



The Cowboy's Witchy Second Chance (Corvid Valley Cowboys #6)

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Category: Fantasy

Description: Alona Bailey never expected to return to her hometown of Corvid Valley, let alone inherit her great aunts Nigerian dwarf goat farm. But at forty-six, she finds herself starting over, armed with nothing but determination and her witchy skills.

Enter Ford Ackerman, the ruggedly handsome cowboy whose heart she broke as a teen. Hes matured from the angry youth she once knew into a hardworking rancher, and the spark between them is undeniable. But can Alona trust that Ford has truly changed?

As Alona navigates her new life as a soap making goat farmer, she must confront her past and decide if shes willing to risk her heart again. With a dash of magic, a smattering of humor, and a lot of small-town charm, The Cowboys Witchy Second Chance is a heartwarming tale of love, growth, and the magic of new beginnings.

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Alona

For the first time in my life, I wake up on a Nigerian dwarf dairy goat farm, thanks to my Aunt B's will.

Out of all of her great nieces and nephews, why did she choose me to take over her farm? And why did I agree to run it instead of selling the place? Is this what a midlife crisis is?

My aunt's estate hired farm help for the month while I get myself settled. I see the men through the window, taking care of the goats. They catch my eye and give a wave. I politely smile and go hide in my aunt's sunroom.

Digging out my cell, I check my messages.

Both Nattie and Clementine have texted in the group chat that they will be here after lunch.

I am excited to see my two best high school buddies, even if it means I somehow find myself living in my hometown again.

And maybe Clementine can help me figure out how to run this place.

Compared to her family ranch, this little dairy farm is probably child's play.

My old high school friends show up several hours later with gift baskets filled with cleaning supplies.

“Times sure are different from 30 years ago.” Clementine jokes as she gives me a welcome back hug.

I usher them into the house and put the kettle on.

“Ladies, I am so lost. I don’t know what got into me when I agreed to take this on.”

We settle down in my aunt’s living room to catch up. I haven’t been back in years, so I get an earful of the town’s gossip.

“Wow, Clem, the Brooks brats are all hitched now?” I ask.

Clementine groans with an eye roll.

“I forgot you called them that!” Nattie says with a cackle.

“What about you, Nat? Anyone special?”

Standing up while shaking her head no, she claps her hands together.

“OK, ladies, how about the tour we were promised? I really want to see the goat milk soap set up.”

I start with my aunt’s house, which Clem points out I need to start calling my house. The ranch house isn’t large, but is a decent size for just me. In my bedroom, Nattie makes a pleasantly surprised noise.

“You have an altar! Are you still practicing your witchcraft?”

I nod from the other side of the room.

“Yeah. Witchcraft turned into much more for me than just a passing teen fancy.”

“That’s cool. I’m happy for you. I remember how much you loved it.”

I lead them out to the dairy goats, which they go crazy for. I have to admit, these goats are ridiculously cute.

“So these ranch hands out here helping are temporary?” Clementine asks as she scratches a goat behind its ear.

“Yeah. There’s so much for me to figure out in such a short time.”

“Come to dinner tonight. My brothers will probably have a lot of ideas and suggestions for you.”

I hesitate.

“Yeah, maybe.” I reply.

I want to ask her if my ex-high school boyfriend still works on her family ranch, but I feel silly that I care enough to avoid the place if he does. It’s been almost 30 years since we dated. But Ford, and his temper, has a way of sticking with you.

I take them into the garage, which my aunt converted into a soap making kitchen. My test creations lie scattered about.

“How’s it going with the soap?” Nattie asks.

“This part seems pretty easy for me. I am already trying a few kitchen witch spells to make some special bars of my own.”

“I will totally be a guinea pig for you, if you need someone to try those out.”

I hug Nattie as a thank you. It’s nice seeing how comfortable the three of us still are with each other. They, of course, have lived in the same town all of these years. But I have only had social media contact with them for a couple of decades now and, yet, we still treat each other like sisters.

At the end of the tour, Clementine checks her watch.

“I got to run. Tonight is my dinner night. Did you decide to join us, Al? I really hope so. I know my brothers would like to see you and bathe in their ranch mansplaining roles.”

I laugh. Her brothers are great, but I can totally see them excited about making my new life on a Nigerian dwarf dairy goat farm a teaching project for them. I would like to see them too. They were always nice guys.

“This is going to sound dumb, but does Ford still work for you?”

Nattie arches her eyebrow at me and turns to look at Clem.

“Yeah, Ford has worked for us for decades now. He has really changed a lot since you two dated, though. I swear. He’s really gotten his act together.”

I don't respond, so Clementine continues.

“Plus, it’s dinner. The cowpokes join us for breakfast and lunch, but not dinner. You won’t run into him, if that’s why you’re asking.”

As she talks, I feel silly. I haven’t seen the guy since he graduated high school. And his temper was never specifically directed toward me. I didn’t feel unsafe with him.

Just deeply unhappy because of his constant anger issues and getting in trouble at school.

“OK, sure, I’ll come over for dinner. Thank you. Sorry, I am being such a dork about it.”

Nattie puts her arm around me and gives me a squeeze.

“Hey lady, we get it. I am sure it’s a lot to come back to your hometown after a lifetime away. Adding an ex to the mix is probably a bit much.”

I walk them to their trucks and promise Clementine I’ll see her in a little while for dinner.

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Ford

Before calling it a day, Amos and I are looking over our end of day checklist for the ranch when Beau walks into the barn.

“All set, fellas? Need anything from me before I head to the house?”

“We’re good. Minus Ford’s love life.” Amos cracks.

Beau eyes me while I throw an annoyed look over at my coworker.

“Having trouble with the ladies again, Ford?”

I sigh. My reputation as Bad At Online Dating is becoming quite the albatross around my neck.

“Yup, the story of my life. A woman I took out last weekend ghosted me. Again. I just deleted the dating app from my phone, which Amos told me is stupid, but I am so over this. Single life, I am here to stay.”

Beau gives me a brotherly slap on the back. He is my boss, along with his siblings, but I also consider him a friend. I have known him pretty much my entire life.

“Listen, mate, why not come to dinner tonight? Clem always cooks dinner enough for a kingdom, so I am sure there will be plenty for you.”

“You sure, Beau? I don’t want to put your family out.”

“You’re joining us. It’s final.”

We say goodnight to Amos and walk over to the farmhouse. The porch screen door squeaks as we walk in and Clementine’s voice yells out from the kitchen.

“Dinner is almost ready. Go wash up!”

“We have an extra mouth to feed tonight, Clem!” Beau shouts.

“Then that makes two.” Clem yells back.

We head to the downstairs bathroom to wash our hands and faces. Ranch work is dirty work.

Beau finishes first and heads to the kitchen. As I walk up to the entrance, I hear Beau greet someone and a familiar voice respond, which stops me in my tracks. There is no way this voice belongs to who it sounds like. Absolutely no way.

I am quickly proven wrong when I walk into the kitchen to find the familiar, and beautiful, face of my ex-high school girlfriend.

She looks almost the same to me as she did 30 years ago, except her auburn hair now has stunning streaks of gray woven into it and her body is rocking extra curves in all the right places.

“Hey, Alona.”

My ex looks at me with horrified eyes, but says hello back. I can’t help but notice her eyes meeting Clementine’s, who mouths, “Sorry, I didn’t know.”

Heat flows up from my chest, to my face, and I am positive I am blushing like a fool.

Of course, seeing me horrifies Alona. I was such an ass when we dated.

Constantly getting into fights, trouble with the law, and barely graduating.

She dumped my pathetic ass right before senior year ended.

And, once I graduated, I left town to get as far away from my shitty stepdad as possible.

My mom's dad took me in on his Montana ranch and taught me everything he knew.

He loved me, but worked me hard and didn't put up with any of my bad temper nonsense.

Those six years did wonders for me. He taught me how to be a good man, unlike my stepdad, who just smacked me around nonstop.

If only my mother had given custody to my grandfather instead of my abusive stepfather when she received her terminal breast cancer diagnosis, my young life would have begun much differently. But, it is what it is.

Now I stand in the same room with the only woman I have ever loved. Well, she was a girl at the time. But, boy, is she a woman now. Dang.

Alona looks very uncomfortable with me being in the kitchen, but I think it would be weird if I just suddenly left before dinner.

I try to be respectful, keeping out of her way and sitting at the far end of the dining table.

I eat quietly, listening to Beau and his brothers ask her about the farm she inherited

from her great aunt.

She is apparently back in Corvid Valley to stay.

“I am totally out of my element and not really sure why I didn’t just sell the place and pocket the money. But here I am. Clueless and feeling a little desperate.”

“And you are about to lose your temporary help?” Wyatt, Clem’s twin, asks in between forkfuls of casserole.

“Yeah. I need to get onto hiring some ranch help. Should have done that before even moving out here.”

Alona sighs as she stabs an asparagus spear. Beau catches my eye, gives me a wink, and says something that blows my mind.

“I’ll send Ford here to help you until you hire someone. He’s a super hard worker and will be a good person to help you get the lay of the land.”

Across the table, Alona and I both look at each other with wide eyes and Clem narrows her own to stare at her older brother.

“Oh, uh, I...” Alona stammers out.

Beau points his fork at me.

“Don’t worry. Mate, I’ll still pay you. But she needs you more than we do right now.”

I clear my throat and nod my head. I can’t say no. Alona clearly needs help. But she also clearly wants nothing to do with me.

I open my mouth to respond, but the kids at the table argue over the last bread roll and the Brooks siblings all step in to break it up.

After dinner, I help clear off the table until Clem shoos me away from the kitchen.

“Thank you, Ford, but Alona is about to leave, so you should probably exchange numbers or plans or whatever.”

I find my ex grabbing her jacket by the front door.

“Hey. What time would you like me tomorrow?”

Alona turns to face me, her cheeks colored bright pink.

“Um, I guess whatever time you start here? Uh, thanks for helping me out.”

“Of course, no problem. I’m happy to, Al.”

A look I can’t place flickers behind her eyes at hearing me use her nickname, and she blurts out goodbye before heading out the door.

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Alona

The morning sun streams through my open window as I stare at myself in the mirror. This is my third attempt to get dressed for the day. What the hell is wrong with me? Why do I care about how I look today?

Dumb question. I know exactly why I am being extra this morning. Ford is here in just a few minutes. I am both horrified and excited to see him again.

Last night threw me for a loop. It's not like I didn't think I'd ever bump into the man again. I know he lives here. But I didn't expect to break bread with him during our first bump-into. I also didn't expect him to look so damn good. He looked fine as fuck, with white hair and graying stubble.

Rolling my eyes at my reflection, I close the closet door. I am dressed fine. I look fine. So what if I am not a skinny teenager any more? I like my curves, so why do I care if Ford likes them as well?

I start another pot of coffee when my doorbell rings.

Ford stands on my front porch, looking delicious, but I ignore that.

Just because he's still good looking doesn't mean he should take up any extra space in my head.

I make him a cup of coffee and take him on a tour of my tiny ranch.

Like everyone else who has been here, he falls in love with the silly goats immediately.

Walking back to the house, Ford points out a few broken slats on my fence.

“I can fix that today, Al.”

With zero thought, I mutter, “As long as you don't punch it.”

His face falls, but he doesn't respond.

“I'm sorry, Ford. that was a shitty thing for me to say.”

“No, I get it. I was a mess in high school. It's amazing you dated me for as long as you did, Al. I showed you my worst self. I do want you to know that I've grown up a lot over these decades.”

“I've heard.”

Our eyes meet and I feel my stomach do a somersault. I offer him a small smile. He returns it with his usual crooked grin, but this time it's adorned with sexy laugh lines.

Lord, I need to cool it.

Ford accomplishes several minor jobs on the ranch during the morning.

At lunch time, I bring him a sandwich and a lemonade.

Before he sees me walking up to him, I enjoy an eyeful.

No longer wearing his shirt, I see he has grown up in more ways than one.

His sweaty, defined chest glistens in the sunlight.

I soak in the sight of his rugged farmwork-made muscles and his washboard abs.

Holy, this man is absolutely delicious looking.

“Oh, hey, thanks,” he says once he notices me.

I feel my face burn when his chocolate brown eyes meet mine. I watch Ford down the glass of lemonade in two gulps.

“Oh, let me get you more.” I offer.

“I’ll come with you. I should wash my hands first, anyway.”

As we walk back to the house, Ford asks me a few questions about how my life has been these last few decades.

“Do you still dabble in witchcraft, like in high school?” he asks, holding the door open for me.

“Well, I’m actually a full-blown witch now.”

The look on his face is priceless.

“That’s amazing, Al! You always had a knack for it.”

My cheeks are on fire yet again. I thank him.

“I’ll be including some spells in some soaps I will make here. Working all of that out now.”

“That’s really cool. I’m happy for you.”

For the rest of the day, Ford works on various projects he finds on the ranch. When he leaves in the evening, he gives me his signature sexy smile.

“See you tomorrow.”

After dinner, I run myself a hot bubble bath. I have been non stop thinking about Ford, and his buff chest, all evening long. I don’t know why I am doing this to myself. We have far too much baggage between us to ever attempt rekindling what we shared eons ago.

Soaking in the tub, I close my eyes and listen to the Celtic guitar album that’s playing from my bedroom. Ford’s bare chest keeps popping into my head and my pussy demands attention. Maybe if I just get myself off and release this urge, I can go back to not caring about Ford Ackerman.

Sliding my hand into the soapy water, I find my swollen, throbbing clit with my hands.

I picture Ford touching me down there, slipping his rough, rancher fingers inside of me.

I want his mouth on me. On my breasts, on my clitoris.

Even in high school, he loved to go down on me, and he was good at making me come quickly.

I can only imagine what adult Ford is like now in bed.

As I rub myself, I imagine him tossing me on the bed and taking over. I want him to

pin my wrists to the bed as he has his way with me. Licking my tits, teasing my swollen lips with the head of his cock.

I remember how good he would feel inside my tight pussy.

Ford's cock was the perfect fit, in my opinion.

Nice and thick. So thick that I found it difficult to go down on him, but the way he felt inside of me was incredible.

Most of my girlfriends in high school never orgasmed with their boyfriends, but not me.

Ford would send me over the edge every time.

Remembering how good he felt fucking me throws me off a cliff in the tub. I come so hard I accidentally kick water out onto the floor and yell loudly enough that I am sure the goats heard.

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Ford

I spend two weeks helping at Alona's Nigerian dwarf dairy goat farm, primarily fixing various things on the ranch that her great aunt let go.

Being near her again stirs up decades' old feelings, which I am not sure how to handle.

While Alona continues to be standoffish, we have had moments where it was like the good times way back when.

I make her laugh with some dumb joke. She gives me that rare golden smile that curls my toes.

She even hugged me when the vet informed us that one of her goats is pregnant.

Last week I helped her interview ranch hands, two who start tomorrow. I will show them around on their first day, but then I am back working at my actual job. Amos has managed without me, but it's pretty obvious he's ready for a second set of hands to lighten the load.

A creak at the door pulls me out of my head.

"Hey. I brought you an iced tea."

Alona stands in the doorway, her auburn and gray hair lit up by the setting sun behind her. She looks like an angel. A sexy-as-hell angel, that is.

“Thanks.”

“You don’t need to thank me,” she says as she walks up, placing the cool glass in my hand. “You have done so much for me, Ford, these last couple of weeks. I don’t know how to properly thank you.”

I can think of one way, but keep my dumb mouth shut.

I take a sip of the cold drink while noticing that she isn’t looking away from me. Or moving away. Alona is so close that I can smell her coconut shampoo.

“Al?” My voice sounds husky.

Alona hesitates in front of me. Her eyes are bouncing back and forth between my own and my mouth. The chilly garage suddenly feels like a hot, humid day. I reach out to touch her arm when she steps back.

“Thank you, um, Ford. For everything. I will see you in the morning.”

Within seconds, I am standing alone in the garage, holding a tall, cool one.

At the end of my first day back on the dude ranch, Beau pulls me aside.

“So, how did it go with Alona?”

“You mean her farm? I fixed a lot. Her aunt definitely let the place go during her last few years.”

“No, dude, I mean with Alona? You didn’t think I just sent you over there to help, did you? I saw the way your face lit up when you saw her in our kitchen that night.”

I can't help but laugh. I was suspicious that Beau's intentions weren't 100% altruistic.

"Well, yeah. Al is amazing. But she has zero interest in me. She's made that clear."

The end of April threatens rain, so I spend my morning-off buying materials for patching up the roof of my shed. Waiting in line to pay, I spot a familiar, gorgeous auburn-haired woman at the customer service desk.

Alona looks up and our eyes meet. I give her a wave.

She first returns it with a tight grin, but then gives a quick wave back.

Next thing I know, she spins on her heel and walks out of the store.

I allow a long sigh to tumble out and, when I look up, I see the cashier is waiting impatiently for me to move up in the line.

In the parking lot, I load up my truck when I'm interrupted by a teasing voice behind me.

"Don't tell me you're doing more manual labor on your day off."

I turn to find Beau and his wife, Scarlett, walking toward me.

"Hey. Hi Scar. Yeah, I have to. Rain is in the forecast and my shed's roof leaked the last time we had a storm."

Beau helps me load the rest of my purchases into the truck, when Scarlett pipes in with a singsong voice.

"I hear that your high school sweetheart is back in town, Ford."

I give her husband a look, who shrugs sheepishly at me.

“She is, yeah. But she wants nothing to do with me. I actually just saw her inside. She gave me a half wave, that's it.”

Beau frowns at this story, but Scarlett gives my arm a squeeze.

“Well, my husband seems to think you two are getting back together.”

I interrupt her with a snort, and she continues.

“Maybe he's right. Give her time. You never know.”

As they walk into the store, I realize I should suggest to Beau that he introduces Alona to Scarlett. I don't know if Scar considers herself a witch, but she definitely works with magic when she reads people's auras.

The next day, when I arrive at work in the morning, I can hear voices through the open farmhouse windows. Beau's voice sounds peeved.

“Clem, what is up with your friend, anyway?”

“I have more than one friend, brother. Be more specific.”

“Alona. She basically ignored Ford when he bumped into her yesterday. What's that about? He spent all of that time helping her on her goat ranch.”

Walking up the porch steps, I want to make my entrance so that they know I am around. I feel weird eavesdropping on them. I reach the door when Clem's voice floats out the window with words I never expected to hear.

“I think she’s struggling with her feelings for him. She told me the other day that she can’t stop thinking about him. But she sees him as a risk and doesn’t want a repeat of what she went through with him last time.”

I don’t know what Beau says in reply, because I open the front door as loudly as possible to announce my arrival.

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Alona

Ford returned to his job at the Brooks' ranch last week. And, while the new hires are working out great so far, I miss having him around.

It's not like we were all buddy-buddy while he was here. I kept my distance from him, mostly. But I enjoyed the moments we had together that weren't just about ranch needs. He still knows how to make me laugh.

I feel conflicted. Part of me tells me to get over myself, while the other half reminds me to stay pragmatic.

On Friday night, I meet up with Clem and Nattie at the Cowpoke Saloon for a couple of beers. I have, of course, made friends throughout my adult life, but there's something really nice about connecting with hometown friends.

During our second round, Clementine brings up Ford.

"So, he worked out OK for you?"

"Yeah. He was great. My aunt did little upkeep the last few years, so he tackled several projects. And helped me hire my new ranch hands."

Natalie looks at me above her beer bottle, blowing into it, and then gives me a sly smile.

"You like him, Alona."

I roll my eyes and take a chug of my beer.

“Nat is right. It’s so obvious, Al.” Clem says.

I sit my beer on the table, a little too hard, and sigh.

“Ford is my past. And, yeah, it wasn’t all awful with him, but I don’t want to be with someone with such a volatile temper.”

“I am telling you, I haven’t seen that temper since before he left for his grandfather’s farm after graduation,” Clem argues. “Don’t close yourself off just because 18-year-old Ford was a mess.”

I lean back in my booth, nursing my beer. Clementine makes sense, but I’m scared. I think she can read the fear on my face, because she gives me an empathetic smile.

“Just don’t fully shut the door unless you’re truly sure, Al.”

I make a run to the local big box hardware store on the last Saturday in April.

Shopping here has become my end of the month prep work for the ranch before the new month begins.

First, I hit customer service to return a package of the wrong type of screws I bought in March.

As the employee refunds my card, I turn around and see a familiar ruggedly handsome face. Frick.

Ford gives me one of his pussy melting smiles and a wave.

My entire body freezes. I am like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming car.

I attempt to smile back, but my face feels frozen and weird.

Throwing up my hand, I give a quick wave.

The employee clears her throat, hands me my return receipt, and I bolt out into the sunny parking lot.

Clem and Nattie are right. I am definitely struggling here.

The start of May brings rain and a laboring mama goat. Since it's raining, I decide to camp out in the barn with her, just to be on the safe side. I have been reading up on birthing goats and what I need to be aware of, but I am still very nervous.

I wake up from an afternoon nap to the crack of thunder, rain pelting down on the barn roof, and an oddly behaving laboring goat. Something seems off, but I don't know what.

I call Clementine for guidance, but her phone goes to voicemail the few times I try. Crap. Nattie won't have a clue what to do. I need to talk to someone who is skilled with farm life.

My ex-boyfriend will know what to do. My fear for my mama goat and her kid overshadows my anxiety with having to speak to him. I dial his number.

Ford picks up his phone on the second ring.

"Al? Are you OK?" his voice sounds worried.

"I don't know. The mama goat is laboring, but something seems wrong. I'm not sure

what to do.”

“OK, hold on. I am coming over.”

“Are you sure? The roads can’t be too safe right now with this rain in the low light. Crap, Ford, I am worried about her and the baby.”

“I’m coming. Let me call you in a few minutes when I am in my truck and I can help talk you through a few things.”

As I wait for Ford to call me back, I notice the mama goat appears to be attempting to push. I put the phone on speaker when it rings.

“I think she’s pushing, Ford. But I can’t tell if anything is happening.”

“OK, Al. I am driving to you, but I may arrive too late. I want you to listen to me closely.”

With my speaker on full blast, Ford talks me through helping her when she pushes.

Her cries worry me, but he reminds me to say soft, kind words to her as she labors.

I feel on the verge of tears, but his calm voice helps keep me focused on the mama and baby.

When the feet poke out of the mama, Ford tells me to help pull the kid out as the mama pushes.

Soon after, I help deliver the cutest little goopy kid I have ever seen.

I wipe the newborn and suction it before sliding it on the towel to its mother.

As soon as the mama goat starts cleaning her new baby, I stand up and burst into tears.

Right then, the barn door flies open. Ford stands there, soaked to the bone, with his eyes wide open.

He notices the mama with her kid and gives me a tired, crooked grin.

Without thinking, I run up to him and throw my arms around his broad shoulders, crying into his soaked shirt. He hugs me tight, whispering into my messy hair.

“You did great, babe.”

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Ford

Alona pulls away from me and stares up into my eyes. At first, I worry I bothered her with my words, but her expression does not show irritation, but relief. Plus something deeper.

“Thank you, Ford.”

Alona goes up on her tiptoes and brushes her soft lips across my cheek. I turn to look at her face when she goes for my mouth. We kiss, her tears giving her lips a salty taste, and then we break apart. She turns to look at the mama and kid when her phone buzzes.

“It’s my ranch hand, Dale. He offered to spend the night in the barn when the mama gave birth. I texted him earlier. He’s on his way now.”

I hate stepping away from her curvy, delicious body, but I walk over to the goats to check on them. I am happy that the kid is already a good nurser. Dale walks into the barn while I do this and takes over.

“Thank you, Dale. It was a bit of a difficult birth for her, but so far the kid seems to be doing well. Do you need anything from the house?” Alona asks.

“No problem. And, no, I packed a bag. I’m good. You can go back to the house whenever you want.”

Alona and I head back to the house after a few minutes, running through the dark,

rainy night. I offer to make a fire in her living room as she goes upstairs to shower. She agrees, but then insists that I spend the night.

“It’s too dangerous for you to drive home in this weather. I have a guest room. You can also shower after me. I actually have some random men’s clothing I found in my aunt’s dresser that I think could fit you.”

“Was your great aunt shacking up with a guy?” I tease.

“Honestly, I think she must have been at one point.” Alona replies with a laugh.

After my shower, I find her popping corn kernels on the stovetop.

“I thought we could watch a movie? If the power stays on,” she says when I walk into the kitchen.

“Sure. Do you have our old favorite? Die Hard?”

Alona grins at me.

“It’s not Christmas, Ford.”

"John McClane is a holiday treasure people should enjoy throughout the year."

Alona smiles at me with a flirty eye roll, turning my insides into a quivering mess. This woman is doing me in.

“Fine. And, of course, I own it. You can find it in the entertainment stand.” she says.

The storm rages on outside as we watch the movie, filling up on buttery popcorn and drinking red wine from Duskwood Winery. I make a mental note when she tells me

that's her favorite vineyard.

We start another movie once Die Hard ends, and Alona surprises me by lying down on my lap.

I grab the throw blanket from the back of her couch and cover her with it.

She murmurs a thank you to me, clearly tired from the day.

Within minutes, she is softly snoring on my lap.

I stroke her hair while putting my feet up on the coffee table.

Looks like I'm sleeping here on the couch tonight.

The rainstorm ends during the night, and the morning greets us with sunshine beaming through the windows. Alona sits up on the couch, rubbing her eyes, and looking confused.

"Did we sleep here all night? Did I fall asleep on you? Ford, oh my goodness, that could not have been comfortable for you. Why didn't you wake me up to go to bed?"

I yawn and stretch. My 46-year-old body creaks to let me know I am not made to sleep like this, but I ignore it.

"I didn't want to bother you. You had a huge day and were clearly exhausted."

Alona stands up, stretching.

"Still, Ford, you must ache all over."

I shrug my shoulders and stand up next to her. An electricity crackles between us, which she appears to feel as well. I want to kiss her again, but I behave myself.

“I’m good. And I’m making breakfast. What do you have?”

In the kitchen, I cook up eggs, bacon, and home fries as Alona juices some oranges she recently picked from her trees out back. We eat, mainly in silence, giving each other shy smiles once in a while.

After breakfast, I start cleaning up, but she stops me.

“You cooked. I will clean up. And isn’t today a workday for you?”

I check my watch. She’s right, I need to get going.

Alona walks me to the door to see me out. I step out the door, hesitate, and turn back to her.

“Al, I’d like to see you. Date you, I mean. I know you’ve been unsure about me since returning, but I still have really powerful feelings for you.”

She nods and says, “Same.”

I reach out to her arm and lightly stroke it.

“Well? Are you willing to see if grown-up us actually has something real here?”

Alona gazes at me as she touches the side of my face.

“OK, but I can’t promise anything. But, yeah, OK.”

I bend down, and we kiss.

“See you later, Al.”

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Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 7:24 am

Alona

Ford picks me up in his truck for the Brooks' Memorial Day BBQ. He gives me a soft kiss before opening the passenger door for me.

"New cologne?" I ask.

"Yeah. Is it OK?"

"I love it. Earthy and musky."

I am looking forward to having some free time with my gorgeous boyfriend and our friends.

The ranch has been chugging along smoothly, but my new soap business has been tough to get going.

Just this week, I finally nailed down the two spell-based soap recipes that I have been working on for weeks.

Thank goodness, since next weekend will be my first ever craft show sales booth.

Ford holds my hand while he drives. We have kept it to just kissing this last month, per my wishes.

He has been respectful the entire time and never pushes me to do anything more when we have cozy make-out sessions.

It's honestly like we are back in high school, but this time without the teenage anger bursts.

We pull into the Brooks' long driveway and I rest my head on his shoulder.

"Tired?"

"No. Content."

Ford gives my hand a squeeze and I can tell my response made him smile.

We park in the bed-and-breakfast parking area. He hops out of the car and rushes to my side to open the door. I get out and pull his tight, muscular body against mine.

"You're a pretty great boyfriend, Ford."

He responds by kissing me deep, our tongues exploring each other's mouths.

His stubble delightfully rubs against my face.

My pussy clenches, feeling his mouth and body against me, smelling his new cologne.

I've loved going at a leisurely pace. It has made me feel secure and safe with Ford.

But I may be ready to throw slowness out the window.

The weekend of the big Corvid Valley Craft Fair arrives, and I am in a tizzy. My checklist is long, but Victor and Dale are helping me with the entire project. They are even working on Sunday to help me run the sales booth. I'm really lucky to have them.

Late on Saturday evening, I get a call from Victor, who tells me he is at the Corvid Valley Medical Center.

“Oh, no! Are you OK, Vic?”

“I broke my dang arm, Alona. I am so sorry. The doctor says she doesn’t want me working until she gives me the OK. I can’t help you tomorrow. I am so flipping sorry.”

My stomach drops into a pit of despair, but I say, “There’s absolutely nothing to be sorry about. I will find an extra set of hands. You take care of you, OK Victor?”

We hang up and I stare at my cell phone. Ford is the first person I want to reach out to, so I dial his number.

“Hey, beautiful, what’s up? All set for your big day tomorrow?”

“Yes, minus the fact that Victor broke his arm. He’s at the hospital right now. I’m down a pair of hands.”

“No, you’re not. What time do you need me?”

My body fills with relief, but, more notably, also an intense feeling of love.

I am in love with Ford Ackerman. Again.

The craft fair goes off without a hitch. I am flooded with customers. Thank goodness Ford and Dale were there to help me. My spell-based soaps are the most popular, too. I think I have a profitable side hustle here.

Back home, Ford helps me bring everything into my soap studio, as I have started

calling it. He accidentally spills some goat's milk on his shirt.

“Give that to me. I will wash it.”

“Thanks, babe. Do you mind if I take a quick shower? I don't want to smell like rancid milk while we watch the movie.”

I laugh and say, “Neither do I. Go for it.”

I finish unpacking the truck and walk back into the house. I hear my shower on and feel a sudden urge.

Walking into my bedroom, I slip off my boots and socks, followed by my dusty jeans.

I peel off the t-shirt I wore all day and stand in my room in a pair of flowered panties and a red cotton bra.

Barefoot, I pad over to the ensuite bathroom's partially open door and knock, allowing the door to swing open.

Ford pokes his head out from behind the teal colored shower curtain.

“Why hello there,” he says in his sexy, deep voice.

“I need to shower the day off, too. May I join you?” I ask.

Ford's eyes fill with love and excitement. Staring at me, he pulls the shower curtain open so that I can step in. His dripping wet muscular body is yummy looking and my pussy cries out to be touched. I toss off my bra and panties into the corner and join him under the steaming hot waterfall.

Ford squirts my body wash on a washcloth.

“May I?” he asks, giving me a look that makes my lower belly tighten.

“Yes, please.”

He slowly soaps up my body, taking his time over each curve, and making sure that my large, heavy breasts are really clean.

I can't wait any longer and guide his hand down to my pussy, where he rubs it vigorously with the washcloth.

The mild coarseness of the cloth feels amazing against my throbbing clit and I moan loudly at his touch.

Ford takes the shower spray and angles it so the soap suds run off of me.

He then kneels down in the tub, bringing my pussy to his warm, eager mouth.

He must have taken a seminar, because I don't remember him going down on me like this back in high school.

His fingers pump inside of me as he flicks his tongue on my swollen clit.

I grip his wet, white hair in my fist as I come loudly, my pleasure echoing in the bathroom.

Ford stands up and I grab him, covering him in kisses, and say, “I want you in me.”

Laughing, we leave the shower running while we slip out of the bathroom, dripping wet, and flop onto my bed. My bedspread is getting soaked, but I don't care. I pull his

slippery body on top of me and feel his thick cock push past my puffy lips.

“God damn, I forgot how good you feel,” he hisses into my ear as he thrusts into me.

Ford slides his hands up my arms, making them go above my head, and pins my wrists down as he fucks me. He catches my bouncing tits in his mouth from time to time, making me groan out.

“You’re so gorgeous, Al.”

At this, I wrap my legs around him, pushing him into me deeper. Ford grunts and curses as he climaxes on top of me. We climb under the covers and snuggle until dinner.

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Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 7:24 am

Ford

I move in with Alona right after Halloween. This was her idea when I brought up the idea of marriage.

“How about we do things a little more modern to start with?” she asked.

And I was fine with that. I just want to be with her.

I stay working at the dude ranch, since Alona is happy with Victor and Dale’s work ethic at her farm. The first few weeks of November fly by with us unpacking my things and figuring out what to do with everything.

The Friday before Thanksgiving, I come home to find Alona on her cell.

“Yes, I am sure Ford will be fine with it. I’ll double check with Clementine, since she is hosting, but I’m sure she will say the more the merrier. I can’t wait to see you!”

Alona hangs up and turns to me.

“Welcome home, sexy,” she says as she gives me a kiss. “So, our guest room is about to have someone sleeping in it for the holiday.”

“Someone you know, I hope.” I joke.

“Yes, goober. You know my friend who is a cat shifter? Dinah? Well, her Thanksgiving plans fell through, and first I’ll make sure Clem is cool with it, but I

invited her for turkey day.”

“I’m sure Clem will be cool with it. If not, we can always figure something out so that Dinah isn’t alone on Thanksgiving.”

Alona grins at me, pulling me close to her.

“My boyfriend is such a quality hottie.”

I laugh and give her a kiss.

Ravenhart Mountain Dude Ranch always hosts a packed Thanksgiving. This year, my fellow cowpoke, Amos, flew home to see his family, but otherwise all the usual folk are here. Plus Dinah. Who blends in really well with everyone.

The children play basketball outside after dinner while we adults laze around with full bellies.

“So, Dinah, how do you know Alona?” Jasper, another Brooks brother, asks after dinner.

“We were roommates when we both lived in Chicago many moons ago.”

“Oh, I love Chicago,” he replies.

“It is a great city. I miss it, but not enough to move back. Actually,” Dinah turns to Alona, “I think I am over Utah. I may move again.”

My girlfriend and Dinah are discussing potential places to move when Wyatt's son, Paul, bursts into the room.

“Is it time for pie yet?”

Jasper stands up, clapping his hands together, and replies, “It’s always time for pie.”

On Saturday, we take Dinah on a hike up to Ravenhart Ridge, which looks out onto Corvid Valley.

“Wow,” Dinah says when she takes in the view, “your hometown is stunning, Al. I hate that I am leaving tomorrow.”

Alona pouts and hugs her friend.

“I hate that you are leaving, too. I’ve loved having you here.”

“You know, I think that maybe Corvid Valley is where I should hang up my hat next.”

My girlfriend shrieks, making Dinah and me crack up, as she jumps up and down.

“Do it! That would be so amazing!”

Alona’s excitement clearly makes Dinah feel good, shown by the smile she beams at her.

“Maybe I will.”

Corvid Valley gets a decent amount of snow the week before Christmas, so Alona and I decide to have a cozy day at home. I cook up my famous chili that she adores on days like this, but when she walks into the kitchen, she immediately runs back out.

“Al?”

I walk out into the living room and hear her throwing up in the powder room.

“Babe? Are you OK?”

The toilet flushes, and Alona walks out, confusion coloring her face.

“I don’t know where that came from, but the spices made me feel sick?”

“Weird.”

We stare at each other for a long moment and then I say, “I’m going to the drugstore. Stay out of the kitchen.”

Alona’s eyes go wide and she nods knowingly.

They plowed the roads, making my drive to the drugstore easy.

I pick up a few items we need, plus a pregnancy test. On the way home, I tell myself to act cool no matter what the results end up being.

But the idea of having a baby with the love of my life thrills me.

Especially at our age, since I thought it wasn’t even possible.

Alona grabs the shopping bag from me as soon as I step into the house and goes into the bathroom. The toilet flushes, and she walks out. I give her an expectant look.

“Three minutes.” She says.

I pull her close to me and stroke her hair as we wait. Her smart watch timer goes off, so she goes back into the bathroom. A second later, my love stands in the doorway,

eyes huge.

“We’re pregnant, Ford.”

Tears flow from my eyes as I pick her up, twirling her in the air.

“This is amazing.” I say, as I kiss her, my tears falling onto her beautiful, smiling face.

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Alona

Ford, Gavin, and I turn toward the officiant, who grins at the baby and continues with his last words.

“You may kiss the bride.”

The guests burst into cheers as Ford pulls me close with baby Gavin nestled between us and kisses me. We turn and face the room to a raucous roar.

If keeping my great aunt’s farm was part of a midlife crisis, then it was the best midlife crisis I could have ever had.