took the opportunity to snag her in his hold. God, she was all tight, wicked curves that he couldn’t touch.

“We need to get her out of here.”

“No, I wanna see if I won!” She leaned heavily against him even as she pushed up the brim of Carter’s hat. He looked at her in surprise. “You’re too pretty to hide under your hat.”

He gave Quint a self-satisfied smile that Quint wanted to knock off his face. But at least she was staying put right now instead of trying to escape. He didn’t want to pick her up, toss her over his shoulder and carry her out of here, but he would. Tempting as it would be, he wouldn’t even cop a feel.

“You guys feel better?” she slurred.

“What?” Quint leaned closer, catching a scent of her underlying honeysuckle smell even if it was buried beneath the notes of too many drinks.

“Your...” she waved a hand in front of her face, “stuffy head. Did it go away?”

“Yeah, we’re fine. Why don’t we find a table and sit down?”

“No, I have to stand here and intimidate the other women. It’s a trick we all do, watching each other compete.”

Damn, she was a force to be reckoned with. A hurricane wind of temper and untamed female. The idea of her standing by watching her competitors made him smile.

Two more women took their seats on the bull—and then their backs in the foam pit. After everyone had taken a turn, the announcer held up the trophy T-shirt. “The winner, with the best score and technique, is Bella!”

She jumped up and down, the side of her heel landing on the toe of Quint’s boot. He steadied her, but she launched herself forward to claim her prize. As soon as she accepted the T-shirt, she wrapped it around her neck like a scarf and took a drink in each hand. Before he and Carter could stop her, she tossed back both shots.

“Jesus Christ. Let’s get her out of here before she needs her stomach pumped.” Quint looped an arm around her and dragged her out of the spotlight.

“No, I’m not finished here. I have to take my victory ride.”

“Not in this state, you’re not.” Carter’s tone was an electric fence, forbidding her to question it.

She did anyway. “You don’t own me. Nobody owns me.”

“Of course not, Bella. But you’re not safe here.”

She looked around. “What the hell are you talking about? I don’t see any ninjas.”

Quint couldn’t stop the bark of laughter from escaping. “Time to go, darlin’.” He plucked her off her feet. Carter took her by the calves and together, they carried her through the crowd of protestors.

\* \* \* \* \*

“She’ll be more comfortable in her trailer,” Quint said, a squirming Bella between them.

“Yeah, but we don’t have her key.”

“It’s probably in her pocket.”

“As much as I like the thought of digging through her pockets, I’m not going to. It wouldn’t be gentlemanly. That means we’re taking her to our room.” Carter had been gnashing his teeth for the last twenty steps. The feel of her round, hard calves in his hands invited images of throwing her legs over his shoulders and sliding home.

“Fine.”

“Put me down!” Bella grunted and tried to rip herself from their holds. Quint adjusted his grip. She kicked wildly, and Carter let her legs slip. Before she hit the ground, he caught her.

“Let me have her, Quint. You go ahead and open the motel room door.”

Quint nodded and they set her on her feet. She started to tip over.

“Oh no you don’t. Face-planting on the asphalt isn’t good for your pretty face. C’mon, sassy pants.” Carter whipped her over his shoulder and started walking. Quint strode ahead, and in no time they’d reached their motel. The slightly greenish glow of the overhead light illuminated their door.

Carter wished they had someplace nicer to take her, but she probably would have no recollection of anything but the toilet anyway. He had a feeling as soon as the alcohol hit her fully, she’d become intimate with the porcelain throne.

Her weight over his shoulder felt just right, and he longed to cradle her against his chest. But the minute he made this less about getting her safely into a bed was the minute he lost control. As it was, her tormenting ass riding high in the air had him as hard as steel.

Need pounded him as her sweet scents filled his nose. By the time Quint got the door open, he was burning.

“Take her,” he grated out.

“Too heavy for you?” Quint quipped, drawing her into his arms.

“Who you calling heavy?”

“You’re not heavy at all, sweetheart, but you are driving me crazy.”

Quint shot him a look that said he understood exactly what Carter was experiencing. Yet he carried Bella to the bed and gently lay her down. She popped up immediately, her eyes fever-bright. The alcohol was definitely keeping her rowdier than usual.



Quint pressed a hand on her shoulder and guided her back down onto the mattress. “Just rest, darlin’. Let some of that tequila wear off.”

“What about the whiskey?”

“Jesus, how much did you drink?” Quint scrubbed a hand over his face. Carter felt the same—as if he’d been smacked over the head with a fluff of angel wings. Bella stared up at them each with a cherubic expression on her face.

“Not much. People kept putting them in my hand. What was I supposed to do?”

“Turn them down. Here, lie back.” Carter propped up two pillows and Quint eased her down on them. With her hair spread over the cotton and her lips looking as if she’d just been kissed for half an hour, Carter was at his snapping point.

“I can’t stay in this room tonight,” he choked.

“Then don’t.” Quint sounded all too cheerful.

“On second thought, I’ll be fine.”

“Asshole.”

“Dickhead.” Neither of their insults held any heat. Quint sank to the edge of the bed as if prepared to force Bella to stay there.

But she made no move to get up. In fact, she snuggled down and curled on one side. God, how was Carter going to get any sleep when she was in his bed looking like a goddess? When her eyelids closed, each dark lash seemed to stand out.

“She was sexy as hell on that bull.” Carter sounded as if his throat was a size too

small.

“Christ, she did.” Quint rubbed his hand over his face again, his shoulders slumping.

“I did great,” she murmured.

Carter and Quint reached for her at the same time. Carter smoothed the hair off her brow and Quint stroked her cheek. For some reason it felt as natural as breathing, and not a hint of the green-eyed snake reared its head.

Another sort of snake wanted to come out and play, though. Carter rubbed a tendril of her silky hair between his thumb and forefinger before stepping back. If he touched her for another minute, he didn’t trust his primal instincts not to take things further.

He crossed the room and dropped into the hard chair. Quint got up too and pulled out the other chair surrounding the small table. It wobbled as he sat, sending an old bottle of water rolling. Quint caught it and set it carefully on the surface.

Both of them stared at the sleeping woman for a long minute. A small stuttering sigh left her, and Carter’s chest felt too tight. He swallowed hard. “How are we supposed to deal with this attraction we both have for her?”

“I don’t know, man. It’s apparent she likes both of us, but rather than choose, she’ll walk away from us both.”

Carter watched her chest rise and fall, an unbelievable tenderness weaving through him and winding up around his heart. Time ticked by. A few doors down, someone started having noisy sex.

The corner of Carter’s lips twisted up, and Quint shot him an amused smile. “At least someone’s getting action tonight.”

“Maybe we keep her trapped here until she sleeps off her hangover, and then we make our move.” The words popped out unbidden. Carter blinked, and Quint gave a small jerk.

“ We make our move?”

He met his friend’s gaze. Was he seriously considering sharing Bella with his friend?

He slid his attention to the sleeping woman. She’d thrown one arm outward, and her fingers curled up like the vulnerable petals of a flower.

With everything in his being, he wanted her. Quint wanted her too.

“We are a team, and we work well together. Why don’t we ask her when she wakes up?” he asked.

Quint raised a brow but didn’t reply.

\* \* \* \* \*

If Quint got any harder, he’d pass out from lack of blood flow to his brain. He needed to strip off his clothes and stretch out alongside Bella, to shape her body to his and give her all the pleasure he suspected she’d never had. Not many men could handle a woman like her.

But he could.

Carter too.

For the hundredth time that night, Quint considered what his friend had said. Share her? Had Carter actually meant they should take her...together? He wasn’t ready to

ask for clarification.

He'd heard of some guys sharing women before. Hell, it might take both of them to tame the feisty cowgirl.

He rested his elbows on his knees, aching. Watching. Bella was getting restless in her sleep. When she woke, he planned to ply her with coffee and hangover cures. He didn't know how she handled her liquor, but she was a tough chick. She probably would pop out of bed, ready to argue with them.

A ghost of a smile passed over his face.

"She's fucking beautiful." The reverence in Carter's voice had also been bouncing around Quint's brain for several hours while Bella slept.

"I know." He pushed off his knees and sat back in the hard chair. There was an extra double bed which neither of them were willing to use. He didn't want to fall asleep and awaken to Carter getting down and dirty with Bella. Then again, if she wasn't with Quint, he'd want her to be with Carter.

His mouth was dry, so he opened the old bottle of water and drank it. Carter rubbed his hands through his hair, leaving it sticking up in spikes. Quint eyed him.

"I know you want to ask something. Just say it, man." Carter sounded as weary as Quint felt. At least their rodeo goddess was getting some rest.

"Okay," he said slowly, trying to organize his thoughts. "Did you really mean...we should share her?"

"Yes. Maybe. Hell, I don't know." Carter got up and paced the short distance between the table and the foot of the bed where Bella lay.

“Let’s discuss this like the rational people we are. Sit,” Quint said.

Tossing him a look that was part glare, part agreement, Carter strode back and dropped into his seat. They both leaned forward and rested their elbows on their knees. When Carter realized how much alike they really were, he sat upright again.

“You think you could actually watch me touching her, kissing her?” Quint asked.

“I don’t know. But it seems like a bad idea to make her choose. She’s not a woman you tie down.”

“No, but we could tie her up.”

They shared a grin, and suddenly things were a bit easier between them.

“She’s just wild enough to maybe try two men at once, you know,” Carter said quietly.

“Yeah, she is.”

She was waking more. Her breathing changed and her eyelids started to flutter. She rolled onto her side facing them and pulled her knees up to her chest. During the night Quint had gotten up and removed her boots. They were lined up beside his and Carter’s. Funny how they didn’t look out of place.

“So if she agreed to this insane idea of yours and we both have her in bed...” Quint glanced sidelong at his partner. “How does that work?”

“Um, you’ve seen a porn or two, buddy. I’m sure you can figure it out.”

“But what about...” He waved between them.

“Us?”

“Yeah.”

Carter’s voice was low when he said, “Don’t tell me you haven’t thought about it. At night when I hear you jacking off in the next bed?” When you were as close as he and Carter were—living, sleeping and working together almost every day of their lives, it was easy to let his mind wander to that type of relationship.

“Have you thought about it?” Quint sounded strangled.

“Look, don’t get uptight. We’d focus all our efforts on her.”

They both looked at the bed and their sleeping beauty. She groaned and then grabbed her head as if the sound had hurt.

It probably did.

He jumped to his feet and went to her. She moaned again, cradling her skull.

Carter shot into the bathroom. Running water sounded. He came back with a cold cloth, which he handed to Quint. He folded it neatly and draped it over her forehead.

“Oh God,” she whimpered.

“Does this make it worse?” he asked, leaning over her, careful not to rock the mattress.

“No, it feels good,” she barely whispered.

“I have pain reliever in my bag.” Carter rummaged around until he came out with a

pill bottle. He dumped two in his hand and held them out for her.

Cracking a bloodshot eye, she waved a hand. "More. Two won't do it."

He gave her four pills and she sat up. Quint grabbed a new bottle of water from the mini bar, uncaring if they were charged five bucks for it. Her comfort was first.

"The room's spinning." Damn, she was cute when hungover. She was always such a strong woman who knew her mind, and seeing her remotely vulnerable fed that vein of tenderness in Quint.

After uncapping the bottle, he handed it to her. She sat there in a daze as if unsure what to do.

"Go on and take the pills, sweetheart. Then you can sleep it off some more."

"What day is it?"

"Friday."

"We don't have to compete till tomorrow."

"That's right," he assured, resting a hand on her shoulder, his need mounting just by being near her.

"Thank God," she grated out and carefully slid a pill onto her tongue. She swallowed it with a sip of water, wincing between pills. "It hurts to drink."

"Good thing we stopped you when we did then. You'd be in worse shape."

When she looked at him, all grumpy poutiness, he couldn't help but smile. "I didn't

get all my free drinks. How did I get to your room? Did we...?" She looked down at her fully clothed body. "Guess not."

"Of course not. We don't take advantage of women who aren't clear enough to make a decision. Now lie back and sleep, sweetheart."

Carter, standing on the opposite side of the bed, smoothed the messy hair on her brow. "Sleep, darlin'."

She closed her eyes before she eased herself back on the pillows. In seconds she was out cold again, leaving them to stare at each other.

"Dammit, I want her bad," Quint said.

"Bad enough to share her?"

He wasn't ready to answer that but looking down at her, he thought that yeah, he wanted her that bad.

But in the end, Bella held the reins.



## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:00 am*

When Bella opened her eyes, she blinked into the dimness. Was it night?

“She lives.” The deep voice caressed her senses.

“How do you feel, sweetheart?”

Recognition flooded in. Carter and Quint. Where was she and what was she doing with them?

She tried to push into a sitting position but her muscles felt too weak. The scents of freshly showered male surrounded her, and she carefully turned her head from side to side. Big, broad man on her right. Tall, muscled on her left.

“Am I dead?” she asked.

Two chuckles sounded.

She wet her dry lips. Her mouth felt filled with hot sand and her head hurt, though not as much as the first time she’d awakened.

Wait. I’m in their room. They gave me pain relievers.

“How long have I been here?” she managed.

“You’re not dead, for one. You’ve been sleeping for about nine hours.”

“Oh jeez. I have to get out of here. My horse—”

“Relax. We took care of her. She’s tucked up with our stock, happy as can be.” Quint’s eyes twinkled with so much mischief that she looked at him more closely.

“Does ‘happy as can be’ mean she’s being mounted right now and I should be expecting a foal in the spring?”

Carter burst out laughing, and surprisingly, the noise didn’t make her teeth hurt as she expected. Pushing into a sitting position, she looked between them, awaiting an answer.

“No, your mare’s safe.”

“Maybe your horses aren’t safe from my mare.” She swung her legs out of bed and grabbed her head to hold it on her shoulders.

“Here. Have some more pain relievers and drink this full bottle of water. It’ll help with the dehydration.” Carter thrust a wide palm beneath her nose, the little white pills in the center. She stared at the calluses riding across each finger, and a shiver began low in her belly, moving up her spine.

“Can I...take a shower?”

“Drink that water first.” Carter wasn’t about to take no for an answer.

She accepted the pills and water while trying to untangle her legs from the twisted covers. Quint sank to the edge of the bed and tugged the sheet and blanket until she was free. As he straightened, his knuckles brushed her forearm.

Goosebumps broke out on her arms and caused her nipples to pucker. She sucked in a harsh breath and fought her reaction to him. He’d touched her arm, not fingered her into a screaming orgasm. What was the matter with her?

The guys waited while she drank the water. Only when the last drop tipped into her mouth did they move. Two hands reached down for her. She looked between them, ignored them both, and crawled down the mattress to the foot of the bed. Avoiding each.

She sauntered toward the bathroom. “I don’t suppose you two studs have a complimentary toothbrush for me?”

“Actually, there’s one on the sink along with some of those little bottles of shampoo.” Carter shot her a crooked grin that made her legs feel wobbly.

She walked into the bathroom and closed the door. She had to admit the hotel room had a few luxuries compared to her cramped trailer. The hot water alone lured her to the shower. She cranked on the taps full blast and let the steam gather while she brushed her teeth.

Seeing the guys’ toiletries scattered across the counter was far too interesting. Not as distracting as staring at the men themselves, though. Between their muscles and dark hair that invited her to run her fingers through it, she was pretty bad off even without a hangover.

She picked up each bottle of aftershave and sniffed them. Feeling out of her element, she shot a glance at the door and then stripped down.

The mirror fogged, which was good because she didn’t want to look too closely at the shadows under her eyes. She slipped into the shower with a sigh.

The hot water struck her face, and she closed her eyes against the pleasant sting. Several minutes later, the cobwebs washed from her mind.

Was she really standing in a hotel shower with two sexy cowboys right outside her

door?

A clicking noise.

She twitched the curtain aside to peek out. Gasping, she plastered a wet hand over her chest.

Not standing right outside the door—standing inside the bathroom.

“Wh-what are you doing?”

“Claiming what all of us have been wanting for weeks. You’re finished leading us on this merry chase, Bella.” A big, naked Carter stepped into the shower with her. Quint crowded in from the other side.

“You guys have lost your minds!”

“Maybe, but we found something much, much better,” Quint drawled, skating his gaze over her nude body. Water scudded down his carved chest and caught in the love trail leading to thick, dark, curly pubes. When her gaze lit on his long, hard cock, she gulped.

“This can’t be happening.”

“It will if you say the word, sweetheart.” Carter trapped her against the wall with his muscled body. Between his powerful thighs, rippling abs and the dark, dangerous glint in his eyes, she was in trouble.

She looked to Quint and noted the tension in his jaw and his roped biceps. She lifted her own jaw. “I’m no prude.”

“Have you had two men at once before then?” Quint’s amused tone called her bluff.

“I’m enough woman for two men.” The breathless lilt in her voice made her want to scream. They were throwing her off balance, and she didn’t like it one bit.

But she did like the inches of steel pointing her direction. Her core clenched, and she reached for them. Looping an arm around each thick neck and drawing the guys against her.

The feel of two scorching men surrounding her made her groan, which they echoed. Carter cupped her jaw and kissed her. As soon as he slipped his tongue between her lips, Quint nestled his cock against her hip and cradled her breasts in his big hands.

Need sliced through her. Her pussy squeezed hard, and juices ran down her lips.

“My turn for a taste.” Quint gripped her by the arms and turned her into his arms. When his minty flavors struck her, mingling with Carter’s earthier one, she moaned. Her body was a live wire pumping with electric want. She wiggled closer to Quint as his partner plucked at her nipples. Pinching them into taut peaks. Twisting them until she cried out.

Panting, she met each of their gazes. “Can you handle me?”

“Don’t rightly know, but we’ve got enough rope to give it a shot.” Quint claimed her lips again, lazily twirling his tongue through her mouth. She slid her hand down his chest and curled her fingers around his length.

He groaned, rocking his hips. A deep-seated desire stole her senses. She needed to be filled, stretched—by both men.

She reached for Carter’s cock. Both men stilled as she linked the three of them. A

bead of pre-come oozed from the tip of Carter's, and she swiped her thumb through it.

"Fuck," he grated out.

A heady and powerful feeling swept over her. She stroked two cocks from roots to tips while four hands landed on her body. She had no idea who was touching her where. She was too dizzy with the sensation.

Carter kissed a path over her throat while Quint ducked his head to taste her nipples. Biting each gently, then grazing them with his teeth until she writhed. As a rough finger nestled between her pussy lips, she lost her mind.

"Spread for me, darlin'," Quint demanded.

When her mind refused to activate her body, Carter slipped his hands over her thighs and parted them.

She cried out while Quint circled her stiff clit with his forefinger. Around and around, each pass wetter than the last.

"So fucking wet for me."

"For us," Carter corrected, and it was true. She wanted both with equal fervor. The need pounding her system was doubled. Quadrupled. A deep ache low in her belly made her grind her hips.

"Are you a virgin here?" Carter murmured in her ear. He dragged a fingertip down the seam of her ass and settled it over her pucker. She pushed back.

"You'll have to find out for yourself." She arched her back to give him better access,

whimpering when Quint buried his fingers in her pussy. He fingered her hard and fast, his thumb striking her clit on each deep stroke.

Carter circled her anus with his finger and then pushed inside. Her mind floated, and she came with a hard pulsing that stole her breath.

Shaking, supported by two of the most beautiful cowboys she'd seen in her life, she gave them her first orgasm.

"Oh God," she whispered.

"Feeling that hangover now, sweetheart?" Carter asked, gliding his finger in and out of her ass. Her inner muscles gripped him, wanting something bigger and thicker, say eight-and-a-half inches long, to fill her.

"What hangover?" She jacked off each man until their cocks were purple and straining. Quint added a third finger to her pussy, and she stopped breathing.

"I have to taste her." Quint dropped to his knees before her. Carter's wet chest slid down her spine and suddenly she had two men spreading her. Hardly able to stand, she braced a hand on the wall and one in Quint's hair as he lapped at her still-pulsating pussy.

When Carter snaked his tongue over her pucker, she lost all ability to think. Two warm, wet tongues driving her crazy. She moaned and swayed between them. But four hands locked her in between them as they licked and sucked her into oblivion.

A second orgasm smacked her out of nowhere. Her scream echoed off the walls. Quint plunged his tongue into her cavern and drew on her as if sucking her dry. Carter poked his tongue in and out of her ass, extending her release.

“Mmm. She’s more beautiful when she comes.”

“I...can’t stand anymore,” she whispered.

“No need. We’ve got you.” Quint lifted her. The water switched off, and Carter started rubbing her down with a thick white towel.

The cobwebs were back in her mind, but this time they were made of maple syrup, thick and sweet.

And she was starving.

\*

Carter’s cock bobbed against his abs, nearly bursting. The rich flavors of Bella’s body lived on his tongue, exciting him almost beyond his control. He fisted his cock, fighting the pending explosion.

They’d laid her out on the big bed. She was damp and glowing from the two releases they’d given her. Once he got a shot with her, he wouldn’t last two seconds. He could see the advantages of having a partner in this event—he and Quint could spell each other.

Quint tossed him a condom and he snagged it out of the air. Bella’s lips were red and swollen from their kisses, her nipples just as pink and bitten-looking. He was going to worship each breast for an hour...but first, he was going to sink into her tight pussy.

He got his condom on first and lowered himself over her body. She let her thighs fall apart to accept him. Trapping her face in his hands, he kissed her first. All the passion and need inside him poured into their kiss.



With a mewl of desire, Bella gripped his partner's cock and drew it to her lips. As each inch disappeared into her hot mouth, Carter sank into her pussy. Balls clenching, an orgasm pounding at the shores of his system. If he didn't slow down, this would be over too soon.

He wasn't nearly done with her.

She hollowed her cheeks as she sucked Quint. He threw his head back, and Carter gyrated his hips, lifting her on his cock. Her pussy was so wet and tight, he was going to lose his mind.

She moaned. Quint grunted, and Carter knew he was close.

"Keep doing that with your tongue and I'm a goner," Quint ground out.

She made a show of swirling her tongue around and around his shaft. When she dipped her tongue into the depression at his tip, the show was too much.

Carter lost it. He pounded into her. She tensed and released around him, making the hottest, most feminine noises imaginable. Sliding his hands under her ass, Carter lifted to meet each of his thrusts.

She cried out as he hit a deeper spot. She sucked on Quint harder, her beautiful lips moving faster on his length.

The tingling in Carter's spine shot upward and a wild roar left him. He pumped his hips, lifting her on his spurting cock as she came apart around him.

"Take it. Take my cock," Quint chanted. His movements grew disjointed, and a long groan rumbled from his throat.

\*

Quint had barely gathered his wits when he saw the bead of his come drip out of the corner of Bella's mouth.

Carter swooped in and opened his mouth over the rivulet.

Shock tore through Quint even as he registered Bella and Carter's groan of excitement.

My buddy just tasted my come.

Fucking hell, he'd never for a minute imagined such a thing turning him on, but he couldn't help it. His cock hardened to full mast again.

While Carter kissed her, Quint's eyes hooded. Her mouth held traces of Quint's come. And Carter was taking her with big, gulping, openmouthed kisses.

Quint's stunned mind grew quiet for a long minute as Carter ran his tongue over the corner of her lips where that bead of come had traveled. Maybe...

A vision of getting on his knees and sucking Carter's thick cock was a firework bursting in Quint's mind. She'd bewitched them.

He pumped his cock through his fist once more, pulling another thick drop from the tip.

Bella stilled, her sparkling gray eyes glazed with passion. "Take him, Carter. You like the way he tastes."

"Fucking hell," Quint moaned. His ab muscles leaped as Carter opened his mouth

over the tip of Quint's cock.

The burning hot feel of a man's mouth on him raised a full-body shudder in him. He pushed deep into his mouth, and Bella's lips tipped at the corners with a soft smile.

She liked this. Hell, things were going fast here, and Quint couldn't keep up with all of it. He watched his friend suck his cock like a fucking pro.

Bella stroked her nipples, teasing the tips into hard peaks. Carter released him with a flash of his eyes that Quint didn't quite understand.

But he rolled with it. Carter got up and tossed his condom. Then together, they stretched out with Bella and each took a breast. She arched, a constant quiver running through her. Like a low hum of electricity. Quint sucked her nipple into his mouth, flicking the tip with his tongue.

His balls felt heavy with the need to blow. Between the two mouths that had been wrapped around him, he was ready for more.

Bella wrapped her fingers around his wrist and guided his hand downward. He expected her to draw his hand to her bare pussy, but a rigid cock bumped his knuckles. He lifted his head and looked into her eyes. Yeah, she held the reins—for now.

She wanted him to stroke his best friend. Carter lapped a circle around her nipple with his tongue, and Quint took Bella's lead.

He closed his fist around Carter's shaft.

His friend stiffened. Something passed between them, dark and animalistic. They shared so much—why not this? He rolled his cock through his fingers, pulling a

groan from Carter.

Bella shifted to see better. Damn, the way she zeroed in on what he was doing—the total absorption on her features—it was a fucking turn-on like no other.

He stroked his fingers low over Carter's balls. He pushed upward, thigh muscles straining. Quint knew just how to please a cock, and he wasn't going to give Bella anything but the best.

He lunged over her body and took Carter in his mouth.

The initial surprise returned. Then Carter made a noise, half growl, half breathlessness, and Quint knew what to do. He worked him in and out of his mouth with sure pulls. Bella quaked as he palmed her pussy.

She cried out, and he spent the next few mindless minutes tormenting two lovers at once. Need built inside him, and soon he was aching for his own release. But not yet.

He trapped Bella's clit under the heel of his hand and licked Carter's shaft. Hands covered his nape, his shoulders. Carter pulling him down, Bella caressing. When she started to release long, throaty moans, Carter stopped him.

“You're fucking great at that. But she's ready for us again.”

Quint pushed to his knees and located a condom packet near the foot of the bed. With one long stroke he rolled it over his thickened cock.

Bella's eyes burned up at him. “I want one in my ass, one in my pussy.” Her demand was the hottest fucking thing he'd ever heard in his life. A whip of heat curled around his balls and shot through his cock.

“We’re pretty evenly matched. You say who gets your ass.”

“I think Carter, since he already knows how I like it back there.”

Quint trailed his finger through the creamy wetness coating her outer pussy lips. “Then I get this sweet, hot cunt.” Rolling into the mattress, he pulled her down atop him. With her ass positioned perfectly for Carter’s claiming, they got right down to business.

She sank over Quint’s shaft in one quick glide. Tossing her head back, her warm brown hair grazing his knuckles as he held her in place. The mind-searing feeling of her body gripping his every inch threatened his control.

“Give me a...second.” He looked deep into her eyes, and she leaned over and kissed him. A soft melding of mouths that meant much more than a sex romp. She wasn’t fooling anybody.

He plundered her lips slowly, while he heard a snick of a plastic cap. Who knew what else the man had in his travel bag, but at this point Quint wouldn’t be surprised by anything. Carter had some lube and was easing his way into her ass.

Quint’s cock lengthened a bit more at the idea of them both filling her at once. The changes of his relationship with Carter hadn’t sunk in fully yet, but he was ready to accept anything this pair threw his direction.

When Bella reared back and caught Carter’s hip, drawing him where she wanted him, his gaze met his friend’s over her shoulder. Fuck yeah, Carter had been right to suggest that they share her.

Gathering her hair into his fist, Quint placed nipping bites along her throat. She already wore a hickey—from him or Carter? Didn’t matter. She was going to be

thoroughly loved and hardly able to walk when she got out of here.

If they ever let her leave.

He withdrew slowly from her pussy. Bella gasped, and he knew Carter had breached her tight hole. As he sank each inch into her body, she tightened around Quint's cock. Sharp rasps of air escaped her, and he stroked her hair, soothing her until she relaxed enough to take them both to the roots.

"Okay, darlin'?" he asked.

"Y-yes. It's just so...much."

"She's so fucking tight, I won't last long." Carter gnashed his teeth.

Quint took the control, easing into her pussy. She shook in his hold. When he withdrew, Carter took the cue and sank in—balls deep.

Bella's lips opened in an O of pleasure, and then they slowly, carefully, began to move in counterpoint to each other. One in, one out. But as her noises grew louder, Quint lost his rhythm and plunged deep at the same moment Carter did.

The thick feel of his partner's cock through the thin barrier separating them stole every ounce of control he'd held so tightly to.

He withdrew. Thrust again. Carter groaned, and Bella screamed Quint's name. The next stroke, Carter's name was on her pretty lips. Then she was coming apart in their arms, quaking as her body clamped so hard on Quint's erection he thought he'd died and gone to heaven.

The sweet release rushed up from his balls. One hard spurt and he was emptying into

her body.

When he came back to his senses, Bella hung limply between them. Her hair draped around her face. With as much care as they'd filled her, Carter pulled out. She gasped and collapsed atop Quint.

He wrapped his arms around her, holding her near. Cherishing the feel of having her in his arms at last.

Carter sprawled next to him and buried his face in the crook of her neck in that most fragrant spot Quint had spent countless minutes kissing.

"Guys?" she asked, startling him.

"Yeah, darlin'?" he responded.

"Please tell me you have a big stock of condoms."

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:00 am*

“I hope you guys don’t think for a minute you’ve tamed me.” Bella paced back and forth in nothing but her skin and a glow of total satisfaction. Both guys stretched on the bed, their hard cocks already stiff and those bad-boy smiles on their lips.

Of course, this strange ménage couldn’t progress past today. But if she only had a few more hours to enjoy herself, she was damn well taking advantage.

“Never, darlin’. We don’t claim to have tamed you.” Quint’s drawl sent desires skittering over her bare skin. She stopped at the foot of the bed and folded her arms. Aware that her breasts were pushed high and on display, she smiled at her victims.

“That’s good, boys. Because you can’t turn me into one of those sappy romantics who loves getting flowers and trinkets.”

“Would never dream of it, sweetheart.” Carter folded his arm beneath his head, and in the dim light streaming through the crack in the ugly striped curtains, the dark hair on his jaw seemed even blacker. “No flowers or trinkets. Not for our girl. We’d bring you leather and new spurs.”

She eyed them. Maybe they really did know her. “What kind of spurs?”

“Maybe those ones with the antique copper posies on the sides and the crystals?”

Okay, those were flashy, but she might be guilty of coveting a pair. “You’re warming me up.”

Carter crooked a finger at her. “We haven’t even started yet. Come to bed and see



what we can do.”

She looked between two dark gazes, amazed that she was still so insatiable with two men to take care of her. Her nipples pinched into hard pebbles and her pussy throbbed. “Maybe I haven’t seen anything to convince me to come to bed with you.” She started pacing again.

The weight of their stares were welcome caresses. When had she ever felt so beautiful, sexy and desirable?

When has any man let me feel I have a choice in how I play in the bedroom?

She threw them a look from the corner of her eye. They weren’t paying any attention to her, though. No, some silent communication was going on between them. Was this a team ropers thing? As by unspoken agreement, they rolled to their feet and circled the bed from either side.

She froze.

“There’s no escape, darlin’. Just let it happen.” Quint closed the gap first and caught her against his hard, heated body. His muscles chiseled to perfection, the set of his square jaw sexy as hell. She squirmed, but Carter clasped her hands and raised them high above her head. Quint released her for a second, and in a blink her hands were bound.

With a gasp, she drew her hands in front of her face. A short length of rope bound them. “Where the hell were you hiding that? Do I want to know?”

“We’ve got a few tricks. Now come back to bed, you sassy wench.” Carter tugged her bound hands. When she dug in her heels to resist, Quint didn’t waste a second plucking her off her feet and tossing her onto the bed.

She bounced but before she could scramble away, they were pinning her. Big male bodies, hard lips and harder cocks. She was combusting under all these hands and tender kisses. As Carter sucked on her nipples, Quint finger-fucked her slow and deep.

When he pulled his fingers free, Carter said, “Gimme a taste.”

She raptly watched as he sucked Quint’s fingers clean. God, did they know what a turn-on it was that they didn’t have any inhibitions with each other? Seeing them pleasure each other was as good as being pleased by them. Well, almost.

Tugging on her restraints, she said, “Untie me.”

“Don’t worry, you’re still in control. You just can’t touch us. Or yourself.” She didn’t like the teasing glint in Quint’s eyes.

Hovering over her, he trailed his lips back and forth over hers, a breath away. Not close enough.

“Quint,” she warned.

His chest rumbled with a laugh he didn’t release. But his eyes danced as he skated a fingertip over her collarbone and down to the tip of her breast. Except he didn’t circle her nipple or twist it the way she needed.

She mewled, arching upward for more that never came. Instead, Carter eased a finger down her stomach. She sucked in on a sharp breath, waiting for him to touch her where she needed it most.

With a dark look of invitation, he got on his knees, cock in hand. She wet her lips, eager for a taste of his fat cock. She strained toward him, but he turned to Quint.

“You want a taste of this?”

“Fuck, yeah.”

They fell upon each other. Sixty-nining. Their mouths working each other until their muscles strained and she knew they were about to blow. She must have made a noise of disappointment, because they broke apart and stared at her.

“You want in on this, sweet thing?” Carter pronounced it as thang.

“I sure as hell don’t feel in control here,” she grumbled.

“Oh you are. You get to tell us what you want. Do you want us to keep doing this?” Quint gripped Carter’s cock at the root. “Or do you want something else?”

She felt her eyes glaze over. They did look fucking hot sucking cock. And she enjoyed the burn of having her orgasm withheld. But she wanted what only they could give.

“I want you both inside me.” Her voice sounded smokier than usual. Damn, she really was affected by them far more than anybody she’d been with yet. Her ex was a distant memory. What they’d done together seemed like boring missionary now.

“You heard the lady. She wants us to fill her up.” Quint rolled away, and Carter went for the condoms. Her clit swelled at the thought of both men deep inside her, moving together again.

She tugged her bonds again.

“Carter, get that condom on because that hot, tight pussy needs you.”

“Yes,” she whimpered.

When he stretched out and rolled her atop him, she realized just how much she really was calling the shots. The only difference was she didn’t need to say it aloud all the time—they knew what she needed, wanted.

She sank over Carter’s veined shaft. As each inch filled her, he kissed her into soft submission. She looped her arms around his neck, bracing herself, and Quint pushed at her backside with his cock.

The spongy head breached her pucker, and a deep quake began in her core. She wanted them so bad. When she was between them, she’d felt totally adored. She was never one to dwell on her past, but Frazer wasn’t going to ever fill her head with nonsense about never doing better. She’d done it times two.

Her breath hitched as both men stretched her. Stealing her mind. She met Carter’s gaze, and something passed between them, a slow and sweet honey she wanted to savor. He cupped her face, brushed her hair out of her eyes and kissed her with a deep passion that sent her into another world.

“Fuck.” Quint pushed into her.

“So tight.”

“More,” she whispered, her mouth suddenly dry again.

As each man found his place and she let them take over her pleasure, she felt herself sinking into a headspace. A spot where pure joy took over. Their arms kept her safe, their bodies supported. And a few dirty words didn’t hurt either.

“Take that cock. That’s it.” Quint sank deep.

Carter palmed her nipples as he jerked his hips. Her pussy contracted around his length. Her mind was spinning like a top, her temperature ten degrees hotter.

Quint licked the perspiration off her throat, and she angled her head to give him total access to that spot she loved kissed. He was so damn good at it too.

He latched onto the tender area and sucked.

“I feel you gripping me so tight, sweetheart. Are you ready to come for me?” Carter grazed the other side of her throat with his teeth.

Crying out, she nodded. “Yes!”

“Good. Come for us. Come on our cocks like a good little cowgirl.”

His words sent a brand new heat to her insides. She rocked between them, reaching toward that end that was a bright star in the sky of her mind. Her whimpers grew louder, throatier.

“Right there.” She could barely rasp the words through the pleasure haze smearing her mind.

“Here?” Carter did something with his hips that sent his cock right into her G-spot.

She contracted once...twice. And came with a cry. As her walls clenched around Carter, his rugged features shifted. He was close, but she wasn't finished with him yet.

She slowed to extend her orgasm, but the guys were having none of that. Quint buried his cock in her ass at the same moment Carter plunged back in. The double action sent her flying again.

“So fucking beautiful when you come, darlin’. That’s it. Come for us.”

“We’ve got you.” Carter’s eyes were as dark as night as he held her gaze.

Yes, this was what she’d needed. In the bar, she’d hoped to get a thrill from riding that bull or having a night of tipsy fun, but in the end, these guys knew exactly what to give her.

Passion lifted in her, and she locked her body more firmly to Carter’s as she rode out her orgasm. As the last traces flowed away, Quint spattered her shoulders with kisses.

“Ready for more?” he asked.

She nodded, panting already. By the time she left this room, she’d have a hard time walking let alone racing. But hells to the yeah, she looked forward to the memory of these moments.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Congrats on your win.” Coming from Jeb Anderson, the words sounded smug and backhanded.

Carter eyed him and gave a nod of thanks. Whatever the guy was up to, he didn’t want a part of it. He started to walk away.

“Hey, can I get some advice, Fallon?” Jeb took off his gloves and slapped them against his thigh.

Leerier than ever, Carter walked back. “Sure.” I’d better get some brownie points for this in heaven. Every single second talking to Jeb deserved a fucking medal. The guy was an arrogant dick.

“What’s going on?” he asked.

“It’s a sensitive topic. I’ve got a date with...” Jeb jerked his head toward the stalls some distance away where Bella and a toad-faced barrel racer stood, preparing for their races.

“A date with the one in the blue hat?” Carter’s heart was pounding out of his chest but he didn’t let on. If Jeb told him he and Bella had a date, he needed the element of surprise when he bashed Jeb’s teeth out.

Jeb chuckled. “Uh, no. With Miss Roberts.”

Stay calm. He might be lying.

“Yeah? So where’re you gonna take her?” His words came out flat.

“That’s the million-dollar question. I’m not familiar with these parts and I hoped you’d be able to tell me a place to go.”

Shooting a look toward Bella, he noted that she didn’t seem to give a damn that the man she was supposedly going out with later had just come off a great run himself. Sure, he hadn’t won, but there was only one winning team, and that was him and Quint.

If she was really interested in Jeb, wouldn’t she be looking at him?

A voice in the back of his head shouted that she wasn’t glancing his way either. Dammit.

Scrubbing a hand over his jaw, he said, “I’m not the right person to ask. I don’t know this area either. I hear there’s a Chinese buffet up the road. Passed it on the way in,

actually.”

He chuckled. “No, I don’t do Chinese food. Makes me gassy. Know of a steakhouse?”

“No, I don’t.” He caught Quint striding his direction, a huge grin on his face that faded the minute he spotted who Carter was speaking to. “Hey, I gotta go. Good luck with...” He waved toward Bella.

His gesture caught her attention. The minute she saw all three of them standing together, her look turned serious.

Then thunderous.

Whirling away, she strode off, ducking into the crowd.

Carter watched until she was out of view, and then he walked away too. Quint caught up to him. “What the fuck’s that about?”

“Which event are you talking about? The fact that Bella looked pissed when she saw us and walked away or that Anderson claims he has a date with her?”

Quint went dead still. The hardening of his shoulder muscles alerted Carter of his temper rising long before his dark brows drew downward. “Like hell,” he grated out.

“That’s what I thought—before Bella saw us talking to him and left. An innocent woman doesn’t run.”

“A stupid one would go out with a jerk like Anderson. She’s not stupid.”

“I know. But maybe she’s trying to prove something.”



“Like what?” Quint’s underlying nervousness was something only Carter would pick up on.

“Maybe she’s trying to show us that last night meant nothing.”

“Like hell,” he said again, louder this time.

Carter echoed the feeling, but he masked his features when he noted the cameras surrounding them. A reporter thrust a mic under his nose and started rifling questions about their win and how they felt about the next city. Whether or not they’d make it all the way to the finals in Vegas this year.

He and Quint took turns answering, always playing off each other. When they finished, a group of fans flocked them, waving papers and T-shirts for them to sign.

By the time they’d finished seeing to the fans and ignoring the Buckle Bunnies who sauntered up and smacked their painted lips, Bella had disappeared completely from view.

“She’s competing soon, right?” he asked Quint.

“Yeah.”

“Do you think we should go find her?”

“Yes.” Quint gave everyone a final wave, scattering them as he wheeled around and headed back toward the place they’d last seen Bella. “I’ve got a bad feeling about this.”

“Me too.” Carter’s hackles on his neck stood up. He quickened his pace. The last person who would be a victim was Bella, but obviously Jeb was gunning for her, and

Carter wouldn't put it past the snake to corner her and try to take what he wanted.

A growl built in Carter's chest until he could barely draw a full breath. When they passed Wynonna Calhoun, he swung around. "Have you seen Bella?"

She gave him a look that said she didn't give a damn where Bella was. There wasn't any love lost between them, though Carter didn't know the whole story. Yet. He planned to uncover every mystery Miss Roberts held. She wasn't slipping away from them.

How crazy that he thought of her as belonging to both of them. After last night, she damn well did. If she was running, it was only because she knew it too.

"Haven't seen her," Wynonna said, tossing her long red hair over her shoulder. Damn, she had as much attitude as Bella. Maybe all barrel racers had it.

He tipped his hat to the lovely woman and took off toward the place Bella had her horse stabled.

Of course she'd have her animal out right now, exercising it before the ride. But when he and Quint reached the area, it was vacant.

"Dammit, I know she's avoiding us. I don't know what's worse—that or knowing Anderson's stalking her," Carter said.

"He's not a dangerous guy. Just a cocky asshole."

They exchanged a look. "Bad enough."

"Damn straight. C'mon. I know where to look."

“There aren’t many places where a woman and a horse can hide, but one of them worries the hell out of me.” Carter took off straight for the parking lot. She hadn’t competed yet, but maybe she’d taken off early—hopped in her truck and pulled out without a backward glance.

It was something Bella would do. She didn’t follow rules, even ones regarding a sport she loved. She followed her every whim and spoke what was on her mind at that particular second. He didn’t put it past her to withdraw from her competition just so she could avoid him and Quint.

And Jeb.

When the overhead parking lamp shined down on the spot where Bella’s truck and trailer had been, he and Quint stopped dead in their tracks.

“Son of a bitch. She skipped.”

“Hell.” Carter’s oath echoed two things—emotion he felt for the woman he’d never let go of so easily, and a passionate need to turn her over his knee and give her a sound spanking.

\* \* \* \* \*

Quint settled on the edge of a new motel bed in a new town and let his shoulders slump. After a long drive west to Arkansas, he was bone-weary. Carter’s brooding silence hadn’t helped ease the tension in the truck either.

Neither of them had seen or heard from Bella. They had sighted Jeb alone at the last rest stop, which fueled the only happiness Quint had felt in a long, dismal day.

This was all about Bella having the last say. She didn’t want to be left vulnerable for

even a minute, but didn't she know that sometimes more strength came from leaning on someone?

Or two someones, in this case.

Carter tossed his bag on the other bed and stood there for a long minute, staring at it.

"We should go look for her," Quint said.

"Yeah. If she's here, she'll be parked on the grounds." They exchanged a look. "This time we meet her on her turf."

Quint's chest welled with affection for his friend. His lover. They hadn't touched each other since Bella was between them, but it had definitely added a new dimension to their relationship. Neither of them spoke of it, but he didn't feel a hint of strain. They'd always worked things out with few words. This was no different.

"Let me wash my face, and then we'll go out and see if we can find this naughty little cowgirl." Quint got up.

When he came out of the bathroom, Carter was changing into a fresh shirt, his back muscles flexing as he slid his arms into the sleeves. Quint came up behind him and hooked an arm around his middle. They stood that way for a long minute.

Breaking apart, Carter shot him a crooked grin that didn't quite reach his eyes. Then he buttoned his shirt. When the ends were tucked in and his hat straight, they set out.

"Who do you think hurt her? That asshole she was with years ago? That bull rider from Oshkosh?" Carter asked.

"Yeah, I think it starts with him."

“Should we hunt his ass down and stick straw under his fingernails until he tells us what he did to her to make her so afraid of getting close to anyone?”

Quint shot him a wry look. “The idea has merit, but we should probably try to coax the information from Bella first. Though I don’t think she’s hung up on someone so much as a little wild.”

“Mm. Yeah.” Carter climbed behind the wheel of the truck. Their trailer had been offloaded and their horses tucked up in the nearby stables, being pampered with fresh hay and water.

Once they were on the road toward the fairgrounds where the next rodeo was held, Quint said, “So we have to lure the wild horse close enough to pet without breaking her spirit.”

“I like the way you think.” Carter took a left turn.

“What if we can’t figure out how?”

“I think we already did—she likes having both of us. Two of us can chase her down better than one.”

Turned out they didn’t need to search far. She came to the door of her trailer on the first knock. And damn if she didn’t open her arms to them.

Heart thumping with joy, Quint launched into the trailer, lifted her and bore her inside. She made a sound of surrender as he claimed her mouth. The long strokes of her tongue against his said she’d suffered without them as much as they had.

When he broke free of the kiss and let her slide all the way down his body, Carter picked her up and seated her on the small tabletop. As he tipped her face back for his

kiss, Quint watched through hooded eyes. Damn, they looked beautiful together.

“I see you wasted no time in finding me.” Her voice was reedy and her lips thoroughly swollen from the last five minutes of their attentions.

“We shouldn’t have to come find you, darlin’.” Quint crowded closer to her and Carter. “You know where you belong.”

She met his gaze and for a solid heartbeat, he awaited her protest—her smart comeback. But none came.

Wrapping an arm around each of them, she brought them down to her level. Her forehead pressed against his, and Carter rested his jaw to the place they touched.

“Why’d you run, Bella?” he asked after a moment.

He felt the change in her. Stiffening, she pushed away and got to her feet. The trailer was too small to put much distance between them, but she managed. With her arms folded and several pieces of furniture separating them, she was doing a damn good job of showing her position on the subject.

Quint took a step toward her. “What happened back in Alabama, that isn’t the end, Bella.”

“I wanted it to be,” she said hoarsely. A knife twisted in his gut. She stared at him sidelong, a glint in her eye. “But I could probably go for one more ride.”

Quint arched a brow. “We’ll start at one then get you agreeing to two by the end of the night.”

“Or three...or forever.” Carter closed his fingers over the hem of her tank top. When

he peeled it off her, leaving glowing, tanned skin, Quint's cock jumped to instant attention.

“By the time we're finished playing with you and come together, darlin', there's going to be a nuclear meltdown.” With one flick of his fingers, Quint unclasped her bra. He tossed it away and they went right for her breasts.

Throwing her head back, she cupped their heads to her as they sucked her nipples into their hungry mouths. She gasped and moaned and begged for more. “Just one more time,” she whimpered.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:00 am*

If someone had told Bella that three people could fit on her double mattress set into the back of her trailer, she never would have believed it. But it wasn't difficult when they were stacked up like pats of butter melting together.

Every nerve ending in her body throbbed as she straddled Carter's face. The scorch of his tongue against her clit thrilled her as much as Quint moving inside her from behind. He sank into her ass, and Carter suckled her throbbing button. With each move, she launched higher.

A haze of passion stole her mind. She had too much invested in these guys for her liking, but she'd make sure to put the brakes on all emotions tomorrow. For now, she wanted them more than anything.

Carter clamped his lips around her clit, using the tip of his tongue to lightly stroke the ball of nerves. She cried out. Quint thrust deep again, and her scream ended on a long moan.

God, they'd been at this for hours and still she wasn't satisfied. With Quint and Carter, satisfied wasn't even a word in her dictionary. She always needed more, more, more.

A deep burn spread through her lower belly. The guys knew just what to do to pull the loudest noises from her. If anybody walked by the trailer, they'd think a wild animal was inside.

Grinding her hips, she felt a brush of fingertips and realized with a jolt that Carter was fondling Quint's balls as he fucked her ass. Her orgasm rushed up fast and hard.



Her body shook as the biggest release of the night raged through her.

Carter gripped her hips, holding her tight as Quint caressed her spine with his lips.

“Come on, darlin’. Give it all to us.”

She had a feeling they were really asking for more than her screaming orgasms. They wanted her mind, body and soul.

She couldn’t be harnessed by a man, though.

But maybe two can hold me?

With her hands braced against the wall, she rode out the last of her bliss. Fatigue washed over her. As if knowing this, Quint slipped from her body and Carter lifted her off his face. She found herself curled between both men, a Bella sandwich.

She giggled.

A light slap came down on her outer hip, and she squealed. “Are you laughing at us, wench?” Carter rumbled.

“No, just thinking I’m like the filling of a sandwich.”

“So now we’re dough-y like bread.”

“Not remotely.” She’d run her hands over their muscled chests if she had the strength. They’d worn her out. That and worry. She wasn’t ready to confide yet.

“Well, you’re definitely a sweet filling. Strawberry jam or honey. Mmm.” Quint swirled his tongue in circles up the column of her throat to that favorite spot of his

behind her ear.

She let her eyes shut and let them give her ease. If she told the guys about Josey Wheels, they'd understand. Who else could? But voicing her fears was too difficult.

Barrel racing horses experienced a lot of strain on joints and tendons. Normally the rider wrapped the legs to protect them, but she'd been careless and warmed her up without the wrappings.

After the first few turns she'd realized her error and had quickly stopped. The day after she hadn't noted any issues with her horse, but before the race in Alabama, she'd noticed her horse had a little tenderness along one leg.

Backing out of the race was the only way to keep her animal from true injury, and she'd seen to the tender spot herself, turning a hose on the affected area and letting the cold water run over it. Now she was watching the mare closely. No precaution was too silly—an injury could end her career.

As soon as she'd seen to the horse upon arrival, all looked well. But she couldn't help but think of her upcoming event. She'd be throwing down against Wynonna Calhoun again, and losing didn't set well with her.

"She's asleep." Quint's rough whisper made her eyes fly open.

Carter's chuckle vibrated her. "Sure she is."

"Good to see you're up. I'm not willing to wait much longer for an explanation," Quint said, his dark eyes serious.

A shiver ran through her. She refused to believe it was because she didn't like his disapproval. No, she'd chalk it up to his dark, dangerous appearance...his mussed

hair and the red marks on his throat from Carter's beard. How fucking sexy.

"If you think I'm going to have some deep talk about feelings, you boys are crazier than I thought." She wiggled out from between their bulk and popped out at the end of the mattress. Her bra was clear across the room, so she settled for the first thing she saw—Carter's shirt.

The worn cotton felt good when she wrapped it around herself. It smelled of him—sunshine and clean male. She resisted the urge to brush her nose over the collar, though, because the guys were looking at her that way again.

Like they were going to eat her alive. This time she didn't believe they meant to fuck her, even if neither of them had gotten off during the last round.

Quint disposed of his condom in a small trash can and took a seat at the end of the mattress. Before she could move away—or want to—he caught her hands in his and dragged her closer.

Carter reclined on the bed, but she didn't believe for a minute he was calm. A crease stood between his dark brows and his jaw was set at a stubborn angle.

They wanted her, probably wanted much more than sex with her. So many guys did, but why should she commit? It was more fun to play around and fly by the seat of her pants.

She couldn't stand the waiting anymore. "Look, I know what you're going to say."

How was it possible they gave her the same skeptical expression?

"Do you guys practice that or something?" She wagged a finger between them.

“Practice what?”

“That look you’re sharing.” When they stared at her, oblivious to what she meant, she continued, “Forget it. This was fun, guys, but I think it’s time for you to go.”

At that, Carter sat up. Every muscle rolled as he moved to sit beside his gorgeous partner. Damn them, ganging up on her this way. Two naked, gorgeous cowboys begging her with their eyes? She was a bowl of pudding wrapped in plaid.

She couldn’t move with her fingers locked in Quint’s.

“You’re not booting us out, darlin’. We’re here to stay. And you’re going to tell us why you ran back in Alabama.”

Should she confide her worries about her horse? Any rodeo person would make noises of sympathy, but she’d seen similar things before. One racer’s horse had gone down with a broken leg and while the other women in her event felt the pains of that, deep down they were relieved to be competing against one less person.

Carter and Quint were different, though. They wouldn’t have a reason to pretend.

She pushed out a breath. “Fine. It’s my horse.”

Carter’s brows drew together to match Quint’s. If she weren’t upset about vocalizing this, she might have laughed. They really had so much in common, though each personality stirred her separately. And together, they were a force to be reckoned with.

“Something’s wrong with your horse?”

She told them the story, and they took turns compressing their lips. “Did you get

somebody to look at her?" Quint asked at last.

She shook her head. "I think she's okay, but if I suspect anything at all tomorrow before the race, I'll pull out again."

"You can't keep forfeiting these races, Bella. You won't get anywhere."

She looked down at her hands trapped in Quint's. "I know."

"I'm glad you told us," Carter said, wrapping his fingers around her thigh. His pinky stroked the backside of her knee, sending new ripples of lust up into her pussy. The back of her knee wasn't normally an erogenous zone, but he could stroke her little toenail and it would turn her on.

"Okay, that's one question answered." Quint eyed her.

"There's more?" She lifted her chin in defiance.

"A few. Don't get your panties in a bunch."

"I'm not wearing any."

As if they'd forgotten, both cowboys looked down at her pussy, barely concealed by the tails of Carter's shirt. Two cocks stirred in their laps, and she prided herself on throwing the dogs off her scent.

Or onto it, rather.

Quint shook himself. "We need to know why you've been avoiding us."

"Easy. I was done with you." She picked at a thread on the cuff of the shirt.

Carter snorted. “That’s why you let us into your trailer and wrapped yourself around us. Let us have you in ten different ways.”

“Umm, I figured you only live once. We have fun in bed. Why not pass the time?” Her bravado was failing as they stared right through her charade.

“Pass the time,” Carter echoed. “Sure, sweetheart.”

“It’s true.”

“You don’t have a bit of attachment to either of us?”

“Well, you do look hot as hell when you’re together.”

They exchanged a look that threatened to set her aflame all over again.

With a bit of pressure on her knee, Carter pulled her closer. Quint let go of her hands and held onto her hip. They spread her legs before she knew their intentions.

Several fingers met at the wet seam of her pussy. Quint pushed a thick finger inside while Carter drew a circular pattern over her rapidly swelling clit. Breathless, she tried to gather her wits. Moving away wasn’t an option, so she might as well give in and tell them what they wanted to hear.

“Fine, I…” pant, pant, “want you both.”

“You mean you want this?” Quint splayed his fingers and teased her anus with one while thrusting deeper into her pussy.

She swayed forward, and they caught her. Carter supporting her while stroking her into a four-alarm blaze again.

“Wider, darlin’.” Quint nudged her thighs apart, and she obeyed. Following commands went against every cell of her being but when it came to Carter and Quint, she was a softie. They made her think of a bigger trailer and a bigger bed. Of exploring cities across the country together while doing what they loved.

And loving each other.

“You’d never let that ass Jeb Anderson do this, would you?” Carter’s question was a pail of cold water to her libido. She snapped her legs shut and folded her arms around her middle.

“Who would ever let that man lay a finger on them? He’s had every Buckle Bunny from Sacramento to the Jersey shore. Probably has more STDs than wins.”

Quint’s mouth quirked up, but he wasn’t fooling anyone—he was relieved to hear her say that. “So that’s a no?”

“A hell no.”

“We knew he was lying.” Carter stood, grabbed her and tossed her onto the bed. They followed her down and blew her mind all over again. When she surfaced from the ecstasy, would she even remember why she was trying to stay away from them?

Something to do with men not believing she was good enough. Or not being good enough for her. Hell, she couldn’t remember anymore, not with so many tongues and hands on her.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Think she’ll come around a third time?” Carter watched Quint make a toss that missed its mark. They were both out of sync tonight, which was bad for their winning

streak. Yet they could afford to go for a bit without prize money. After the last two cities, they had enough for gas, food and motels. What else did they need?

Bella. We need Bella.

She was back to the vanishing act. Neither of them had laid eyes on her since their night in her trailer. After checking in on her horse, they'd found it in relatively good shape. But no Bella around.

Quint issued a steady sigh through his nose then began to recoil his rope. His second throw missed its mark too. "She'll come back. She just needs some time to work it out in her mind. Just like a strong-willed horse. You take a little then give them some lead."

"She needs to run wild for a bit, is that what you're saying?"

"Yeah." Quint raked his gaze over Carter's body, landing on his bulging fly. "You thinking about her?"

"And more."

Quint's jaw was dark with a five o'clock shadow, inviting a heat to settle in Carter's balls. He liked this new extension of their relationship. Maybe it was time to take things solo, without Bella's presence.

Stepping up, he caught Quint's forearm, stopping him from throwing the lasso again. When he angled his head, his lover did the same. Their mouths came together in a rough kiss. Teeth and tongues added a dash of heat. And when they ground their cocks together, a low whistle sounded.

A flush heated Carter as he jerked away. Feminine laughter sounded, and together



they turned to see the prettiest little cowgirl in the world leaning against the fence. Her hair was in a messy rope over one shoulder, her breasts pushed out as she draped her arms over the top rail.

“I see I started something between you.”

They broke apart and Quint wrapped the rope he still held. They moved toward her.

A quiver of some emotion passed over her face. Part excitement, part trepidation? Carter couldn't tell, but he was certain about one thing. By the time they were finished with her, she'd forget the worry part.

“What brings you to this side of the arena, darlin'?” Quint drawled.

She tried to sidestep, but Carter hemmed her in against the fence while Quint used the rope to bind her hands to the fence rail.

Fire glinted in her eyes, making them a stormier gray than usual. The freckles on her nose stood out beneath her flush.

“Just passing through,” she said.

“Uh-huh. Looking for a good hard fuck, I say.” Carter ripped open her top. Buttons flew every direction. Back in one of the stables, a horse whinnied.

Bella's eyes widened. “What am I going to wear out of here?”

“My shirt. We can't let anybody see these beautiful breasts but us. You're ours, Bella,” Carter said.

Her head fell back at his words, and he realized how affected she was by him. By

both of them.

Quint sucked her nipple through the cloth of her bra while teasing her other nipple with his fingers. Small, squeaking noises escaped her—gasoline to Carter’s fire. He captured her braid in his fist, yanked her head back and kissed her.

For long minutes nobody surfaced. But when they did, he and Quint exchanged a knowing look. If she wanted to watch, they’d give her a damn good show. After all, they were professionals in the area of entertainment.

Carter released her and turned to Quint. They fell on each other. Rough hands, bruising kisses. Teeth grazing necks. When Carter flipped his lover’s belt open and opened his fly, Bella moaned.

“Aren’t you going to untie me so I can join in?” she whimpered, chest rising and falling.

“Not yet. You need to see what keeps bringing you back.” Quint reached into his boxers and pulled his thick cock free. Without hesitation, Carter did the same. His swollen head was beaded with pre-come.

Using a hand on his nape, Quint dragged Carter close until their bodies bumped. Carter wrapped his fingers around both of their thick shafts and pumped.

Bella moaned and strained at her bindings. Quint’s mouth was scorching as he kissed a path over Carter’s chest. Then he dragged his beard upward until their lips collided in a crash of epic proportions.

“Oh God,” Bella murmured. There was a violent creak of the fence, and then she was free somehow. Carter barely had a chance to chuckle at the fact Quint had tied a half-assed rope so she could free herself and join in.

They opened their arms for her, but she dropped to her knees and parted her lips for their cocks. A growl of pleasure rushed up from the depths of Carter's being as they took turns sinking their cocks into her sweet, hot mouth. A glow coated her skin, and he wanted nothing more than to strip her and bend her over the fence.

But he was too close. Quint too. Their breathing was fraught with need. Bella's little whimpers didn't help. When she opened her jaws wide and took them at the same time, her cheeks bulging with their cocks, he couldn't hold back another second.

Come rushed up from his balls. spurts jetted from him, and Quint's primal groan let him know he was coming too. Bella tipped her head back to take them further. Gripping his cock at the base, Carter pulled free and finished on the crests of her round breasts. Painting her, marking her as his.

Quint followed suit, hips jerking with his release. He spurted over her breasts too, and she blinked up at them, a pleading in her eyes.

"Oh yeah, sweetheart. You'll get your turn." Carter gave his cock one last pump then drew her to her feet and kissed her, tasting their combined flavors. He never wanted to let either of his lovers go.

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"Grab that rope," Quint instructed Carter. He didn't take his gaze from Bella's. She was too lovely to tear his gaze away from, all soft and compliant. Her lips rosy and swollen from sucking their cocks. They'd cleaned up her breasts with her ruined top, but a sheen of their essence gleamed under the afternoon sun.

Carter held out the rope, and Quint closed his fingers over the end without even looking at it. He drew the frayed ends to Bella's nipples, which had accidentally popped from her bra after Carter had destroyed it.

The garment lay in tatters on the dirt ground next to a few buttons. They'd have to be careful not to rip up any more pieces of clothing or she'd be going back to her trailer wrapped in a feed sack.

The idea held appeal, he had to admit. She'd look gorgeous in one.

Her rough gasps fed the fire of need inside him. She might try to run from them, but she kept running back into their open arms. Whatever was holding her up from investing emotionally, they'd work through it—together.

He unfastened her jeans and shimmied them down her hips. With her clothing around her ankles and her thighs spread as far as she could, he took the edge of the rope and skimmed her clit with it.

A light, teasing touch that ripped a cry from her.

“Shh, darlin’. We don’t want anybody to come running.”

“You’re going to...have to...gag me,” she ground out.

“Mmm, not a problem.” Quint took a clean handkerchief from his back pocket and fastened the gag around her mouth. Carter stared up at her wide, bright eyes and continued his torment.

Circling her clit. Each hemp strand catching on her swollen nubbin. Teasing the edges. Caressing the small hood covering her core. Using a forefinger, he pressed the hood back and grazed that spot.

She shook, juices squeezing from her pussy.

“She smells like candy. I can’t do this very long before I taste her,” Carter warned his

other lover.

Quint started kissing her neck and reached around her body to pinch and twist her nipples. She rocked into both of their touches. Her body was strung as tight as an instrument, and damn, he loved playing her.

If ropin' and ridin' were his first loves, pleasuring Bella was vying for the top spot. A muffled moan left her, and Quint clamped down on her nipples. Carter dropped the rope and buried his face in her pussy. Dragging his tongue back and forth with more and more speed. She tensed, gave one shuddering sob...and came.

A wild noise escaped his throat as he sucked her pussy clean. Pulling on her clit until she grew too sensitive and then wagging his tongue through her slickness. When he raised his head, he caught movement from the corner of his eye.

Jeb Anderson, and he'd had seen them.

Carter licked his lips slowly like a beast who'd just gotten his fill.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:00 am*

Quint dropped into the booth of the diner and snatched the grease-coated menu from the holder at the end of the table. While he stared at the choices, his mind was far from his stomach.

“I can’t believe she won her race and hightailed it out of town without saying a damn word to us,” he said for the fifth time.

“I do. It’s Bella.” Carter, seated across from him, peeled the sticky pages of his own menu apart. Inside was a smear of maple syrup, and he gave up reading it and tossed it aside.

His partner’s words revolved through his head. It’s Bella. It’s Bella. Yeah, it was her personality through and through. Her independent and sassy ways were exactly what had drawn both of them to her. But it was getting difficult too.

“She isn’t as invested in us.” The words came out unbidden.

Carter looked up in surprise. “You know that ain’t true, man.”

“Do I? We can’t walk away so easily.”

“Who says it’s easy on her? But she’s trying to work it out in her mind. And you gotta admit that this game of hide and seek makes for some fun when we finally locate her.” Carter waved at the waitress, who sauntered over with a sway of her hips and a big Southern smile.

They ordered breakfasts and a pot of coffee, but a few minutes later when the platter

of ham and eggs was placed before him, Quint couldn't remember having ordered it.

He picked up his fork tines down and stabbed the ham with enough force to kill it a second time.

Carter's rough fingers on his wrist stopped him. Their gazes met, and Quint's chest walls flexed around his thudding heart.

"I know. You're right. I can't take it personally that she runs from us."

"If we give her enough rope, she won't feel tethered. The last thing we want to do is tie down a woman like Bella." Carter was annoyingly calm about all of this. And right.

Quint sliced off a chunk of ham and stuffed it into his mouth. All of the hours spent with her were the best of his life, and he didn't want to live through the hours when they weren't together.

"I've fallen for her."

Carter gave him a crooked grin. "Me too. Feels good, doesn't it?"

He found himself smiling back, his heart more buoyant than it had been minutes before. "Yeah, it does."

The door opened with a tinkle, and he glanced up automatically. The ham stuck in his throat and he choked as he saw the expression on their cowgirl's beautiful face.

He got to his feet, coughing. Carter whipped around and jumped up too when he spotted Bella. Carter reached her first. "What happened?"

Her features were twisted in pain and her cheeks tracked with tears. Quint placed a

hand on her waist and felt a slight tremor within her. “What’s going on?” he asked.

With a wild look around, she said, “Outside.”

They started out the door, but the waitress hollered, “Hey, you haven’t paid!”

Quint swung back and tossed a bill on the counter and then followed his lovers out of the diner. The sunny morning didn’t reflect the devastation on Bella’s face. He caught her by the shoulders and forced her to meet his gaze. “Tell us what’s wrong.”

“It’s Josey. When we came out of that last turn at the race, I felt her shift. I knew something was wrong and sure enough, she’s favoring that leg. The tendons were hot and swollen almost immediately.”

“Oh shit.” Carter wrapped an arm around her middle.

“What can we do? Where is she?”

“I took her out right away and tracked down the first vet I could find. He looked at her and said it’s beyond him. So he sent me to another guy. But they need to do surgery, and I don’t know.” Her voice broke and fresh tears splashed down her face. “I didn’t know what to do and I had to find you guys.”

“Take us to her,” he said.

She nodded and led them to her truck. When Quint got behind the wheel, she started to protest, but he said, “You’re in no condition to drive safely. You came after us for a reason. Let us help you.”

With supreme effort, she sucked back her tears and Carter put her into the passenger seat before he jumped into the back seat. She gave them directions to the next town over. As Quint drove, he realized what it really meant that she’d tracked them down



at the diner. It showed just how deep she was entwined in their unorthodox relationship too.

Reaching across the console, he rested his hand over hers. She blinked back more tears, but the love shining in her eyes was enough for him even if she was never able to voice it without a hell of a lot of attitude and a smart comeback or two.

He squeezed her fingers. “You trust this vet?”

“I-I don’t know what to think. I have to admit I’m not good at this sort of thing and I’m sort of...emotional.” She gulped a sob. “If they fuck up her leg, she’s done racing. I don’t want to put her out to pasture and find another horse.”

“We get it,” Carter said. In the rearview mirror, he met Quint’s gaze. Understanding snapped between them. They were in this for the long haul—all of them. Quint wasn’t letting either of them go.

“We won’t let that happen. I have some experience with vets. Let me talk to him?” he asked her.

She nodded and gave a sniffle. Carter gave her his clean hanky, and she mopped her face. Half an hour later they were pulling into a clean-looking animal hospital. Quint parked her truck and trailer and each of them took one of Bella’s hands and together they went to see what could be done for her horse.

“Whatever happens, you have us, all right?” he whispered against her ear.

She nodded. “I know.”

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With as much strength as she could muster, Bella tried to focus on what the

veterinarian was saying to her. He'd seen such injuries in the past. He wasn't the top man for the job, but he felt the tear was simple and his skills were adequate.

Her brain was too fogged with worry for her prized animal, and thank goodness Quint and Carter started plying the man with questions she couldn't even begin to think of asking.

Leaning against Carter, she listened to their deep, soothing voices. Things would work out. They had to.

Something was decided between the guys, but she'd missed it. She watched Carter walk away with the vet while Quint led her to the seating area. She cleared her throat and wiped her eyes, but they wouldn't stop streaming.

"I'm sorry. I'm acting like a drama queen. The world only needs one Wynonna Calhoun."

Quint's eyes were dark with concern. "You're fine. It's understandable that you're upset. Our livestock are our best friends as well as our livelihood."

"Yeah. I'll be out of commission for a while without her. Or I'll have to go home and get another horse that I've worked with in the past. I wouldn't expect to win, though."

"Maybe not. What's the real story behind you and Wynonna's rivalry?" He entwined their fingers.

She had a feeling he was trying to take her mind off the fact that her animal was about to go into surgery. Drawing a deep breath, she said, "Wynonna's okay, I guess. We just got off on the wrong foot, and I suppose neither of us are willing to make peace."

"What happened?"

The waiting area was cozy and nobody else was around, since it was a Sunday. She couldn't even imagine what the bill for an off-hours surgery would be, but she'd worry about that later. If she had to, she'd turn to her family for help. They'd always supported her.

But after discovering that Josey Wheels was injured, Bella had stared at her phone and struggled with calling her father. In the end, she'd pocketed her phone, gotten in her truck and gone to find the two men who she'd become so close to recently.

Quint stroked her hair behind her ear and drew her head down on his shoulder. "You don't have to tell me about Wynonna if you don't want to."

"No, it's okay. I'm just gathering my thoughts. It started my first year racing when her brother started hanging around me."

She felt Quint's shoulder tense and she shifted to find a comfier spot to rest her head. "We were just friends, or so I thought. I was with Frazer at the time, so I didn't have my eyes open to things like flirting from other men."

He turned his lips against her temple, and she issued a soft sigh, snuggling closer. "Wynonna didn't like you hanging out with her brother?"

"No, and when he found out who I was dating, he got grumpy. He told me that my boyfriend had come onto Wynonna, but she was only seventeen at the time and he was going to have him arrested for corruption of a minor and all that."

"Did Frazer touch her?"

"I don't know. Maybe. Probably. He was an ass. Either way, things got tense between all of us because I didn't know better and I defended Frazer. Nothing ever came of the allegations, but we never discussed it further. I guess we agreed to disagree, and we've kept a wide berth of each other ever since. She is a diva, though. You have to

wear sunglasses when she's in the arena because she's so shiny."

He laughed out loud. "Shiny?"

"Yeah, all those sparkles and rhinestones."

"She's pretty young still."

"Yeah, she'll learn you don't need all that crap to make a statement out there. All you need is skill, a prayer and a good horse." At the mention of her horse, she welled up all over again.

Carter returned, tucking a slip of paper into his pocket. When he took up the chair next to her, she tipped her head from Quint's shoulder to his.

"Everything's going to be all right, sweetheart." He kissed her other temple. "I feel confident in this doctor's abilities."

"And I Googled him." Quint's statement made her straighten.

"You did?"

"Yeah, we couldn't let some chest-thumping vet with a god complex touch your horse."

Melllllt. Every hard edge inside her melted when she was with these guys. As strange as it might be to give herself to two men, she couldn't imagine being happier.

"Thank you."

"Now it's a waiting game. But in the meantime, I'd like to bring up the subject that you've been running from for too long." Carter looked over her head at Quint.

Oh no. She couldn't run anymore, though. She pushed back her shoulders and nodded. "I'm ready for it."

Surprise crossed his rugged features.

Quint brushed his fingers beneath her chin, drawing her face his direction. "We need to know who hurt you and why you won't commit to us."

She shook her head. "That's not the case really. I...I mean, Frazer was a dick, yeah. And I don't really understand what he said to me when he left, even now."

"What did he say?" Quint's hard tone meant if he didn't like it, he'd probably hunt down Frazer and kick his ass.

"He said, 'You're never gonna be better than me, Bella. Don't think you can do better.'" She looked between her men. The crinkles that appeared between each of their brows echoed her thoughts all these years. "Okay, so I'm not out of my mind. You don't get it either."

"Sounds as if he was jealous of your wins. You've always been a strong competitor and he's hit and miss." Carter's jaw worked—a sure sign that he wasn't as calm as he appeared on the surface.

Quint clenched his fist on his thigh. "And he might have been warning you that he was the best thing to ever happen to you. But we know that isn't the case." He wagged his brows.

She gave a soft laugh. "Not remotely." She cupped each of their jaws and divided her attention between each set of dark eyes.

"Don't get hung up on his words, sweetheart."

“I’m not,” she said and realized it was true. Somehow sharing Frazer’s words made her understand how little power they held over her now. That man was nothing, and she had two very strong and viral lovers supporting her. And sometimes you just couldn’t understand someone who was nuts and had to let it go.

“We don’t want you running from us ever again,” Quint said. “What we have between us...it’s not going away, Bella.”

“I know,” she said softly, a deep stirring of passion inside her.

“We love you for your spirit,” Carter added.

Love? She latched onto the word and when she searched his gaze, noting the golden flecks around the rim of each iris, she saw the sentiment reflected there. Staring at him in awe, she searched her own heart.

He loved her. Quint had fallen too. No men could touch her the way they did and not. And she didn’t want to ignore the feelings that were beginning to grow in her own heart. She wasn’t ready to say the L word yet, but maybe in time.

Maybe if she stopped running.

“We’ll give you plenty of room to run,” Carter said.

“What am I—a wild horse?” Her tone sounded with attitude.

They grinned. “There’s our Bella.” Quint tugged on her ponytail.

“We like you a little wild, as long as you don’t bite us too hard.” Carter winked.

She embraced each man. “I’m so glad you’re with me.”

“We won’t leave your side.”

“I need to put in a call to my father and see about him paying for the vet bill. I don’t have a lot of cash—”

Carter and Quint shared a look that set her on high alert. “Wait. What’s that look mean?”

Rubbing his forefinger beneath his nose, Carter said, “Don’t worry about the bill.”

“What do you mean, don’t worry about it?”

“We had a little extra after our wins, and we don’t need much traveling money. Besides, if we get tight, we can skip the motel and pound on your trailer door.” Quint arched a brow, his smirk too much for her.

She threw herself into his arms. When he tugged her onto his lap and gave her a sound kiss, the first hints of arousal hit her system. But before she could act on it, he set her back in her seat.

Carter leaned down and gently depressed her earlobe with his teeth. “We take care of our own, sweetheart. Don’t ever for a minute believe we’re going to walk away from this. You mean too much to us.”

“We don’t want to change a thing about you,” Quint said.

“Except tie you to our bed with your legs spread wide.” Carter’s whisper sent her stomach tipping.

She skimmed her fingers over both stubbled jaws, her heart fuller than she ever believed possible. “Just don’t get too comfy, boys. I might be subdued for now, but that doesn’t mean I won’t take you for a hard run.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Quint hooked his rope tightly around his hand. The end didn't feel right, so he adjusted it a split second before the chute opened. The calf made a break for it. Carter shot out, lasso in the air.

When Quint made his own toss, he heard a whoop that brought a grin to his face. Bella cheering them on from the sidelines.

Carter landed his toss around the cow's ears and they pulled the animal to a stop.

"Damn, that felt good," he hollered to Carter, who gave him a crooked smile and a nod.

As they trotted out of the arena to wait for their scores, Quint grinned at the sexiest cowgirl climbing the gate. She balanced on the toes of her boots, waving with both hands.

Passing her, Quint hooked his arm around her neck and yanked her over the gate. She plopped into his lap, and the crowd cheered.

Her soft, sweet weight against his cock sent a thrill through him as much as the fact that Jeb Anderson had looked away from the spectacle.

"He doesn't look too happy," Quint said to her.

"He can't lie about sleeping with me anymore," she said against his ear. Her warm words teased him into a further state of arousal.

"Hey, share." Carter grabbed her out of Quint's arms and she squealed as he settled her on his lap. A louder cheer went up.



“Nice show, guys.” Buck Calhoun gave them a chin-nod of congratulations, and Quint figured he referred to more than their great score on the board. Every single man in the arena was probably wondering how they’d managed to get Bella Roberts in their arms.

Bella pushed away from Carter, shot off his horse, landed and on her feet and was immediately swarmed by reporters and fans. Quint and Carter gave a short interview, but they didn’t hold the attention of the people the way Bella did. Everybody wanted to hear about the health of her horse and how she was feeling about missing so many competitions.

She’d been amazing the past month while Josey Wheels recovered from her surgery. The specialist who’d assessed the horse assured Bella that the animal would make a full recovery. It was only a matter of rest and rehabilitation. In the meantime, Bella had been more than supportive of him and Carter. Their own personal cheering section.

Quint gripped Carter’s shoulder. “It’s time.”

Carter shot a glance toward Bella. Seeing she was still surrounded, he nodded. They led their horses out and passed them off to a trainer who would rub them down and treat them for their good rides.

“Here’s the little beauty. Looking great.” A cute little cowgirl with a spring in her step led another horse toward Quint. Bella’s mare stood with her head proudly tossed back, as strong as the woman who owned her.

“You’re a sight for sure.” Quint rubbed Josey Wheels’ long neck as Carter took the lead. The animal’s leg was bound but with a colorful wrapping and ribbons curled from her tail. Despite her injury, her gait was elegant and sure.

“Think Bella suspects our surprise?” Carter asked him.

“Not a chance.” Quint clicked his tongue, and the mare followed. As soon as they broke back into the public eye with the animal, the crowd went nuts. Bella looked up from signing an autograph. Her cheeks were pink and her hat tipped back enough for them to see the lights dancing in her eyes.

Shock stole over her features.

Then her face crumpled and she ran at them. Josey Wheels pawed the earth and whinnied as Bella reached her and threw her arms around the horse’s neck. Next to him, Carter sniffed loudly, and Quint couldn’t deny the moisture around the edges of his eyes.

She dragged a sobbing breath in and turned to both of them. “You guys...you couldn’t have given me any better gift. Thank you!” She hurled herself at them, and they caught her between them.

As Quint flexed his arms around both of his lovers, he’d never felt so happy with the state of his life. Even if he and Carter’s winning streak went south, they had other reasons for their joy. The risks they’d taken had panned out plus added a bonus or two.

Carter captured Bella in a sound kiss while Quint looped his hand around Carter’s nape and drew him in.