



L.R. Wards

Seth

and

Priscilla

Seth and Priscilla

The Cowboy and the Angel 2

L. R. Wards

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Dear Readers

I've received numerous e-mails and comments regarding the editing of my work. Although I have no problem with constructive criticism, there are some that border on hostility.

Please be aware that I do not have a team of researchers, editors and publishers to help me. I am an unpublished writer. These books take months; sometimes years to write so spotting the errors can be difficult when you're a one person show. Writing is a hobby for me and if you've written something, you would understand the enormous amount of work that goes into it. Although I appreciate the summarized list of pages and editing errors from some people, it is not necessary. I do reread them time and time again after I post them and eventually I will catch the errors.

Secondly, although I'd love to be nineteen and beautiful please realize that the characters in my book are not me, nor even near what my life is. (yes, believe it. I have been informed that I'm young, uneducated and single—not asked, just informed). I've received several responses that have summarized my life just from the books I write. This really surprises me that people would think that my characters are me. Although I'm flattered, writing is a wonderful way to make a fantasy world seem real; much like an artist paints a picture, or a poet writes prose. It is their interpretation of a world that we live in or an escape in some aspects.

That being said, I wish to take my hat off to those who can see the effort beyond the scribble, and see the world that I try and create for the reader. It is because of you that I will keep writing hoping that you get as much joy out of these books that is equal to the pleasure that I have in creating them for you, and you all know who you are.

~God Bless~

*Now please enjoy the latest in the Cowboy and the Angel
series*

~L. R. Wards~

PROLOGUE

It seemed like a dream—a nightmare. Blood was everywhere. Priscilla heard screaming and it took her a moment to realize that it was her own voice. People dressed in their finest evening wear were rushing all over the place. Her eyes guided up to the enormous crystal chandelier then over the still body of the woman laying on the floor at a distance, then to Seth. It would occur to her later that she was in shock.

There was so much blood.

Instinctively she leaned forward and placed one hand on top of another over the bullet wound in his upper chest. He had collapsed on the spot when he was shot. Somewhere in her mind she hoped it missed his heart or a major blood vessel. His head turned and looked at her as his eyes glossed over.

“Oh God Seth! Don’t pass out! Tell me what to do!”

“Keep the pressure.” He managed to say in a barely audible whisper before he went slack.

She already knew to do that, but what else? She felt more panic rising and her heartbeat was pounding in her ears as she felt helpless to save him.

“Keep him alive Priscilla! I can hear the ambulance!” Alex yelled swiping a tablecloth off a nearby table throwing expensive glassware and dishes everywhere before they shattered on the carpet.

Balling a bunch of the cloth in his fist he knelt abruptly down on the opposite side of his brother and helped apply pressure to the wound.

“I can’t—” she sobbed. “Oh *God!*”

“Do it goddamit!” he hollered with grief and fear clearly registering on his expression, “Seth you bastard! Don’t you dare die!”

Pris leaned down and sobbed in his ear, “Don’t leave me

Seth.” The tablecloth was already crimson with his blood.

“Pris!” Alex shouted trying to snap her back to the task.

“Keep pressure.” She said sitting up, trying to focus through the blurry layer of tears. Seth had shut his eyes. His tuxedo was crimson with his own blood. She couldn’t lose him, she just couldn’t!

CHAPTER ONE: THREE WEEKS PRIOR

Priscilla lugged her two suitcases downstairs with the help of the doorman to wait for her ride home. She was actually nervous because she hadn’t been home since Bea Harrison’s funeral last year. She felt a wave of sadness over that event missing the woman dearly. It was hard to leave her hometown after that.

At the funeral Alex and Seth, her sons, were clearly devastated and her heart went out to them. Bea was an amazing woman and Priscilla loved her almost as much as her own mother because she was good to her and never expected her to be any different than who she was. Maybe it had something to do with only having sons so she treated her and her sister like her own. It was the one place the both of them could be themselves without the constant pressure of their own parents.

They were stricken. She knew they were because they both wore dark sunglasses and it was cloudy out.

They stood above the grave while Alex held his wife, her sister, close to his side and Seth had his hands in the pockets of the slacks of his dark navy suit. His shoulders were slouched, and like Alex, had his head bowed as they lowered the coffin containing their mother in the ground. Pris wept openly as she tossed a white rose into the grave. She really loved Bea. Everyone did and that’s why the cemetery was packed with just

about the whole town.

People started leaving then and she felt her father's hand on her shoulder urging her away but she couldn't help but glance at those two tall regal men dressed dark suits feeling such sadness for them. Then she saw Seth reach up lift his glasses and use his other hand to wipe away a tear. It broke her heart.

Those were two of the toughest men she knew and there wasn't much that would bring them to tears.

Both of the men loved their mother dearly and from the events of four years ago it was apparent how much. They protected their mother from hurt and shame no matter how much it cost them, especially Alex who had nearly sacrificed his love for Angel over it.

Before Priscilla went away to college, she had spent a lot of time with their helping her redecorate the house, and she was grateful for every minute of that time. Bea accepted all of her idiosyncrasies. Of course her parents weren't the least bit cruel, but they were ordinary parents who wanted the best for their children and Prissy didn't live up to their expectations, so the Harrison's was like a home away from home.

Her father owned the Ranch next to the Harrisons since she was born and they were good friends besides neighbours. Also, her sister Angel had married the oldest brother four years ago and they had two rambunctious boys named Morgan and Shane. Morgan was three and a half and could ride a horse like he was born to it. Shane was born ten months later which got Angel and Alex a lot of teasing from their friends and family at a banquet that the town put on every two years. It was the event that no one who was anyone should miss and it raised a lot of money for charity.

Pris gave her sister a generous hug while the men around the table continued to rib Alex.

Alex's response was a nonchalant shrug followed by the

statement, "Can you blame me? Look at her." He said gesturing toward his gorgeous wife in a silver sequined elegant gown as if it made all of the sense in the world.

Priscilla laughed to herself remembering her baby sister blushed furiously followed by a shy smile of pride.

Angel was always painfully shy and she used to hide her beauty in clothes that she'd expect her mother to wear but somehow Alex saw her, really saw her. Prissy would have never thought that he was capable of such insight if she didn't already know that he had a University degree because he acted like some intolerant uneducated brute sometimes. Yet Angel had always seen the intellect and tender side of that large cowboy and fell in love with him. She was probably the only one besides Seth that could soothe the man when he was raging.

She sighed to herself. Seth. He was the object of her affection since she could remember yet he never noticed her. He was tall, dark and handsome, literally.

She envied Angel for the love that her and Alex shared, but she was also happy for her because she'd come close to losing her four years ago after a near fatal car accident in which she was driving. It was her fault and even though no one made her feel guilty she shouldered it on her own. Alex told her not to feel that way because if he hadn't upset her in the first place, she might have made it home safe, but she still felt guilty. She hadn't gotten behind a wheel of a car since then.

Up until that day she didn't realize how spoiled selfish she was always putting her needs first. However, now she was twenty five and just finished her training as a Nurse. She wanted to make a difference in people's lives and over the last four years she changed dramatically. Gone were the expensive fashions and selfish tendencies, and she'd spent her spare time volunteering at children and homeless shelters. In fact, it had opened her eyes to a new world. She never realized how hard people had it until she

went out on her own because she came from money and was indulged growing up. Almost losing her sister seemed to snap her out of that selfish shell she'd lived in.

Even now she wore inexpensive olive coloured slacks and a cream blouse. Although, she was living in her father's apartment in the city because she couldn't afford her own because she never worked in her life until she started school. It was an incredible eye opener.

She brushed back a long strand of platinum blonde hair remembering that she was seen as the class joke when she first started nursing. She showed up in a designer dress and high heels. She'd never dressed down for anything and didn't realize what she'd gotten herself into.

It wasn't until the second month when she'd found out that the class was calling her 'princess' behind her back that she started to change. It was such a shock because she was popular in school, and never had a problem making friends. It wasn't like she had good grades, but she did graduate. She'd probably have done better if she wasn't more intent on having fun.

The first time she heard that she went home not intending to return and actually cried herself to sleep. To her complete surprise she'd got a phone call the next day from Seth. Him of all people! He was in town for a few hours before he had to catch a flight, and was wondering about dinner. Of course she accepted. She was crazy about him. Even though she knew he was just being a family friend, she couldn't stop how she felt about him.

He'd taken her to a fancy restaurant but despite her best of spending two hours in front of a mirror, he acted as if she was just his little sister. She was devastated. She should have known better that he wasn't interested in her especially after she'd met so many of his girlfriends. As sophisticated as she was, they outdid her.

"What's with the red-rimmed eyes Pris?" he finally said after

they'd ordered.

She couldn't believe he noticed. She thought she had them covered with makeup. She shrugged and averted her gaze to hide the sadness in them.

"Come on honey, tell me." He said leaning forward so he could meet her eyes.

How could she refuse that smooth deep tone? It could soothe birds out of the trees. Giving in, she nodded, "I'm having trouble adjusting."

"Go on." He urged keeping his eyes on hers.

Priscilla realized that he was really interested in what she had to say. It was odd because she tried her whole life to get his attention and now she that she had it, she felt oddly insecure. Something she never had to deal with in the past. After that she told him everything. He listened with the patience of a saint not interrupting, not once. When she was done he took her hand, stared directly in her eyes and asked her why she wanted to be a nurse.

It actually took her a moment to find her voice. He'd never held her hand before and the feeling that it gave her was indescribably wonderful. "I want to help people. I've always been someone who took and it near cost me Angel." She shuddered physically.

"How much do you want it?" he said.

"More than anything. I need to feel like I'm making a difference. I know I have to change—," She paused feeling embarrassed, "—a lot, but I'm trying."

"So then." He smiled, "Who cares what your classmates think. Go and be that nurse you want to be. You're not there to make friends. I'm sure they'll come to love you as we do once they get to know you."

We do. Gosh it would have been nice if he just said 'I do', instead. Even if he only meant it in a plutonic affection sense, it

would have thrilled her.

As usual though, he didn't judge her. Seth was probably the only one that never did besides Bea and her sister, yet he had every right to because of the way she was around him but that 'love' statement near curled her toes. Only if he would use it in a different reference instead of making it sound like affection for a family friend.

After he dropped her off, she thought about it a lot. That night she threw all her designer clothes in bags with the intention of giving them to good will. Then she went shopping the next day at department stores instead of boutiques and bought clothing that was comfortable and practical for school.

When her father received the credit card bill that month he called her to see if she was ill. Usually she spent ten times that amount and because she had no money, he gave her a card to help her pay for necessities. She explained that she was turning over a new leaf. He was impressed. Again, she didn't realize how selfish she was. He was hard on her, but he never gave her any restrictions. It made her realize how much he did love her. Something else she didn't notice before. She always thought her baby sister was his favourite for some reason. Now she knew better. He may have treated them differently, but that was because they were different people.

After the first week back to class there was a difference in how people perceived her. By the next month it was obvious. She'd been making top marks in the classes and before she realized it one year had passed and she was enjoying herself thoroughly. She truly believed she found her passion.

One of her classmates, Janice Stills asked her to help out at a soup kitchen and soon her eyes were wide open of how the underprivileged lived. Before long she was volunteering a lot in her spare time.

She finished with honours and her graduating class made

her valedictorian. It was such a proud moment to stand there in front of her family to give the graduating speech. She hoped that Seth would show, but Angel said he was out of the country but to her surprise sent two dozen red roses with a card to her apartment. The roses died last week, but she'd never let go of the card. It wasn't anything mushy, it only said 'congrats, love Seth' which again never indicated anything beyond a family friend. Unlike Alex, Seth had told her and Angel many times that he loved them. She knew it was along the lines of a little sister stigma or family friend thing, but it still made her heart ache.

Still, if it wasn't for Seth, she would have quit and never found self worth, which she realized now, she lacked despite her privileged upbringing.

A sleek black all wheel drive Mercedes cruised up to the curb and Prissy couldn't contain her excitement as her beautiful sister got out of the driver's side. She screeched and rushed around to embrace her in an emotional hug. Both of them were crying when they released one another.

Angel got her driver's license several years ago after Morgan was born and her husband bought her a car, an expensive car. Before then she was too afraid to get behind the wheel, but somehow Alex gave her the strength to do just about anything. He had taken his time and taught her how to drive which was surprising to everyone because Alex had as much patience as an angry wasp, but when it came to Angel, he'd given her the moon if she'd asked for it.

Their father wanted her to be a lawyer, but Angel wanted to be an artist, which Priscilla had to admit was probably the best choice because she was really good. After Alex had married her and built her a studio at the house, their father dropped the demands because he was just happy that she was alive after the accident. Now her sister had regular showings at the gallery in town and was very popular locally.

Angel couldn't help but cry at the sight of her, "Oh Prissy, I'm so glad you're coming home!"

"Me too! These three hour weekend phone calls are getting expensive." she released her sister and looked through the tinted windows of the fancy car, "Where are the kids?"

"I know you wanted to see them, but Alex insisted on showing Morgan how to rope a calf and well, Shane, wouldn't be separated from his big brother." She said with raw emotion on her face.

"Oh Gosh, I'm so jealous." She breathed looking at her sister's expression.

"You shouldn't be. I swear you're more gorgeous every time I see you." She gushed.

Prissy waved a hand, she knew she was pretty, but Angel was always more genuine besides beautiful and it made her more appealing to the opposite sex, especially an ex-rounder like Alex, who still couldn't keep his hands off of her. Even though it had been four years since their marriage and he still didn't have a problem pounding on another man out of jealousy if they so much as looked at her with an inkling of interest. Angel was always oblivious of her beauty and used to do her best to downplay her looks to shrink from attention. Priscilla had come to realize it was because of the way she acted that made Angel feel insecure. When she came to terms with it, she had felt horribly guilty. It was just one more thing she had done toward her sister. Yet Angel always supported her regardless of how stupid she was.

She regretted it constantly because at the time she was very dramatic and outgoing it made her little sister feel insignificant at times. She had since apologized for her outrageous behaviour but Angel told her that if it wasn't for her, she wouldn't have Alex. "Pretty and single." Prissy sighed.

"So is Seth." Angel's eyes studied her sister's expression

carefully. She knew her sister had been in love with Alex's younger brother as long as she'd been in love with Alex. Seth was a prominent physician in town and probably owed his success to the hoards of single women that traipsed through his clinic feigning some illness just to see him. Although he was a very good doctor, he was also very handsome. Alex had that rough cowboy on the range look that made him appealing, but Seth had movie star looks, with a movie star smile and more than once she'd heard a woman sigh when he set his gold flecked hazel eyes and wide irresistible grin on them. Yet, he didn't date locally and since Priscilla left town he hadn't had a steady girlfriend. It was mostly because of his last steady girlfriend Melissa had said some horrible things to Prissy the night of the car accident. It had upset Prissy to the point of losing her concentration of where they were going. They ended up turning down the wrong road and hitting the washout nearly killing them both. Angel told Seth what had happened and he was visibly angry, something Seth could never be accused of. Alex, most definitely, but Seth was Alex's exact opposite. He very easy going and rarely ever showed his temper.

After that, Seth sent Melissa packing and vowed never to fall for a pretty face again. Oh, the woman denied everything but Seth knew Angel would never lie about something like that. Prissy might have at the time, but not Angel. However looking at the beautiful blonde now, Angel knew her sister had changed. She was no longer the spoiled socialite. In fact, she always wore designer clothes before she went into nursing and her attire wasn't even remotely close to that. She was sure she'd never seen her older sister in anything but a dress. There was something different about her whole look too. She looked genuinely happier. She guessed that four years away from Reidsville not including brief visits, would open up her horizons.

Angel didn't deny that it was a shock that Prissy wanted

to go into nursing because she was not the outward caring type except with her. However, she finished her bachelor's with honours and secured a job at the local hospital in town saying it was about time she came home because she missed her friends and family. She was quite sure that Seth had something to do with that too even though she had denied it on the phone.

It was no secret that their parents were proud of her, because for some time they were worried that Prissy wouldn't find direction in her life. Yet, they were equally as shocked as Angel was that she wanted to be a nurse. At first they thought it was because of Seth being a physician but Prissy assured them that she would never be good enough for him and shockingly Angel believed her. There was a time that Prissy thought of herself as better than everyone, but now she was quite humbled. In fact, she had never mentioned her affections for Seth after the night of the accident.

After they stowed her luggage in the trunk, they got in the car and Prissy did up her seatbelt excited to be going home. However, Angel didn't start the vehicle and it caused her to look at her sister just to see an excited look on her face, "what?"

"I have something to tell you." She said with an expression of barely contained excitement.

"Oh God!" Priscilla laughed already knowing what she was going to say. Angel's blush was evident. "How far along are you?"

"Three months." She said excitedly, "I haven't told mom and dad yet."

"How's Alex, or should I ask?" she said still laughing.

"Feeling ten feet tall and all man." She said starting the car while grinning.

"I wouldn't expect anything less," she said shaking her head with a laugh, "He's so damn man that he could get you pregnant with a smile."

“Prissy!” she burst with laughter as she pulled away from the curb. Although she wasn’t far from the truth, they used contraception.

The ride home was a blast. They laughed and talked the whole way catching up on old times. As far as Priscilla was concerned, her sister was her best friend in the whole world. She always forgave her for the stupid selfish things she did in her past, and was never angry at her when she did them. It was surprising because there were times that she wasn’t nice to her and Angel was about the sweetest person on the planet. It was no wonder Alex fell so hard. He was a large muscular cowboy who had a temper that could cause thunderclouds to look docile, but her sister could bring him to his knees with barely a look.

Four and a half hours later Angel pulled up in front of their Parent’s house. A three story Victorian style painted slate blue with white trim and a wrap around veranda. Well, it was more of a mansion from the size of it and it reminded Priscilla how privileged she was and how spoiled she used to be. However, she would look at finding an apartment in town so she could walk to the hospital for work. Her father or one of the ranch hands could drive her, but she didn’t want to be a burden, and she wanted her independence. Also she’d had a taste of it for the last few years and decided that she preferred to live alone. Not only that, she would rather walk to stay in shape besides her fear of driving.

Priscilla never drove after the accident where she nearly killed her sister. Just thinking about it made that sick feeling come back in her stomach. How she could have been so selfish and careless with someone’s life, especially someone that she loved the most in the world. It was just an eye opener to how selfish she was. Never again would she do such a thing.

“Hey sis.” Angel said softly seeing the play of emotions across her sister’s face, “It was a long time ago.”

Priscilla blinked to stop the tears, "It was yesterday to me Angel," she said meeting her sister's gaze, "I'm so sorry." She said with a rush of emotion, "I was so stupid."

"You've told me that a thousand times. Quit blaming yourself. No one else does." She gave her a genuine smile, "If it wasn't for that night, I wouldn't have Alex. He would have married that other woman." Angel furrowed her brow remembering, "And I would be alone with a baby to raise."

Angel was referring to the woman Alex was going to marry before she got in the accident. She didn't realize it at the time, but Alex had been blackmailed by her and although he loved Angel, he was trying to do the right thing by protecting his family.

Alex and Seth's father had a baby with this woman and showed up that very day Alex was going to propose to Angel threatening to expose their father's affair to their mother if he didn't marry her. At the time Bea had a weak heart and Alex did as she asked. Max looked like Alex so people didn't doubt that he was his son, but since Bea's death Max had been told the truth, but just the same Angel and Alex had cared for him as if he was theirs. He always knew that Alex wasn't his father, but knowing the identity of his true father seemed to make him happy. Lucy, his mother, was convinced that he was better off with a stable family, took the money Seth had given her and left. She did keep in touch with Max though. Angel and Alex didn't mind in the least as long as the woman didn't interfere in their lives again. She admitted that she wasn't cut out to be a mother even though she did love Max. It was hard on him that first year, but the stability seemed to bring him around and Priscilla knew that Angel and Alex treated him as if he were their own. Now he was a straight 'A' student and referred to Morgan and Shane as his little brothers. "You always see the good in things." She reached over and squeezed her sister's hand, "I would have been

lost without you Angel. You kept me grounded.” Her sister blushed.

“Come on, I’ll help you with your luggage. Mom and Dad went to church.”

An hour later Priscilla was alone in her room but Angel didn’t leave until she agreed to come to dinner tomorrow night. Reluctantly she did. Four years ago she thought the sun rose and set on Seth. Now she knew Seth wasn’t ever going to be hers, but it didn’t mean she still wasn’t in love with him. She just knew that he was way out of her reach and sitting at the dinner table with him was going to prove to be a true test of her willpower.

As for her room, it was nice to see that her parents didn’t change anything. She walked over to the door of her walk-in closet and opened it sighing at the sight of the hoards of expensive clothes. It seemed as if they didn’t get rid of any of her them. Tonight she’d pack them up and take them to the Good will in town tomorrow. Then she’ll go see about her job. Angel already said she’d take her in and together she’d hunt for an apartment. Already she knew that her parents wouldn’t be too happy. She was sure that they expected her to stay with them and work, but she really needed her independence.

She was tired by bedtime. Especially after her parents came home and insisted on hearing everything that happened to her since the last time she’d been home. By ten o’clock she was exhausted.

She smiled to herself while brushing out her long hair, it wasn’t like she didn’t call them every weekend, but she could understand why. They missed her as much as she missed them. Despite her father’s constant disapproval over the way she used to be, he still loved her and at least she still had her parents.

She dressed in a pale pink vee neck light satin nightgown trimmed in white lace that came to mid thigh. It was cool and because she was always so warm at night, preferred the cool

material on her skin.

After she brushed her teeth she was getting into bed when the phone rang on her nightstand. Quickly she sprawled across the bed to answer it thinking it was Angel. How wrong she was.

“Pris?”

Her heart started thumping in her ears at the familiar deep baritone of Seth’s voice. Gosh it was so darn heavenly. She reached behind her and pulled her gown down feeling like he knew that she was half naked. It was his voice. It was so damn seductive.

“Seth.” She didn’t have to ask if it was him. There was no way in her life that she would forget that voice. She’d idolized the man for years.

“Angel said you were home. I just wanted to phone and welcome you back.”

Good lord, did he have any idea on how his voice could affect a woman? That deep husky timbre he possessed heated up every nerve cell in her body.

“Pris?”

“Oh yes, sorry. I was just getting ready for bed—” She cut herself off and winced at that confession. She was sure that it sounded almost suggestive, what she said, even though she didn’t mean it that way. There was a slight pause before he spoke again.

“Really?”

Did his timbre just drop an octave?

“I remember a time when you would have never gone to bed before midnight.”

“True, but now I work for a living so I need to be a little more responsible.” She added with a false laugh trying to dispel the feelings running through her. Here she was lying on her bed, wearing a slinky nightgown, talking to the man of her dreams.

“shame.”

“Shame?”

“Yes, I was going to ask you out for a cup of coffee. The diner’s open until midnight.”

She bit her lip knowing that if she said yes, it would have been catastrophic to her willpower. It was easier to knowingly ingest poison. Seth was a friend and was acting as a friend, but she knew it wouldn’t affect her that way, “Can I take a rain check? I’m exhausted.” There was a time that she would have broken records getting ready to go with him anywhere, but she was delusional then. Even though he called her to go for coffee, that was just the way Seth was. Down to earth and courteous. You’d think the way he looked he’d be completely arrogant, but he was amazingly polite and just wanted to welcome her back.

“Definitely.”

She took a deep breath hoping he couldn’t hear her inhale on the other end. His voice was toxic enough to her. Every cell in her body was heating up. “Goodnight then.”

“Goodnight Pris, sweet dreams.” He murmured before the phone went dead.

She hung up and rolled over on her back and slapped an arm across her forehead thinking that was only one phone call. How the hell was she supposed to sit at the same table with him tomorrow and not act affected?

The next day didn’t start out to well. Angel picked her up like she promised so Prissy could get her errands done. She couldn’t bring herself to tell her that Seth phoned. If Angel knew he did, she didn’t say anything. It was a relief really because she was still rattled about that phone call and there was no way she could hide her emotions if she even came close to mentioning his name.

After they dropped her clothes off at the local charity, she found out her job was given to the niece of the hospital

administrator even though she'd been promised it. Surprisingly, Angel was angrier than she was after she'd told her.

"That's just not fair!"

Prissy shrugged, "Well, it's not like I can't support myself. Mom and Dad are rich and I have this enormous trust fund. I bet this other woman had to work from day one."

"That's not the point." Angel argued.

"It doesn't matter Angel, I'll find another job. I had them put me on the casual list anyway, there's plenty of work with that. I'm not worried." She laughed at her sister's rare display of temper.

Finally Angel nodded, "fine, but you aren't getting of dinner tonight."

"I wouldn't dream of it." She said rather reluctantly causing Angel to give her a suspicious glance.

Just then a series of large trucks cruised by with a popular movie logo on the side. "What is that?"

Angel groaned, "They're going to film a western here."

"That's exciting!"

"Not if they're parking on your ranch." Angel explained, "they offered Alex and Seth an enormous amount of money to film the ranch scenes out there because our house was kept authentic and the land is beautiful. Alex told them to keep the staff out of the house and he'd agree."

"Wow! That's so neat. Who're the actors? Anyone we know?"

"I heard there's Sandra Lang, and Wesley Banks, but I don't know if they'll be there, I kind of stayed out of those meetings. Hollywood people intimidate me. The director is supposed to be coming to supper tonight so Alex can lay down the ground rules. The producers arranged it after Alex voiced his concerns about interruption to his business and family."

"Angel, that's great news. Don't you see, your ranch will

be in the movies?”

Angel shrugged, “You know I’m not flashy like that. Anyway is a low budget movie, so it’s not like our home will be famous.” She narrowed her eyes, “And if the tabloids are correct Sandra seems to like to split up marriages.”

That got a round of laughter from Priscilla, “Sure, like Alex knows there’s another woman on this planet besides you.”

“Well Sandra is beautiful, rich and worldly.” She said still frowning while she pulled away from the curb after checking her shoulder.

“You’re just crazy if you think he’d stray” Priscilla said with conviction knowing darn well that was true. However, Seth was single and she couldn’t help but feel dread over the thought that he would fall for a woman like Sandra Lang. After all, Seth was so drop dead gorgeous that a woman like Sandra would be interested even if he wasn’t famous. She was sure of it.

As it turned out that night at the Harrison’s, there was Seth, Alex, Angel, their children, Max and the director of the movie at dinner. His name was Ryan Spencer and he was an older man that must’ve been in his mid fifties. However, that didn’t stop him from flirting outrageously with Priscilla throughout dinner. It was obvious to Priscilla that he was used to younger women accepting his flattery, but she wasn’t flattered at all. In fact she was growing more uncomfortable as the evening wore on. Maybe four years ago she would have played into it because of how famous he was, but not today, or ever again.

Angel saw Priscilla’s discomfort despite her outward effort to be polite. Although she couldn’t blame him as she watched the display. Her was sister stunning in a simple pale blue dress with her hair and makeup done nicely. It wasn’t anything near fancy like she used to wear but she looked like a

movie star herself. Looking around the table she saw that her uneasiness didn't get missed by the Harrison brothers.

Alex, her husband, did not look impressed at the attention that the director was giving Priscilla. Since the accident four years ago he'd become protective of her, but before then he used to resent her flamboyancy. He also didn't hide his scowl or care to hide it.

Another darkening expression was Seth's. That was odd, but Angel knew that Seth cared for both of them, and it was obvious the director had it bad for her sister. Angel was not the least bit surprised. Priscilla never had a problem getting any man she wanted, except Seth of course. There was nothing more that she'd like than for her and Seth to get together. Priscilla had changed dramatically over the last four years and knew that they would be perfect for one another. Much to her momentary shock, Alex actually mentioned that she would be good for his brother compared to the bimbos he dated. She smiled remembering that.

Despite his expression now, Seth never revealed anything beyond a professional or friendly attitude around them. Priscilla had the body of a runway model, and her face was as if made of fine porcelain making her brilliant blue eyes stand out even more. Her hair was naturally blonde, but it was so light it was almost platinum and she was glad to see that she hadn't cut it so it hung all the way down her back.

Secretly Angel had kind of hoped that there was some spark between the two when they saw each other again, but Seth as usual was late getting home from work. There may have been a slight pause seeing Prissy there, but he smiled and said hello and that it was nice to have her back. Pris blushed a little but thanked him. Even if her sister was used to compliments, which she was, Seth's smile was bewitching to the most seasoned woman. Unfortunately not much business got done because

Ryan's attention was completely on Prissy. Not once did he lift his eyes from her. If he did he'd see her husband's 'fit to kill' look.

"You know, you could be an actress yourself, with your looks and—."

"Would anyone like desert?" Angel cut in seeing Alex tense and Prissy flash her a look of discomfort. She could almost count down to zero from three in her mind for when her husband was going to leap over the table and drag the man out of the house by his expensive shirt collar and pound him stupid.

"That's a good idea honey, Pris, you help." Alex added tersely without taking his eyes off of Ryan.

"Certainly." Priscilla was all too happy to get out of that situation and nearly knocked her chair over getting up and following Angel. As for Alex's tone, he was always abrupt and she never took it personally and this definitely wasn't toward her.

In the kitchen Angel turned to her wide-eyed, "My God, Hollywood people are relentless!"

"It's getting a little uncomfortable. I agree." Priscilla admitted.

Angel went to the fridge and took out the fruit torte she made earlier, "Alex looks like he's going to hit him."

Prissy grinned at that, "I wouldn't mind. I usually don't dress like this anymore." She said looking down at her expensive clothing, "but I thought it was a special occasion. I honestly don't like that attention anymore."

"I know you don't." Angel said pulling a knife from the drawer, "None of us even thought it. Even Alex is getting angry over Ryan's constant flattery. It's so cheesy." She said laughing.

"It really is." Prissy said laughing right along with her.

Angel fluttered her lashes, "Honey you're so pretty you could be a movie star!"

Angel's attempt to imitate Ryan made her laugh harder.

“I’m naïve, but I wouldn’t even fall for that.” She said rolling her eyes.

“I don’t like it—” she paused for a moment, “—It reminds me of that night.” She said referring to the shallow way she acted before.

“Stop it.” Angel said gently with compassion in her eyes, “Please. Because of you I have two beautiful children, a loving husband, and I’ve never been happier.”

“All right.” Pris said, “I’ll stop.” She didn’t want her sister’s pity. Most importantly, she didn’t want her worry about her. Angel always was there for her and defended her constantly even though she didn’t deserve it so she knew she’d do those things, “Alex really doesn’t look happy.” She grinned changing the subject.

Angel lifted her delicate brows, “Seth doesn’t look to happy either.” She turned and got dessert plates and utensils out of the cupboards without saying another word. It also helped her hide her smile.

Prissy just shook her head watching her, “he’s just being protective.” She knew that the Harrisons cared for her because they’d known them so long. It was unfortunate that it didn’t go beyond that. However, Prissy knew from that day four years ago after her reality check that Seth wasn’t meant for her.

“You never know.” Angel said picking up the torte and heading back to the dining room without looking at her.

Priscilla picked up the silverware and plates and followed her knowing better. They had grown up next to the Harrisons and not once did Seth give her an indication that he cared for her more than a childhood friend. He was a physician after all, and his concern was a given. Angel, as usual, was just being a good sister.

When they went back into the room Ryan looked slightly embarrassed, Alex looked smug and Seth looked as if nothing

happened. However, Max was grinning ear to ear with that same Harrison smile that all of the brothers had. After that Ryan didn't make any more comments toward her and she was grateful knowing full well that Alex had laid down the law.

Despite Seth sitting across from her distracting all of her senses, she was able to enjoy herself. When dinner was over, Prissy went and sat on the porch swing while Alex and Ryan retired to the study to talk business and Angel took the boys for a bath before bed.

"Do you want help?" Prissy asked before she went to wait outside.

"No, they're a handful, but if they have an audience, it's worse."

It was said in a way that made Prissy realize how much her sister loved her children.

Morgan, her oldest, giggled then became serious, "Was daddy really going to punch that old guy?"

Priscilla burst into laughter and Angel gave her a sheepish smile and shrugged, "*Daddy* was joking." She said to Morgan knowing darn well he wasn't and then gave Prissy an amused look of helplessness.

"What does 'cut your balls off mean' mom?" Came the little male voice beside her again.

"Oh *lord!*" Angel fell her face in her hand. "I'm going to *kill* him." She mumbled.

Prissy had to bite her lip coupled with slapping her hand over her mouth for fear of losing it that time. She should have known that Alex wasn't going to beat around the bush.

"Kill who?" Morgan asked with humour knowing exactly who his mother was talking about.

"Bath." She said sternly to her youngest who grinned from ear to ear knowing that his mother may have sounded stern but it meant nothing.

“No book tonight if you don’t go get undressed for your bath.” She continued causing him to drop his grin and solemnly turn and go up the stairs.

“Gosh he looks so much like his father.” Pris said feeling completely envious.

“Uh-huh, and just as stubborn. Oh and not to mention that he’s already showing signs of being a womanizer. Last week a complete stranger gave him a five dollar bill because he smiled at her.”

“That’s unreal!” Pris said.

“That’s not all. He’s gotten toy cars, candy, and the teenager at the grocery store where we shop asked if she could babysit. Since when do teenagers ask to babysit?”

Pris laughed, “Oh dear.”

“Try living with this. A house full of men.” She sighed and placed her hand on her abdomen, “If this baby is born a boy, I’m thinking God is punishing me.”

“You’ll be happy either way sis. I know you.”

“Of course you do.” She turned to go up the stairs, paused and looked at her sister, “I’m so glad your home. I missed you.” She said sincerely.

“Me too.” She said genuinely. She told Angel she’d wait until she was done for a ride home, poured herself a coffee and went to wait on the porch swing.

A half an hour later she heard the porch door open and close and thinking it was Angel she spoke, “Are the mini Alexes tucked in already?”

“I’m not sure.” Came the deep masculine response.

Prissy felt her heart rate increase at the sound of Seth’s voice and immediately stood to face him, “Oh, hi.” Thankfully the light on the porch was dim so he couldn’t see the slight pinkening of her cheeks. However, she could see enough of him to see he changed from his expensive suit into jeans and a blue and white

striped western cut shirt. The jeans weren't too tight, but actually fit him perfectly so she could see that he'd kept his physique. He may not have been as muscle bound as Alex, but he was still built very nicely

"Angel asked me to give you a ride home. She said she was going to be awhile." He explained with an amused smile. "I told her I would when I saw Shane racing down the hall bare-assed, wet and full of bubbles with his mother in hot pursuit. She was just as wet."

Pris couldn't help but laugh at the image he gave her. "Well, if you're sure."

"Absolutely." He assured.

I'll kill her later, she thought to herself knowing what she was trying to do. Yet, Seth's presence was so incredible she could have easily forgiven her for being able to spend a few moments with him even though she didn't want to the night before. Seeing him shattered her resistance. At least she could say no over the phone—barely.

He looked a lot like Alex with the same black hair and contrasting hazel eyes, but he had a lady killer smile adorned with boyish dimples and when he smiled it affected her viscerally. Alex had a tough masculine cowboy look about him, and Seth did to a certain degree when he wore the clothes that he wore now, but his features were a little finer and not as hard set as his older brother's. Also, Alex's jaw usually had a day's worth of stubble, but Seth's was always clean shaven and his hair was always combed neatly. He also had that cowboy physique like Alex; broad shoulders, thick chest, flat stomach and a hard earned golden tan. Just because he worked in town, didn't mean he didn't pitch in around the ranch. He liked breaking horses and spent a lot of time doing so. What he didn't have was Alex's dynamite temper, which she was grateful for. He was always polite despite the way she used to throw herself at him.

Remembering those days still embarrassed her. She was such a fool, so young in many ways.

“I don’t mind Prissy—really.” He said seeing her expression and misinterpreting it to her putting him out.

“All right.” She said trying to keep her voice from shaking. She really should be over him, but some things were hard to get past and Seth was always in her life.

“Let me get the keys.” He said giving her a look before turning and going back in the house.

She thought she saw something odd in his gaze, but it could just be the setting sun that was playing tricks on her. Then she was distracted as he turned to go back in the house. Her eyes guided over his broad shoulders knowing how nice and fit that body was under his clothing.

He re-emerged a moment later jingling the keys in his hand, “Let’s go.” He said politely casting her a smile and indicated with his arm for her to lead the way.

That smile near melted her internal organs. She loved his smile. He could possibly take over a country with it. By rights the director should have been harassing Seth for a part in the movie. He was much better looking than Wesley Banks, and younger, and more intelligent as far as she was concerned.

Before long they were headed off down the gravel road toward her parent’s house.

“Don’t fall for that man’s charm.” He said suddenly out of the blue.

“It didn’t even cross my mind Seth.” She answered knowing exactly what he was talking about.

Seth just nodded, “Good, because Alex threatened to beat him stupid if he didn’t leave you alone.”

She laughed, “Morgan mentioned that.”

“I was pretty tempted myself.” He added turning into the road to the house.

His confession set her back even more. Seth was the peacemaker in the family. “You know, I can handle myself Seth. I appreciate you two but, I’ve learned to be strong.”

He shifted the SUV into park and faced her, “I can see that, but that guy was way out of line.” His eyes dropped to her mouth for a second, “Do me a favour though and stay away from the ranch while that film crew is there. I’d worry less.”

Worry? His confession made her heart beat faster and her whole body flush with warmth, “No problem there, I have no ambition to be a movie star.” She said holding up her hands in surrender. The interior of the Navigator was dark but the dash lights illuminated part of his handsome face and with that atmosphere and his deep voice she felt butterflies in her belly.

He nodded seeming pleased with her answer by the smile that tugged at his sensuous mouth. “Angel said your job fell through.”

“Angel talks too much.” She frowned wishing her sister didn’t constantly tell Seth things about her. She still couldn’t shake his deep voice from the phone call the night before, now there was this ride home. “I guess she worries about me.”

“I have an opening at the clinic.” He said casually, “If you want it, it’s yours.”

You could have heard a pin drop and she swore she stopped breathing, “I don’t want to put you out.” She finally said.

He shook his head, “Michelle broke her foot last week, and it’s been insane lately. Poor Mary has been doing twice the work.”

Insane because he was so darn sexy that women lined up for hours to see him, is why, she thought. “If you’re sure.” To further her shock he reached over and squeezed her hand.

“Of course Pris, I wouldn’t have offered if I didn’t think you were perfect for the job.”

Perfect. She sucked in a long slow breath unable to take her

eyes off of his.

"If you want I can pick you up first thing tomorrow, and bring you home so you wouldn't even have to worry about a ride, so we'll both get something out of it." He continued casually.

Me more than you, she thought. Spending time with Seth alone was a long standing fantasy of hers, even though their two families have been close, she was never really alone with him. "That sounds fine." It was a stupid thing to say, but it was that or she just started spouting her undying love for the man.

"I'll see you tomorrow at seven then."

"No problem." She said getting out of the vehicle,

"Pris."

She looked at him.

"I'm glad you're back. Reidsville didn't seem the same without you."

She tilted her head slightly, "You mean crazy." She said with a false laugh hiding her discomfort. Although she knew he wasn't teasing her. The tone he used wasn't anywhere near it. He was genuinely pleased. She felt her heart skip a beat.

"That's not what I meant." He said with a smile just to have it affected her much more deeply.

She nodded, "Thanks for the compliment—and the ride." she shut the door turned, and went into the house without a backward glance. To stand there another minute and let that gorgeous man look at her was going to have her on her knees. She ran her fingers over her brow after she got in the house, wishing she wasn't such an idiot around him.

For years she wished he'd paid attention to her but now that she finally had a little taste of it, she was completely unsettled. The truth was, it wasn't anything unusual for Seth, and he was genuinely polite unlike Alex, who could clear a room with a look. It was just a revelation to be treated as an adult for a change. It wasn't just that, nothing had changed. Her feelings for him were

just as strong now as they were when she was fifteen, if not stronger now that she was a woman and could actually appreciate him as a man. *God*, he was such a man!

His whole presence assaulted her. He smelled terrific too, like he needed help in that department. Gosh, she *was* an idiot. She should have walked home. She released a frustrated noise under her breath and went upstairs to her room.

Seth watched her go in the house and reached up to run his hand through his neatly combed thick black hair displacing the smartly arranged thick locks. It had been a long time since he'd seen Priscilla. If it was possible she had grown more beautiful since he'd seen her last. Unfortunately that was during his mother's funeral and he didn't pay close attention to her so today was unexpected. When he walked into the dining room he actually paused. Thankfully no one noticed him yet because it took him a few seconds to regain his composure and give her another good look.

Then the emotion of anger that went through him over Ryan's attention to Priscilla surprised him, even if the man was too old for her in his opinion. He never got irritated over women, ever, but Prissy was unique. She always was, now more than he could remember. What she didn't know, is that night he took her to dinner four years ago when she cried about her classmates, he looked at her—really looked at her for the first time.

She seemed to have matured incredibly over the past few years. It was true he always had a soft spot for the sisters but this new discovery over dinner surprised him. The thing was, not one flattering comment Ryan made to Priscilla was a lie. She *was* beautiful, graceful, and sexy and could easily put any other woman to shame, but this maturity of hers was probably the most attractive. She used to be so silly around him, like an empty headed flirt even though he cared about her. Also, his mother thought the world of her. That's why he never said

anything harsh to her back then when she followed him around the ranch, but now that girl was gone and in its place was an attractive intelligent woman.

Oddly enough, he missed her attempts at gaining his attention despite this maturity of hers. All through dinner she initiated polite, sometimes funny conversation but only looked at him twice and only when he asked her a question. It was almost as if she was shy. He scoffed, Prissy? That woman never had a shy moment in her life, and it was that exuberance about her that he found refreshing at times. However, she had grown up and that was the difference.

He drove back to the ranch with his intelligent mind rolling through events over the past few years. He knew why she didn't drive anymore even though it wasn't talked about, and to know that she'd still felt that guilty about the accident that nearly claimed her and her sister's life, actually made him realize how deep her feelings ran. Something he hadn't recognized with her.

Fifteen minutes later he cut the engine and got out of the vehicle and went in the house. When he was removing his shoes he heard a noise coming from Alex's study. As he looked in, he saw Alex and Angel in an intimate embrace. His brother had his wife shoved against his desk as he continued to seduce her. Seth smiled, shook his head, and closed the door quietly to give them privacy. He had grown used to his brother's carefree displays of affection toward Angel. It was obvious he loved her deeply. Not one day went by that he could have forgotten his reaction when he told him Angel was pregnant as she fought for her life. His expression said everything and there was no doubt that Alex loved her beyond imagination even though he was marrying another woman. It was then Alex confessed everything.

Seth had learned the truth about his father's affair. Apparently their father had sworn Alex to secrecy and all those years he was dealing with that anguish and because of it nearly

missed out on the best thing of his life, Angel. Alex may have been volatile at times, but he was protecting his family. Seth told Alex to take care of Angel and he would take care of the other woman. Because Alex had handled the burden of that secret for so long to protect him and their mother, he was the one that paid Lucy off to get rid of her. Every month he gave her money in exchange for a legal agreement that she stay away from his family except if she wished to see Max. It wasn't a huge fortune, but one could live off it modestly. After all, Lucy didn't really know how much the Harrison's were worth, but she knew they had money and it was money that Seth didn't really need because it was left to him by his father. What better way to spend it than on his mistress because after Seth learned the truth from Alex, he wanted nothing to do with his inheritance. Basically Seth looked at it this way, Max was their brother and he didn't mind paying to keep that woman away from his family.

CHAPTER TWO

The next morning Priscilla wore a pink crisp knee length nurse's uniform and braided her long blonde hair to let it fall down her back. It got in the way most times, but she couldn't bring herself to cut it short like most of her classmates did. Their nursing instructors had warned them that if they didn't keep it up off the collar it was going to fall forward and land in something oozing from a patient. They weren't far off. In her first clinical experience one of her classmates had that happen and she cut off her long ponytail right there and then. After that Priscilla made sure she wrapped it tightly on her head no matter how long it took her. However, working at a clinic was a different pace and had different clientele, so she left it long down her back in a single braid.

Despite her previous oath not to moon over Seth, she still

kept checking the front drive for his SUV followed by her chastising herself and running back to her bathroom the last time to put on some makeup. This was ridiculous, she was acting like she was sixteen and on her first date.

The sound of a horn startled her and made her drop her mascara into the sink followed by her mother's voice that Seth was there. She quickly tidied up and rushed out the door of her room and down the stairs in a whirlwind rush just as her mother came out of the kitchen. That made her stop and try and act casual.

"What about breakfast?" Catherine said seeing her daughter heading toward the hall closet.

"Sorry mom, Seth's waiting." She said grabbing her coat and purse and rushing out the door without a backward look leaving her mother to shake her head at her.

"Of course he is, how silly can I be?" her mother murmured with a smile to the empty foyer.

Seth leaned over and opened the passenger door of the shiny black Lincoln Navigator and gave her a smile, "Good morning."

"Same to you." She said hopping in the leather seat then looking around the interior. "This is new isn't it? I remember one a little older." Now that she saw it in the early morning light she noticed that it was.

"I like the make. They're built well." He explained. "Do you need coffee or anything before work?"

She shook her head, "I'm fine and I'm sure you have a coffeemaker at work."

"Yeah but store bought is much better." He cast her a sideways smile, "And the stuff Mary makes tastes like it was filtered through an old boot. She's great, but she sure as hell can't make coffee."

She laughed, "Fine Seth, stop at the coffee shop, I'll go

along.”

“My partner in crime.” He chuckled turning onto the highway toward town.

Prissy’s eyes slid over him. He was striking in a dark navy suit yellow shirt and matching striped tie. His hair, as usual was combed neatly and parted on one side. He looked so professional that it was intimidating. He was always dressed nicely in a suit for work, but she was also used to his casual wear and probably preferred it because it made him seem earthier, more attainable. Not only that he filled out denim just as nice as Alex did. At that moment he looked at her and raised his brows in question.

“It’s nothing.” She practically blurted out embarrassed at being caught ogling him. Thankfully he didn’t press it. He was probably so used to it that it didn’t seem unusual for him.

“Are you nervous about today?”

“Of course.” She quickly agreed even though it was part of the truth but not what he thought, “I was trained in acute care, it’s my specialty. I don’t know if I can keep up to your fans.”

“Fans?”

“The woman that strut into the clinic.” She explained honestly.

He threw back his head and laughed, “It’s not that bad Prissy.”

Gosh what a wonderful sound, she thought, “right.” She studied him for a moment, “You know, I’m really surprised that you’re not more arrogant because of that.”

He chuckled and gave her another look, “Who says I’m not?”

She shook her head with certainty, “you are a very nice man Seth, not the least bit arrogant.”

“Oh, I’m conceited Pris, you just haven’t seen me in that light because you and Angel are close to my heart.”

“Don’t fib.” She teased trying to ignore the skipping of her

own heart at his words.

He cast her another look as he pulled up in front of the coffee shop. This one she couldn't quite read, but it was almost as if his eyes deepened in color for a moment before he turned away and got out. "Black, one sugar. Right?"

"Oh you're good." She said.

You have no idea, he thought taking another glance at her before he shut the door and went into the coffee shop. She wasn't trying to impress him at all or flirt with him. It was very refreshing to be himself around a woman like that. Not that he wasn't comfortable around Angel and Priscilla. She was wrong about one thing though, he was conceited where women were concerned, but he wasn't arrogant about it. His mother, bless her, raised him to be respectful about women and even though he'd had more than his share, he never treated them badly even when they threw themselves at him. Most times he was able to downplay their affections, other times, when he felt the urge, he bedded them. In the recent years he'd become more selective and he never dated from his hometown. As a professional, he needed to maintain a certain amount of respect so instead he would make frequent trips to the city to satisfy his needs. He knew he had a lusty appetite although no one knew that side of him. There had been several occasions he felt like calling up Priscilla and seeing if she wanted to do dinner, but he knew the risks involved. Because she was so beautiful he was attracted to her and knowing her affections for him, it wouldn't have taken him much to get her in bed. However, he respected her too much to treat her like one of his acquaintances. He needed more time to think about this.

One thing was certain, he was protective of her. Since he and Alex saved her and Angel's lives four years ago, Seth couldn't ignore that vulnerability toward her. She looked so pale and still when they found her face down in the mud that at first they

thought she was dead. It was an image he couldn't shake. He'd seen plenty of deceased people, but this was Priscilla. She was usually vibrant and self assured, and independent, yet all of that was robbed of her when they found her face down in the mud cold and lifeless looking. Ever since then he'd been paying closer attention to her, but she left shortly after that for university to get her nursing. However, she did come home periodically and as usual their families got together, but the last time he saw her was at his mother's funeral. She was genuinely distraught.

Time and time again Alex would make a comment about Pris and her vices, because of the way she was toward Angel, but that had stopped the night the women nearly died. Now he was just as protective as Seth was especially when learning her part in trying to get Angel and Alex together. It may have been true in the past that Priscilla was selfish or had selfish tendencies, but there was no trace of that woman now. She acted and looked compassionate and mature.

"Doctor Harrison?" Said the woman behind the counter with a flirtatious smile. *Gosh he was so dreamy!* She'd begged her boss for the morning shift just so she could set her eyes on him. She sighed heavily, just like every other woman in town.

The woman's voice brought him out of his thoughts, he smiled and saw her eyes sparkle, "Large coffee—Black and the same with one sugar."

The clerk gave a rush of breath with her words, "Right away."

Seth was used to flirting women of all ages, and it honestly didn't bother him. He had learned to shut most of it out and be professional. Every now and then he did take a beautiful woman up on her offers when he needed release but it never lasted. His last girlfriend was manipulative and had upset Priscilla which led to that car crash. He always knew what she was like and nothing was going to be permanent with her, but

she was pretty wild in bed and that's why he kept her for so long. However, he always had a rule when it came to family. No woman would ever interfere with it, and he always considered Priscilla and Angel family.

"Thanks." He said when she handed him his change causing her to giggle. He smiled at her and took the coffees. Seth wasn't a stranger to women giggling around him and never thought anything of it.

Pris near rolled her eyes as a woman actually held the door open for him while he was leaving the coffee shop. She saw him stop and say something to her causing her to smile, even blush. More than likely he was thanking her. Then to her surprise she followed him toward the Lincoln to open the driver's door.

"Black, one sugar." He said leaning over and handing Pris hers then his so he could get in.

It was then the other woman saw Pris and looked a little embarrassed, "Thanks Bernadette." He said before getting in and shutting the door.

"Good lord Seth, you're like the pied piper—except with women following instead of rodents." She said before she could stop it.

He was putting his seatbelt on when he paused looking at her as if he didn't know what she was talking about.

"The women." She repeated gesturing toward the one that was heading back to the door of the coffee shop.

He shrugged, clicked his belt into place, grinned and started the vehicle like it was common for women to do things for him.

Pris eyed him for a moment before she returned her eyes toward the windshield after taking a sip of her coffee. Maybe he was conceited, but he sure came into it honestly. She couldn't lie to herself and not think how lucky she was to be the one sitting in

the passenger seat of his fancy vehicle, while Bernadette opened the door and not her. There was one time that she would have done just that, but not anymore. Then she remembered what Angel told her about Morgan, her nephew. She was sure that's what Seth was like from an early age so it wasn't a strange thing for him to have women bend over backward to please him. No wonder he looked confused when she mentioned it. She smiled to herself. Bea must've had her hands full with her sons.

When they got to the office Seth introduced her to an older woman behind the nurses' station, "This is Mary." She was a woman in her mid forties that informed Priscilla later that she was married and had three daughters, all teenagers and that they were all madly in love with her boss.

Pris liked her immediately.

Mary held up her hands, "Just so you know, I'm not a nurse, just a glorified secretary." She explained, "I'm excited that you're here, you can alleviate some of the workload on Doctor Harrison and Doctor Jacobs. Poor Michelle broke her foot when she went hiking with her boyfriend."

Is she all right?" Priscilla asked.

Yes, she's in heaven, he feels guilty and is doting on her. Michelle thinks he's just about ready to propose." Mary smiled.

Prissy laughed, "Good for her."

"Don't you worry about your job when she comes back, your boss needs both of you or he won't have anyone working here."

Pris didn't say a word. She knew she had favour with Seth and if it came down to taking a job away from someone who needed it, she wouldn't. If Michelle was going to have a wedding in the near future, she'd need the money.

Mary started to teach her the routine after Seth went to his office. She had an half an hour before the clinic opened, so Mary did her best giving her a crash course and was equally impressed at her ability to catch on. After she showed her where to put her

coat and purse, she set up a password on the computer and went through how the patient files were catalogued in the file room behind the nurses' station.

Priscilla took notes and when Mary glanced at the clock she turned to her with a smile, "ready?"

"It can't be that crazy." She answered with a look of disbelief.

"Honey you have no idea with that gorgeous single man in the office." She indicated with a nod down the hall where Seth had gone thirty minutes ago.

Prissy rolled her eyes, "How true."

Crazy was an understatement. Four hours zoomed by in the blink of an eye, and the waiting room was never empty. Priscilla couldn't believe the lengths women would go through to pile into the office and get an appointment. She was swamped. She thought working Emergency was busy, but Seth's patients put that to shame. Everything from a pain they couldn't describe to a busted fingernail came through the door in the ages of sixteen to fifty of all shapes sizes, and race.

Just before noon, she shot Mary a wide-eyed look as another woman came in and said she needed to get in right away because she thought she was getting a cold. She instantly recognized her as the niece to their current mayor. She was quite the socialite and it looked like she had spent all morning in the salon before she came there.

"You *think* you are?" Prissy said in a carefully guarded expression when she really wanted to hang her mouth open in disbelief. Out of the corner of her eye she saw Mary grin and shake her head.

"Why yes, I've been sneezing."

"Could it possibly have anything to do with spring and pollen—" *or the perfume you're wearing?* She wanted to say resisting the urge to wrinkle her nose at the overpowering scent.

Mary gave the woman an amused smirk.

“Look missy, if you won’t give me an appointment, I’ll show up in Emergency on Wednesday when he works there.”

“All right, I’ll pencil you in.” she said not the least bit affected by the woman’s outburst. She was good at staying professional. The past four years were good for her becoming a nurse because is also trained her to remain calm. However, she couldn’t help remembering that she was no different than this woman and instantly felt ashamed at her behaviour. She didn’t realize how it was for Seth with women like this using any means possible to gain his attention.

She vowed never to act like that again even if it meant that her heart would slowly die knowing that she would never have him. It was no wonder he never took her advances seriously, he was probably immune to them after seeing how things were today; women following him from coffee shops and female patients practically begging her to see him. It saddened her to know that she was in that category four years ago. It was a wonder that Seth didn’t say anything to her. She knew that if the roles were reversed, that she would have. Even the attention she got from the director last night bothered her. She couldn’t possibly imagine what Seth had to deal with on an everyday occurrence.

She shook her head silently. *I’m such a moron*, she thought to herself.

“Don’t fret honey.” Said Mary patting her on the shoulder, “He even gets fan mail.” She reached under the ledge of the counter and pulled out a stack of mail setting it in front of her.

Priscilla stared at the tall stack with disbelief. “You have *got* to be kidding!” she said in a harsh whisper.

Mary shook her head, “He stopped reading them several years ago. We don’t even open them anymore, because some of them come close to bordering on x-rated material. This is from

the last two weeks.”

“Oh lord.” She said with wide eyes, “I never even thought that he’d have to deal with things like that.”

“Well, he never says anything negative about the attention Priscilla. He just carries on as if this is normal for every man on the planet. That’s probably why he gets so much of it.”

Pris knew that wasn’t true in the least that this was normal. Seth was a magnet for her sex. A very powerful sinful magnet.

At that moment Seth came out threading his arms into his suit jacket. “Come on Pris, I’ll buy you lunch.” He said as if he did it a thousand times in his life and never even considered that a woman would turn him down.

How right he was.

She glanced up from the stack of files that were in desperate need of being put away. “I can’t I—“

“No, you go,” Mary interrupted, “I’ll do those. Doctor Harrison’s patients know when he takes lunch, so it won’t be that busy. This is a common routine. I take my lunch at one. And if you don’t take it now, you’ll go without.”

“If you’re sure.” She said casting her a guilty look, “After all this is my mess.”

“Just because I’m Doctor Jacobs’s clerk doesn’t mean I don’t help out Doctor Harrison’s. Lord knows you work twice as hard.”

Prissy laughed, “Okay, I give.”

“Coming?” Seth said from the doorway.

She nodded, “Let me get my coat and purse.” She said trying to stop the surprise from reaching her expression. There’s nothing more in this world that she wouldn’t like to spend time with Seth alone. Despite her apprehension over the first night home when he called her, she relished the time with him when he drove her home even if it was only a few minutes. It was like a drug to an addict; Seth to a woman. All her body senses perked up and came alive around him. She loved the way he made her

feel when he singled her out. She felt on top of the world.

He led her to a quaint little place across the street and they were immediately seated. She didn't remember this restaurant; it must've opened in the past year. Obviously this was a normal occurrence with him because the waitress seemed to know his routine. She also flashed him a very welcoming look, but if Seth noticed, he didn't acknowledge it, yet as always he was polite.

"I don't know how you do it." Priscilla said as he pulled out a chair for her.

"Do what?" he said cocking a brow while adjusting himself in his own seat.

"I never realized it was that bad—the women. Mary showed me this huge stack of mail."

He chuckled as the waitress came back and poured them some ice water. After she left he explained, "It's not so bad. Quit making me out to be some roman deity."

It was her turn to laugh because he was that in spades, "All right, but broken fingernails, fan mail, and woman who *think* they are coming down with some ailment is ridiculous. I've never seen anything like it."

"True, but as long as they pay their bill, I'm legally obligated to see them." He said still smiling. "Besides, it's flattering that women think I'm attractive."

Think? They worshiped him! "And you never tire of it?" She said with a swallow to bite back her thoughts hoping they didn't show on her face. She knew she wouldn't like it and even the director she'd met the night before had her very uneasy. It wasn't as if she didn't have her share of admirers, but in the end they only wanted one thing from her, and she found that distasteful because no one ever *really* knew her.

He studied her lovely face for a moment wondering if he should say what had been on his mind since they sat down. *What the hell*, he thought. "I never tired of you."

Prissy just stared at him if he'd sprouted a third eye in the middle of his forehead. That certainly wasn't the answer she expected.

He grinned seeing her stunned expression and leaned back in his seat totally at ease with himself, "Pris, I've known you forever. It's not hard to believe."

That brought her out of her momentary shock, "I know, its—well, you've never mentioned anything along those lines before." Was he talking friendship, or was it something more than that? Did he mean he never tired of her because of how they had known each other all their lives, or was it because of her obvious infatuation with him when she was younger? Gosh, that statement left so much open for interpretation and it clearly wasn't fair to her or her feelings.

"I never thought about it." He said honestly shrugging a large shoulder, "I didn't realize you didn't know."

"Well, I understand because you have known me so long that you care about me." She hedged hoping he would elaborate, but he didn't. In the end she came to the conclusion that he was talking about her younger years when she followed him around like a lovesick puppy.

"So did you have men competing for your attention at that fancy university you went to?" He said changing the subject. He'd said enough and he wasn't sure if she still cared about him like she used to.

She shrugged slightly embarrassed to be talking about herself, "No, I've done my fair share of that when I was here. I concentrated on my degree." There were plenty of opportunities, but she'd worn out that scene because of her original reason that men only wanted to get her in bed. "Why do you ask?" again she was digging for information on how he thought about her, but again she was disappointed.

He grinned, "I'm just wondering if they still lined up at

your door to get you to go out with them.”

She blushed slightly this time, “that’s not true.”

“It was.” He paused, “Have you talked to Soames since you got back?”

Red Soames was one of the local lawyers in town and Priscilla used to date him but there was nothing intimate involved. Her sister Angel used to work in his office. They were more friends than anything, but she knew how it looked to others because they were close as friends. She shook her head, “No, I was going to call him after work though.” Did she just imagine the darkening of his expression?

“Soames is a good man.” He finally said after tamping down that rare grating of jealousy again. Red was a good man, but he was also a womanizer and he knew that Prissy and him had a thing before she left town to go to school. It bothered him then, but he had his own love life, and kept to himself. It was then he wondered if Priscilla had experience from Soames and that grated him even more. The thought of her naked and gasping with pleasure from another man really bothered him. More than he thought possible and this went beyond brotherly concern. Soames had experience, and unlike Seth, didn’t have a problem dating locally, so gossip surrounding his escapades was common. It was the reason Seth kept his personal life out of town. “Besides that and the rush, how is your first day?”

“I like it. I really like Mary too.”

“She’s a gem.” He paused, “When Michelle comes back I’d appreciate it if you stayed. I spoke to Mary and it sounds like my practise is twice as busy as Walter’s.”

“Busy? I don’t know what you mean.” She teased.

He smiled, “Smart ass.”

Just then their meal came and they ate in comfortable silence. When it was over Seth paid the bill saying she could get it tomorrow after she protested.

Pris couldn't stop the rapid beat of her heart after that because it meant that she would have him to herself the next day too. She wouldn't trade those moments for anything in the world right now because it was a rare occasion to get him to herself even if it was in a crowded restaurant.

That afternoon her sister phoned her at work and asked her to come over for supper again.

"What's wrong?" she could hear the strain in her voice.

"That actress is here Pris, and she's been making eyes at Alex all day. I'm going to scratch her them out of her plastic face."

Priscilla laughed, "Alex wouldn't notice her if she stripped naked and fell at his feet, trust me."

"Yeah, that's what he said, but would you please come anyway." She begged.

The pleading in her sister's voice was her undoing, "I'll ask Seth to wait while I change at the house. I can't show up in my uniform."

"Okay, if he can't just call me and I'll come and get you."

"All right sis, and don't worry." She said before she hung up.

Shortly after that Red Soames came through the door like he owned the place and grinning from ear to ear when he saw Priscilla.

"Hi babe."

She returned his smile, came around the counter and gave him a genuine hug, "What are you doing here?" Red was blue eyed like her and he was blonde, but it was a darker shade. He was another long sought after bachelor in town. However, he never cared if his affairs were public or not. Angel told her that he had something going on with the mayor's niece that was in the clinic earlier, but knowing Red it was purely sexual. He radiated sex appeal so much that it practically spelled out on his forehead.

"I heard you were back in town. I ran into your sister earlier

at the grocery store, and Angel said that you were working for Seth.”

Seth came out of one of the exam rooms in time to see Priscilla embrace Red and inside he was seething. He just stood there watching the two but he was too far away to hear the conversation. Thankfully it was short and she returned to the counter to sort files while Soames left. Curiosity overruled his common sense. He was wondering what was said between the two, so he walked up behind her and asked, “What did Red want?” He said trying to keep the curtness out of his voice unsuccessfully. It wasn’t any of his business, but he didn’t like Soames hanging around Pris for a multitude of reasons.

Pris didn’t seem to notice his tone but Mary did and she lifted her head and stared at the two of them from her spot behind the computer. She was also on the phone, so she missed everything the woman was saying trying to listen to Prissy and Seth.

“Just that he didn’t know I was in town and he came by to say hello.” She answered casually walking into the back room where the files were stored. Seth followed her.

“Didn’t you used to date him?”

“Years ago.” She answered while returning a file to its rightful place. Then she paused and looked at him. It hadn’t occurred to her that he’d followed her in there to ask her about Red, but it did now, “Is something wrong Seth?”

“He’s a womanizer.”

“I know.” She said still looking at him, “He doesn’t keep that a secret and even if he did, the gossip about him is ear burning.”

“You dated him.” He said as a statement this time.

Finally she understood what he was saying. It really surprised her that he would imply such a thing. “Seth, I never slept with Red.” she offered in her defence clearly surprised that he would even insinuate such a thing, “We’re friends.” He didn’t

look convinced. She really couldn't blame him because she gave people that idea four years ago from the way she acted. Not intentionally, but people did talk. However, she was too hung up on the man standing before her to have a relationship with another.

"Red doesn't have female friends Prissy. Maybe he was waiting for you to mature a little more—"

"What does that mean—mature a little more?" She knew damn well what he meant like she was just thinking. She was an outrageous flirt before she went away, but tossing it back at her like that was unfair, and embarrassing. She never knew he was capable of bringing up her past like that.

Knowing how he just sounded, he did his best to fix it, "I meant, that you have grown into a very attractive woman, and a career orientated woman, that's attractive to a man like Red." He explained.

"Is it?" she asked not quite believing him.

"Very." His eyes dipped down to her mouth then her legs, "Even in that supposedly shapeless uniform, you put most women to shame. And let's go back for a minute about what you said at the restaurant about me and women. You draw men out of the woodwork like termites."

Her mouth fell open. She was angry before with his assumptions, but now she was stunned.

"Just so you know to be careful." He said before he left the room.

Pris couldn't find it in her to breathe for a moment. It sounded like he was *jealous*, but Seth didn't get jealous! He could have any one he wanted. Yet that thought quickly converted to concern for a friend. Of course he was. She felt conceited thinking that he was more than protective. She should know better.

The next two hours soared by and Pris was relieved to see

the last patient leave. She said down and released a long breath of disbelief. "That was unreal."

Mary patted her on the shoulder. "Get used to it honey, your Seth is in high demand."

My Seth. She sighed, that sounded so wonderful, "Apparently." She answered nonchalantly. She should have denied it, but by the look on her new co-worker's face, it would have been pointless. She learned long ago not to even contest people's assumptions. It was useless and people were going to believe whatever they wanted.

"I'll be seeing you tomorrow. Get a good night's rest." Mary said after retrieving her coat and purse.

"Bye Mary." She couldn't help but like the older woman. She would have expected her to be a little judgemental having another female employee. She'd heard from Angel that Seth had been through six this year before Michelle. It was probably because Michelle was in love with her boyfriend that made her stay. The other women were either asked to leave or left when Seth didn't fall for them.

Leaning back in the chair, she reached up around and undid her braid, massaged her fingers through her scalp and sighed.

"It's nice to see you didn't cut your hair."

Seth's deep voice startled her. She removed her fingers from her head and sat up straight. "Hi, are you done?" she asked trying to ignore the rapid beating of her heart. She wondered how long he'd been standing there watching her.

"Yes." He said guiding his eyes over her face. "Charts signed off, patient load accomplished," he smiled.

"Angel asked if I could come to dinner tonight." To her it sounded like she was speaking a little too fast, but hopefully he didn't notice. She was nervous around him, "Apparently that movie star is there and is making eyes at Alex."

"No problem." His eyes dipped to her legs again, "You'll

need to change. Right?”

“If you don’t mind?” she said trying to ignore the heat that flared in the pit of her stomach at that brief look.

He smiled, “Not at all. Let’s go.”

Pris hopped up and grabbed her purse following him out of the building.

He chuckled as he locked the door of his clinic, “Alex sees no one else but Angel.”

“I told her that.” Prissy said with a smile while waiting for him, “But she’s still worried.”

It was in the vehicle on their way out of town that he spoke again, “I envy them.”

“Who?”

His eyes glanced off her, “Alex and Angel.”

It was one of the few times she saw his expression become serious as opposed to charming and charismatic. She nodded, “me too.” She knew exactly what he meant. It was almost disgusting the way they were so much in love with one another and thinking about seeing that large ornery man paw her sister made her smile.

Seth saw that, “It’s interesting isn’t it, that she’s the only one that could bring my brother to his knees with barely a shrug of her shoulder?”

“It is. Especially when I’ve seen him knock three men off of theirs in a brawl.” Pris added with a smile.

Seth chuckled, “He’s about as tough as they come.”

“And you’re his opposite.” She said before she could stop it. Hopefully he didn’t hear her. She winced when he responded.

“Opposite?”

She felt herself digging a hole. Now she’d have to elaborate without giving anything away. “You know, nice,” she nearly stuttered wondering where she found the courage or stupidity to

say that.

“Is that right?” He said with a sly smile, “I’m *nice*.”

She shrugged.

He laughed, “That’s the second time you mentioned that. I just never heard a woman call me nice. I get sexy, hot, sizzling,--” he paused flicking her a glance, “--and some of them I wouldn’t even tell you.”

“Please don’t!” she blurted and held up her hands.

“Anyway, it was interesting,” he said looking at her briefly again before setting his attention back on the road.

I’m an idiot. She thought. I’m the only one that could find the dumbest way to describe the most desirable, sexy, gorgeous man in the world. Dumb—stupid—.

He chuckled again while turning down her driveway, “Home sweet home.”

She breathed a sigh of relief. More and more she felt like she was putting her foot in her mouth around him.

“I might as well come in.” he said seeing her parent’s large truck in the driveway, “George and your mother would never make me live it down. I haven’t been around much.”

“You’re right.” She agreed, “My mother thinks the sun rises and sets on you.”

“Is that right?”

She turned and looked at him, “Don’t tell me you didn’t notice? Seth she all but stated the fact.”

He grinned showing those gorgeous dimples and straight even white teeth, “I always thought Alex had favour with them after he saved Angel’s and your lives.”

“You had a hand in that too. Short of murder, I don’t think either one of you could do anything wrong and I wouldn’t even doubt that would change their opinion.”

His eyes went down her front for a moment before settling back on hers, “You don’t huh?”

If it wasn't that curious look, it was the slight deepening of his voice that made her quiver inside. "No." she said with a slight quake in her own voice.

"Maybe we should test that." He continued with a slow baiting smile.

She forced herself to believe that he was teasing her and rolled her eyes, "Dream on cowboy." She turned and got out of the vehicle to his burst of laughter. Gosh, even that could set her on fire. She had to be sick, or just mentally ill to have everything about him affect her like that.

Seth opened the front door of her house and walked in after her. They were met by her parents. It was sort of an unspoken rule that the Harrisons didn't need to knock and vice versa.

"Seth, how wonderful to see you!" her mother said with a glance flicked in her daughter's direction.

"Hello Catherine." He bent and gave her a kiss on the cheek, while flicking an amused look to Pris. "It's been a few months."

"That's because you work too much." She chastised and blushing a little at the attention. "You should be getting married and having children like your brother."

He chuckled, "In due time."

"Seth." Her father said extending his hand in greeting and giving him one of his rare smiles.

"George." He greeted respectfully.

"I'll be a few minutes." Priscilla said seeing the admiration in her parent's eyes especially the hopeful one toward her from her mother. Both of her parents would love to have the other Harrison boy as their son in law, but Pris knew that was not an option. He was still out of her league and he'd seen the type of women he dated.

"Take your time." He said glancing at her right before George drew his attention by drawing him into discussion about

cattle breeding.

Pris paused at the top of the stairs to take in the scene below. Her parents adored the Harrison boys and Seth could charm an angry cobra which was pretty close to her father's temperament. If that didn't work, then his deep sexy chuckle would. At least on her.

Then she heard her mother scold them for standing in the foyer and to come in and visit for a bit. Seth nodded and followed her along with her father smiling like he was as charming as sin. She turned and went to her room wishing that she could tell if he was teasing her or not when they were in the vehicle together. It actually angered her a bit, not that she'd ever let him know. Unlike his brother, he did have a sense of humour, which really accentuated his charm. Everybody liked Seth. In fact, her father didn't warm up to people easily. Years in the military turned him hard, and she always felt like a disappointment to him. Angel always seemed to be the jewel of his eye and Pris could never live up to that. Maybe that's why she behaved the way she did and went out of her way to get attention.

She went to her room and changed into a pair of new jeans and a blue blouse to match her eyes. Then she went and combed out her hair and touched up her light makeup. It was no use trying to gain Seth's attention despite his concern today. He was and always would see himself as just a friend of hers.

It only took ten minutes to get ready before she made her way downstairs. A far cry from the two hours a day she used to spend in front of the mirror. She found Seth with her dad drinking coffee in the sitting room.

Seth saw her and quickly finished off his cup before standing.

"Don't be such a stranger son." George said standing up and shaking his hand again.

"I guess not. I'll be taking Pris to work from now on so I'll

see you more often.”

Once in the vehicle Prissy turned to him, “I’m moving out soon.” She said because of the last comment her father made. She felt the need to tell him that this wasn’t permanent.

He arched his brows, “Really? Why?”

“I just thought you should know. I haven’t told them yet, but I will. I can’t live with my parents forever, I’m twenty five.”

“Pris, that’s not uncommon in a town like this. Women are almost expected to do that until they’re married.”

“I know—“ she stopped.

“What is it?”

“She shrugged, “it’s just that I’ve been on my own for four years and honestly, I don’t want to feel that privileged. Besides I don’t drive and I’d rather walk to work. I was thinking of an apartment in town.”

He looked up at the large house, “I guess once you get a taste of freedom it stays with you.”

“You came home.” She said. Seth still lived with his brother in their parents’ house. She knew he loved the ranch that he grew up on, but he never had a relationship in town. Angel said so. However, she also said that he’d frequent the city several times a month on the weekend, so she sort of put two and two together.

“I did, because I love it here.” His eyes went over her face, “And I love my family.”

That statement was profound to her. It was the way he said it to let her know there was no doubt with his feelings in that aspect. He would make a wonderful father some day. “I love my parents too Seth, it just feels weird.”

“Is it because of the privacy issue, you know, with men?” He said easily as if he was discussing the weather.

She actually made a noise in her throat at his blatant

question. “N—no of course not!”

Her indignant expression nearly made him laugh, but all he did was lift a single dark brow in question. “Pris, like you said you’re twenty five. I’m sure that you’ve—“

“Can we just go?” She said flushing bright scarlet and averting her gaze to her window.

He waited for a moment wondering if he should push her a little more about her love life. His eyes didn’t miss the blush. Who would? It was intense. It didn’t make sense to him why she would feel embarrassed. Everyone knew that Red and she were an item several years back even though she told him nothing happened, but he knew Red. He wasn’t the type of man to date a woman without sleeping with her.

Maybe it was because he was a family friend and that confession is hard for her. However he was a doctor and people talked to him all the times about sex, birth control issues, and more, so it was a common subject for him in his practice. Yet he could understand her apprehension because of their relationship. Even his brother and he didn’t share their personal lives with one another.

His eyes guided down to her breasts while her attention was out the side window. She had a nice figure, she always did, but the last few years brought some nice curves to her body. Without another word he turned and started the Lincoln. Her body interested him more than he liked to admit.

It was a short drive to the Harrison’s ranch from her father’s but it was still uncomfortable after that awkward moment. He may be able to discuss sex like it was no different than any other topic, but it was a personal issue with her. Thankfully he broke the silence.

“After this, I’d like you to stay away in case R makes moves on you again.”

She looked at him, “That movie star is bothering Angel.”

“I know. Alex will take care of it. One thing he can’t stand is women who spill themselves all over him.”

“That was true.” And there had been plenty of times that had happened before Angel came along and it was Alex that pursued Angel. “Still, I want to be there for her—wow!” she exclaimed when she saw how full the yard was. There were semi trucks, trailers, vans, and a multitude of fancy cars.

“Oh hell.” Seth said under his breath weaving through the vehicles, “Alex is going to be fit to be tied.”

“I thought he made some rules about this.”

“He did, but it’s obvious that some of them didn’t get the message.” The only clear place was the driveway. At least they knew better to park there. “Come on. Let’s see what it’s like on the inside.”

“Oh dear.” Priscilla mouthed as she saw all of the strangers in the house even Seth made a frustrated noise under his breath.

There were at least a dozen people in the entrance when they stepped into it. Angel was already fretting, “Oh thank the lord. Seth, Priscilla!” She rushed forward.

“Where are the kids?”

“With May, upstairs.” May was their housekeeper who helped Angel look after the kids from time to time. “I don’t want them around this.” She said exasperated, ‘Did you see the yard?’

“Where’s Alex?” Seth asked.

“Oh, I think he’s looking for that director, Ryan so he can de-hide him.” She said with widened eyes. “He was so angry.”

“I’ll go find him.” Seth said.

Pris could see that it was obvious from the look on his face that he wasn’t impressed either.

“Oh Seth—” Angel grabbed his arm as he turned away, “That woman is clinging to him like saran wrap. Could you please do something about that before I scratch her eyes out?”

He grinned down at her, “Absolutely.” He couldn’t help it.

She looked so helpless it was comical.

After he left Pris took her hand. "Why don't we go to Mom and Dad's and get away from here."

"I can't." She nodded toward the busy yard out through the windows in the door, "I leave and that scorpion in the shape of a movie star will sink her stinger into him."

"Angel really! You have no reason to be jealous." Priscilla would have laughed if she didn't feel her sister's anxiousness and the hoard of people in and outside the house.

"I can't help it!" She flustered, "I'm pregnant, emotional and I have no weapon against someone like that. She's sophisticated, beautiful and famous."

"And no match for my precious little sister." Priscilla added.

Angel looked at her sister and took a deep breath, "You're the best friend I could ever have."

Seth found his brother, well, he'd heard him first. He just followed his raging voice. When he rounded the large building that housed the stables for his prized thoroughbreds, he saw Alex towering over Ryan Spencer as he gave him hell. A brunette with a too tight red dress was with them. Obviously the movie star and ill equipped to be walking around the ranch. She was wearing five inch heels that kept sinking into the mud as she struggled to stand as close as she could to Alex without touching him.

Ryan looked incredibly relieved when he saw Seth knowing he was the calmer of the two.

Alex turned to see what he was looking at and spotted his younger brother, "did you see?" he bellowed gesturing toward the direction of the house.

"I saw." He answered in a calm tone that he was known for, "You should go see Angel, she's upset."

"Hell, of course she is! Goddam people parading through

my house like a bloody carnival! My wife is Hormonal for Chrissake!" He continued loudly while narrowing his gaze back on Ryan who visibly flinched, "God forbid the man who upsets my wife—"

"Alex," Seth said with a tone that said plenty. It basically said 'I'll handle it'. He knew Alex was close to hitting the director who just winced as that last statement was roared out.

Alex paused nodded once and swore vehemently before he started heading back toward the house, "Deal with this!" he said as he walked past him waving an arm toward Ryan.

If the movie star was trying to gain Alex's attention, it was pointless. He hadn't even acknowledged her. "I will," he reaffirmed. Alex wasn't angry at him despite his bellowing. He knew his brother well enough. He was worried about Angel and if something upset her, he was a force to be reckoned with.

Sandra had to hold her breath when she saw the newcomer. She thought that Alex was a hunk. This one was thigh twitching gorgeous! He was the epitome of tall dark and handsome right down to those stunning pale eyes, then he smiled and she swore she could have fainted. In fact she reached out and grabbed Ryan's arm to steady herself.

"Ryan." He nodded in greeting as if Alex wasn't going to kill him moments ago.

"God Seth, I didn't think he'd be so angry!" Ryan said helplessly running a hand through his thin greying hair. "I thought he was going to punch me."

"You dealt with him last night over Angel's sister. My brother doesn't make empty threats." He reminded him.

He nodded casting a wary glance past him to the strong receding angry stride of Alex Harrison, "I'll make sure that everyone moves to the field that he designated for us."

"That would probably be a plan. You should remind them to stay out of the house too."

Sandra took the opportunity to step in front of Ryan at that time, "I'm Sandra Lang." she beamed holding out her hand.

Seth said hello shook it knowing that she'd want him to greet her properly with a kiss, but he didn't like his family turned upside down as much as Alex even though it didn't show in his expression so he didn't feel like being charming at the moment.

Ryan saw an opportunity here. Sandra was obviously interested in the younger brother, hell, who wouldn't be. Ryan even found the man attractive. "Seth would you mind taking Sandra home. We leased the hotel Regent in town for the actors and I'll be busy talking to the crew about your brother's stipulations." If he could at least use Sandra to soothe Seth maybe it would spill over to his volatile brother.

Seth contemplated that for a moment. He'd told Angel he'd get her off of Alex and he did. He nodded, "Certainly." He held out his arm and Sandra took it like a dog to a bone.

"Oh how wonderful. Are you a cowboy like your brother?" she gushed, "I love cowboys."

"Alex is more of one than I am." He said as-a-matter-of-factly. Seth could do just about anything Alex could, except rip a ranch hand in half verbally. He and his brother always had different views on that subject. That is why Alex ran the ranch, not him, and did a damn good job at it.

"Is that right?" she said hanging off every word he said.

He nodded giving her an amused look.

"And what do you do?"

"I'm a physician." He answered knowing what that confession would bring. He was right, her whole face lit up like a Christmas tree.

"Oh wow! I never would have guessed."

Seth was amused. His two thousand dollar suit spoke volumes. It was obvious that he was in a high paying profession. His eyes went over her face. She was a pretty woman, but not

near Priscilla's looks. Also, the false pretence she had, wasn't attractive. Contrary to what people thought, he liked intelligent women.

"I love this place," she waved her free hand toward the scenery, "It's very rustic."

Seth chuckled. It really wasn't. It didn't lack anything modern, but he supposed if you just saw the land without the equipment, the shop, the barn and the house, that it would seem so. He led her toward his navigator and opened the door, "I need to go tell my family that I'm going to be late for dinner."

"Don't be long." She cooed.

Seth studied her for a moment. It had been almost a month since he'd gotten laid, and Pris had him worked up from earlier. Sandra was an experienced woman, no doubt about it, so she could satisfy what he needed. The invitation was there even though she didn't come out and say it. He could read women well. He'd have to think about it. "I'll be right back." He said before he shut the door.

People started moving the vehicles out of the yard and into the field when he went into the house. He was thankful.

"Thanks." Angel said meeting him at the door.

"No problem honey." He said looking down at her. He adored Angel, always had. She was as sweet as they come and perfect for his brother, "I'll take Sandra back to her hotel. I may be late."

Priscilla came down the hall then, crossed her arms and leaned against the wall looking completely relaxed, but inside was a different story, "Are you going to be awhile?" She knew darn well that Sandra had hooked her claws into Seth the moment she saw him. No one had to tell her. She knew Seth's sex appeal. It was like a sinful tractor beam.

He guided his eyes to her. Actually he was thinking about taking Sandra up on her offer, not because of who she was, but

what she could do for him. "I might be." He said without elaborating then turning back to Angel. "Don't keep dinner warm if I'm late."

"Okay."

After Seth left Pris had a heavy sickening feeling settle in the pit of her stomach. She knew exactly what he meant by that statement.

All through dinner she barely touched a thing while flicking a gaze to his empty plate. Then Angel made coffee and they went to the family room to visit. At least watching the kids play with their toys was distracting her. Still she hadn't said much.

"What's wrong with your sister?" Alex said finally.

Angel shot him a gaze to be quiet. It wasn't as if Priscilla couldn't hear him, with his voice, the neighbours probably did.

"What?" he said not catching the hidden meaning in her look, "Hell Pris you've hardly said a word all through dinner. Are you ill?"

She forced a smile, "It's nothing." Even though Alex sounded gruff, she knew him well enough to know he was concerned, "It was a long first day."

"How's that going for you?" Angel said trying to distract her from Seth's absence and disrupt her husband from his insensitive probing. She felt responsible, Seth was only doing what she asked by distracting Sandra away from Alex only she never even considered how it might affect her sister.

"I can't believe that I used to be like some of those women that came here today."

"You were never like that." Angel said.

"Actually—" Alex started but Angel shot him a look and he cleared his throat, "—I'll get the kids washed up." He grumbled getting to his feet.

After he herded them out of the room Angel apologized, "Sorry, sometimes he forgets to use his filter."

Prissy laughed, “He’s right though, that’s what I love about him.” She sighed thinking about Seth. “She is really pretty isn’t she?”

“No match for my beautiful sister.” Angel repeated the words that Priscilla said to her when she came first came in the house.

“Nice.” She said with a partial smile.

“Do you want—“

The door opened then and in came Seth, “It’s raining outside.” He said while brushing the droplets out of his normally neat hair. “I ended up with a flat and had to drive half the speed limit home. Where’s Alex? I parked the Navigator in the shop.”

Priscilla’s heart soared seeing him there.

He looked up after being answer by silence to see both women looking at him with expressions of surprise, “What?”

They looked at each other and laughed. Priscilla couldn’t believe the feeling of relief running through her at that moment.

He gave her one of his deadly gorgeous smiles after a brief hesitation, “Ah private joke. Are you ready to go home Pris, I started one of the ranch trucks.”

“Of course.” She stood up and shot a smile to Angel, “I’ll just get my coat.”

Neither one of them said a thing on the way to her place. She honestly couldn’t believe that he resisted the Movie star’s charms. Inside she was celebrating, but she shouldn’t. It would only be a matter of time before the other woman seduced him.

“I’ll pick you up at seven tomorrow.” Seth said pulling into her driveway.

“Thanks,” She got out of the vehicle.

“Pris—“

She looked at him.

“She doesn’t hold a candle to you.” He continued.

That confession made her knees weak. Somehow he'd known that it bothered her about the movie star. Her eyes guided to his and in the dim dash light she could see that he was sincere, "Thanks." She said managing a small smile. She shut the door and went into her house.

Seth waited until she was inside before he left. He could have easily slept with Sandra, but by the time he got to her hotel, he'd changed his mind. She was a sexy woman, but for some reason the urge had worn off.

When he walked in the house a few minutes later Alex was waiting for him. Standing in the hall like a roman soldier, legs apart and thick arms folded across his chest.

"I told Ryan." He said removing his coat and hanging it up.

"Yeah, thanks." He relaxed slightly.

He turned and looked at him, "Is there something else?" Alex looked slightly uncomfortable, which was unusual for him.

He nodded glanced at the stairs his wife went up a few minutes ago and indicated with a nod of his head toward the study.

Seth followed him.

Once the door was shut he turned to him, "Pris still has a thing for you Seth."

Seth just nodded.

"I know it's not uncommon for women to fall at your feet, but you should just be aware of her feelings. That woman—the actress, has no self respect."

Seth nearly laughed out loud at that statement. Sandra may have thought that Alex didn't notice her hovering but obviously he did. He just didn't acknowledge her. As for his brother's concern, the only feelings Alex was ever worried about were his immediate family. Priscilla used to frustrate him to no end. "Yeah, I'll consider it."

Alex should have known that Seth understood. He always did. It was obvious that he was aware of Prissy's feelings for him too even though he didn't talk about it.

"My wife is concerned for her, therefore I have to be." He near winced.

It wasn't easy for Alex to talk about anything emotional, but Angel was everything to him. Seth grinned, "I'll take that into consideration."

"She's been in love with you since she was twelve." He added.

"I know." He said without hesitation. "But she's an adult now, and that was a crush that ended long ago. She as much said so. Tell Angel not to worry about Pris, she's stronger than she thinks."

Alex studied his younger brother's expression. He knew that he wouldn't intentionally hurt Priscilla; he just wanted to make sure that he knew that he was aware of her feelings. They had never discussed it in the past because they stayed out of each other's personal lives. "All right." He said with a tone of relief glad the conversation was older.

Seth made went to his room undressed and showered. He had some thinking to do about today and if he made the wrong decision he needed to understand the repercussions of it.

CHAPTER THREE

The next morning Priscilla put on a baby blue uniform and just finished braiding her hair when she heard Seth's voice downstairs.

She rushed downstairs to see her mother try and get him to come in for breakfast. He hadn't spotted her yet which gave her a moment so mask her expression because he was devastating in a dark gRyan three piece suit and red tie.

Taking a deep breath she went down the stairs and greeted him. When he turned to her she thought she imagined him pause while looking at her, but he turned and opened the door masking whatever expression she thought she might have seen. He moved with the grace of masculine sophistication even if he wasn't wearing a two thousand dollar suit. It was easy to see that he came from money and was confident in himself.

"Maybe next time Catherine," he said about her invitation, "Pris and I will grab something in town."

"All right, but the invitations open. Pris honey, this is the second time you skipped breakfast."

She smiled at her mother, "I'm not five mom."

She rolled her eyes, "Of course you aren't but you're thin."

After they got in the vehicle Seth pulled out of the long driveway, "I think your figure is just right." He said.

Pris's mouth fell open.

He glanced at her, "It is." He confirmed with a tone that didn't indicate anything beyond an observation of fact. At the same time, there was no teasing in it either.

"Well—um, thanks." She said a little shyly.

"You filled out really nice in the last few years."

She flushed further still gaping.

"I always thought you were a little thin, but now you're perfect."

Perfect! She felt that word through to her bones. It was the second time he said that to her in the last few days.

He glanced at her and gave her one of those dimpled grins, "Take the compliment Pris. I don't mind giving them where they're due." He said easily.

She blinked a couple of times and nodded. It didn't really sound like one, but she couldn't deny the flushing through her over it especially when he accompanied it with that smile. Didn't

anything affect him? He would say the most intimate things without thinking anything of it. The problem was it affected her. No wonder women fell all over him. Besides his looks he could flatter them so easily then follow it by that smile and that could cinch any apprehension they had. It was a devastating combination and there should have been a law against it.

As was his ritual, he pulled up in front of the coffee shop and got out to get them coffee. She waited patiently in the Navigator. It was then that she spotted the social worker's office. She made a mental note to go back later and ask about volunteering.

This time he walked around her side of the vehicle when he came out of the café. She rolled down her window and he passed her the two coffees.

"Yours is on the right." He said meeting her eyes.

"Thanks." She said keeping his gaze. He was so self-assured it was frightening.

He walked around to the driver's side and got in.

"Do you think she's pretty?"

He looked at her taking a minute to think of what she was talking about, "Sandra? Yes, I do." He said honestly.

"Would—I mean, is she the type of woman you would date?"

"Normally? Yes she is." He said truthfully while starting the vehicle. Although he did prefer a woman who could hold a decent conversation, he occasionally dated Sandra's type. No attachment, no commitment.

She never said another word after that. It wasn't his fault that she felt her heart breaking. He was being honest and she had asked. By rights she should have kept her big mouth shut.

Mary was just unlocking the door to the clinic when Seth drove up. She pulled open the door and held it as they got out. "Good morning Priscilla, Doctor Harrison."

"Hi Mary," came the chorus reply.

"Doctor Jacobs phoned me at home this morning, he's going

to be a little late.”

“That’s fine.” Seth said walking into the building behind Pris. His eyes guided down to her backside. She was wearing uniform pants today and although he liked her legs, her nicely shaped bottom was just as nice if not nicer.

He walked down the hall to his office shaking his head. He was getting distracted these past few days. It was about time he went to the city for the weekend because it was getting harder to ignore Priscilla. It wasn’t that she wasn’t beautiful, she was. Everyone thought that about her. She was popular when she was in high school, in town after high school, and he was sure she was in college.

Her long platinum hair, large blue eyes and mouth watering figure were the talk of the males in his circle. Although he could have had a relationship with her four years ago, he chose not to. She was too close to them as family and he wasn’t ready to settle down so it would have ended and damaged their friendship. She also didn’t have experience and because of that, he didn’t want to hurt her. He knew how she felt then, but to play on her feelings would have been inhuman.

What Alex told him the other night was not new knowledge to him. Pris had made herself obvious when she was a teenager. At the time he was in the middle of overlapping women, and still did at times. He didn’t see himself as a husband or father. Lately, he had a glimpse or two of being married, but there was no face attached to the woman that he was married to. It was just an idea and like all ideas this would most likely fade. Although the prospect of being a father interested him more lately and that never left. He saw his brother’s children and how he was with them, made him want his own. He was thirty four and it probably would be a good time to start thinking about it.

However, Pris was different now. There was no outrageous flirtation from her and it actually bothered him to a degree. It

made him wonder if she was still attracted to him. Usually it was easy for him to see a women's feelings, but Pris was a new mystery.

After they'd gotten through the door the phone was already ringing and Mary went to answer it. Seth walked down the hall toward his office with an easy stride and Pris watched him before shaking her head and going back to the front desk.

Mary hung up and gave her a sly look, "Honey, you got it bad."

"Always did Mary." She said with a long drawn out sigh not denying a thing. There was no point. It would have been a lie, and she respected Mary too much.

Meanwhile, out front the office was already packed and thankfully Mary had time to call Doctor Jacobs's patients and tell them he'd be a little late so she was able to help her.

As yesterday around noon Seth came out of the back, "You ready Pris?"

She glanced up, "One sec." she quickly finished writing in a file, closed it and stood up.

"I'll put it away." Mary offered holding out her hand. "Take your lunch."

"Thanks." She handed her the file and bent to retrieve her purse out from under the counter, "See you in an hour."

"I'll be here." She waved

Seth took her elbow this time and led her across the street to the restaurant. She tried her best not to let it show that his touch affected her.

After the waitress seated them he sat back in his chair and just stared at her.

"What"

"Come out to the ranch tonight."

"I thought you wanted me to stay away." She said tilting her head at him.

“Yes, but I figured if you were there Sandra won’t be so forward to get me in bed.”

She could actually feel her nostrils flare with the anger she felt, but thankfully she managed to force an amused smile, “Bed?”

“She offered, but I’ve decided I’m not interested.”

“She’s beautiful.” she said softly trying not to ground her teeth to ashes.

He tilted his head ever so slightly, “I told you Pris, she doesn’t hold a candle to you.”

Now what did that mean? Could he tell that it bothered her? She tried so hard to hide it.

“It’s that or I spend the evening fending her off.” he added. “Quite frankly, I’m tired, and I don’t feel like playing the charming host for the woman.”

She actually looked away for a moment before she centered her eyes on him again. It was so easy for a man to hop into bed with a woman, well, apparently it was for Sandra too. “All right. I’ll come” she tried not to sound too eager about it, him wanting her with him.

His eyes studied her expression and slowly, deliberately he leaned forward putting his forearms on the table to close the distance between them, “Or, if you wish, you can.”

“I can what?” She said tipping her head in confusion.

“Oblige me any time.” He said huskily.

Her eyes must have said a thousand things because she knew every emotion was visible in them for a moment and his expression soften even more, “It’s not easy for me like it is her.” she heard herself say.

“I’ve known you forever.” He added still looking at her, “We’re friends.”

“And friends sleep together?”

“Sometimes.” He said softly.

“Seth I—“

“Before you say anything, I should tell you that you’re driving me crazy. I’ve been thinking about you and I together for several days now. It’s probably what stopped me from having sex with Sandra last night.”

She couldn’t do anything, say anything but stare at him in disbelief. Maybe it had something to do with her heart jumping into her throat.

“You find that hard to believe?”

“No, I mean yes, from you it is.” Priscilla knew how she looked to the opposite sex, but Seth never indicated in the least that he found her attractive.

He quirked his brow in surprise, “From me? Sweetheart, if you opened your eyes and saw the way I’ve been looking at you the past two days, you wouldn’t doubt it.”

She flushed a little, “I guess I just summed it up to you being concerned for me.”

“I am, but I also find myself attracted to you.”

“I work for you Seth.”

“So?” he straightened in his chair.

“What if it didn’t work out between us?”

He nodded, “I’ve thought about that.”

“And?”

He shrugged keeping his eyes on hers, “I’ve decided that you’re worth it.”

Her heart skipped a beat. “You don’t have affairs around town. People know you don’t.”

“People are already talking about us. So why should it make a difference?” he said with a smile casting a look past her shoulder to several other patrons who were staring at them with obvious curiosity.

“They are?” she said raising her brows and looking around the restaurant. It was full and she noticed several interested

glances in her direction, "Oh dear, I never thought about how this looked."

"At least half my patients today asked if we were dating."

"What did you tell them?"

"I told them that you were my sister in law and a good family friend. Something they already knew."

Why did her heart hurt at that confession? "Good reply." She lied.

He kept his eyes on hers, "So what do you say?"

"Do women usually say yes to such a proposal." His slow devastating smile was her answer, and she held up a hand in surrender, "Why should I have even asked."

"We get along well together, and we have a lot of the same interests. Pris, you're a mature woman."

"Has it occurred to you that I don't hop into bed with men?" she found herself getting a little defensive. Is that how he thought of her?

"That's a little crass Pris." He said not seeming affected by her tone, "We're friends. We've known each other from the day you were born."

"And you're willing to take a chance on destroying that Seth, I don't think I can."

He studied her for a moment before he nodded, "So there's no chance?"

Of course there was, she wanted to scream. If he asked her one more time and accompanied it with that unbelievable smile, she was going to crumble and ask him when and where. If he felt her pulse, he would see that she was close to having a heart attack. Slowly she shook her head. "I need more than just a promise of a good time." Those were possibly the hardest words she ever said. Furthermore, he didn't seem the least bit upset about her refusal. If he really wanted her, wouldn't he seem a little put off?

This time one brow went up, “How much more?”

She shrugged, “Some sort of commitment.” It looked as if he was in pain for a moment before he spoke.

“I can promise not to see anyone else without being upfront with you about it.”

That was surprising. Not that he’d see other women, but that he’d not see other women. “Seth, this may be hard for you coming from me because of the way I’ve been perceived in the past, but I want to be in love with a man before I sleep with them.” He actually looked a little confused for a moment before he regained his legendary composure.

“Fair enough.” He finally said leaning forward and taking her hand, “But just so you know, I’m not done.”

Of course he wasn’t. That whole conversation was completely casual to him as if it wasn’t strange that he propositioned her. She was sure it was usually the other way around for him. He was also use to meaningless relationships and she wasn’t. That’s why it was so easy for him. She was still wondering if she should feel insulted over his confession, but he also said he cared about her. Seth would never lie to get her in bed...he was too—honourable.

It was then that their lunch came and she removed her hand from his to make room for the plates.

They ate in silence while she pondered his offer. It hurt her more than he knew to turn him down knowing that he’d go to Sandra’s arms, but she was trying her best to let that part of her life go—unsuccessfully.

One thing was certain about his promise about not being done, he held to it almost immediately. After he insisted on paying the bill again, he actually took her hand and led her across the street. She was so stunned by his sudden show of affection that she lost the words to protest with.

Mary didn’t miss it at all when they walked back into the

clinic and neither did the female majority of the waiting room when they came back through the clinic doors.

"You're drawing attention." She whispered.

"Good," he drawled before he released her with a glint in his eyes and went back down the hall.

"What was that all about?" Mary asked in a low voice so no one would hear her.

"He's proving a point." Prissy said before taking her seat at the computer.

"He made it." She said nodding toward the angry glares of his waiting female patients.

"To me." She clarified ignoring the looks.

"Sure he was." Mary said clucking to herself.

Prissy tried not to care what people thought about her. She'd dealt with it before, but this was Seth and lord only knows how his fans would retaliate, "Nothing's going on." She murmured back to Mary who didn't look like she believed her.

The rest of the day was crazy just like the day before. The only relief she had is when Red showed up to invite her to dinner Friday night which she accepted. She had to, or she was going to go crazy after what Seth did at lunch. Unfortunately Seth was standing right behind her when she said yes. After Red left he took her arm and dragged her into the back file room.

"What is wrong with you?" she said looking at the tight grip he had on her arm.

"I told you." He answered, referring to Red's reputation.

"You're wrong about Red and I." and he pretty much singlehandedly got the whole town talking about the both of them over lunch today that she was sure it didn't matter.

"Even if I was, Priscilla, I don't think I like you dating him because of his reputation."

"Since when do you care about Red's reputation?" She mocked, knowing exactly what he was referring to. Hers.

He shoved his hands in his pockets and let an amused smile show on his face, "Okay honey let's call a truce."

"Serves you right for holding my hand in front of your loyal fans."

He chuckled, "Yeah, I deserve that, now break your date with Soames."

She shook her head, "We're friends. I wish you'd believe me. It'd be like kissing my brother."

It actually surprised him that she just didn't go ahead and do what he just told her to. Yet he reminded himself over and over again that Priscilla was the only one that never jumped to his commands. She was self-confident, independent and apparently immune to him. Even though she was in love with him when she was younger, he expected her to still have some sort of infatuation with him to this day. It actually bothered him. However he wasn't giving up easily and he was just as confident in his abilities. So he turned up the heat. "You don't have a brother, so that explanation means nothing" he said with a calculating grin.

Priscilla caught her breath at that look. It was heart stopping. She didn't realize that he had more seductive charm than he already emitted. All she could do was stare.

"No argument?" he said cocking a brow knowing he was winning.

"I've had some experience with the opposite sex Seth, I'm not an idiot." She felt insulted, only she shouldn't have said it like that because he misinterpreted it.

"Experience?" his eyes narrowed and darkened to a deep green making those gold flecks even more predominant, "How much experience have you had with men Pris?"

"You of all people don't have a right to ask that question." She said blushing.

"I'm a man. It's different with a woman."

“For heaven’s sake Seth you sound jealous.” She blurted out.

He pursed his lips together and she was unavoidably drawn to them. He had such a fine masculine mouth.

“Like you said, I’m concerned for you. Besides, men have been fighting over you since I can remember.”

She froze and again her mouth hung open, “that was years ago Seth. I was never into that and I never encouraged them no matter what people said. You of all people shouldn’t bring up reputations of the past.”

He gave her a look that said he never considered that. “I’m not trying to offend you.” he explained stepping up to her, “Pris, I don’t like men like Red running around after you like a panting puppy when all they see is the surface beauty you have and—“

She laughed falsely cutting him off, “surface beauty.” All her life people judged her because of the way she looked, so somehow she just slid into that stereotype of being beautiful and nothing else. Now she saw it as a curse because she knew she was more intelligent than people gave her credit for. Then what he said next floored her.

“Honey, I know that the surface beauty you have goes all the way to those precious delicate bones you have. Never doubt that.” He gave her a heavenly grin showing those irresistible boyish dimples he possessed while stepping closer, “Do you have a problem believing that?”

“You have no idea.” She breathed unable to take her eyes off of him.

He chuckled and reached up to tuck a stray lock of blonde hair behind her ear that had escaped her braid, but he didn’t remove his hand. Instead two fingers traced the delicate lines of her jaw, “You *are* beautiful Pris, but I see it for other reasons.” He said not taking his eyes off of hers, “A man like me could get completely lost in those deep blue eyes of yours.”

“A man like you?” She repeated not thinking. Seth had never touched her like that in all the years she’d known him and whatever struggle she had trying to get over him just disintegrated into a pile of ash.

“I’d like to take you to dinner, and maybe the opera in the city.” He heard himself say.

“Seth I—“

“I have an apartment there.” He added thickly dipping his eyes to her mouth.

She felt herself heat up a few degrees at what he was saying, “You have no idea how unfair that is to me.”

“If you mean how you feel, I know.” He explained, ‘I’ve always known.’ Actually he wasn’t sure if she still felt that way anymore but he was calling a bluff to see if she’d confess something, and she did.

“But how—I mean.’

“You weren’t subtle Prissy.”

She flushed beet red, “That was a long time ago.”

“And now?”

She shook her head unable to answer.

“I know I’m being forward, but seeing you with Red made me feel possessive.”

Possessive? Seth?

“We could ignite the sheets Pris, I know we could.”

God, didn’t he know? “I can’t.”

“Ten minutes alone with you and I know I can convince you.”

Oh lord. She didn’t doubt it. As it was, they were alone for around two and she was already convinced and he did nothing but that one caress.

His hand ventured to the collar of her uniform and traced the flesh under the material causing her to close her eyes, “See?”

“Seth I can’t.” she said opening her eyes. She sounded

completely unconvincing but he did drop his hand and smiled.

“Still—I’m not giving up.” He added taking a step back and looking down her body letting his smile widen to a knowing grin. Then he shoved his hands in his pockets and walked out of the file room whistling.

Priscilla didn’t realize she had gripped the shelf behind her to stay upright and her knees folded together, but he obviously seen it and knew his affect on her. She stayed in the back room for another five minutes to regain her composure. Then she got angry. It was completely unfair how he could practically seduce a woman with a single touch. No man could possibly be that gifted, but she empowered him, she knew she did. Interestingly he didn’t take it further and he could. That actually made her think that either he was taking his time in seducing her, or that he actually respected her protest no matter how weak it was. Finally she came to the conclusion that it was both.

When she came out of the back he already had his jacket on waiting.

“You need to stop that.” She said tersely while getting her purse.

“Stop what?” he said with mock innocence.

She cast him an accusing look but didn’t say anything as she followed him out the door. She had to get an apartment sooner than later, because him consistently driving her to and from work would crack whatever resistance she had left.

Thankfully her sister didn’t call her to come and save the day so she was free to just stay home and not have Seth’s potent masculinity oozing all over her that evening. Working in the same building was hard enough and after today, if he got her alone again, she would be done for.

She thanked him for the ride and went in the house without a backward glance. She was sure she heard a chuckle after she closed the door. Maybe she imagined it. He had her so mixed

up.

CHAPTER FOUR

The whole week went smoothly without another incident like that day where she was practically seduced by a single touch. In fact he seemed to have been a little distant. He was still cordial and polite, but he didn't have lunch with her again since Tuesday but then again, he hadn't left the clinic. From the flow of the patients it was extra busy. Or it could have had something to do with the fact that she had a date with Red that Friday. Well, to her and Red it wasn't a date, but she was pretty sure from Seth's reaction that he thought it was.

During that whole evening she was with Red she felt almost like she was cheating on Seth. Then she realized that's what that whole thing was about in the file room. He knew her! he knew exactly how she would feel on her night out with her friend after that display because he knew how she felt. He easily dragged it out of her without her speaking a word. It made her angry.

"Honey, you're distracted." Red said eyeing her over the wine glass.

She rolled her eyes, "He planned this."

"Who?"

She never said anything.

After a moment he chuckled and set his glass down, "I see. The handsome physician finally noticed that there was a flower among the weeds."

"funny." She said in a tone that meant the opposite.

"You can't blame him."

She flushed slightly, "Thanks."

"You know it's funny. You never use to blush when I complimented you."

"I've changed. I used to swim in my own conceit. I hate to

admit that now but I expected it then. That day I nearly killed my sister humbled me.”

Or his compliments didn’t mean anything, he thought. “It was an accident.” He said leaning forward and taking her hand, “Accidents happen Pris.”

She averted her gaze for a moment, “I know. But I nearly lost the most precious thing I had.”

“But you didn’t.” he reassured.

Red wasn’t the least bit sensitive, but he and Priscilla had been friends for quite a few years so he had a soft spot for her. Although he wasn’t beyond dumping her in a busy restaurant or a bar if a beautiful woman paid attention to him or even pretending like she was his cousin. There was a time when he first met her that he chased her, but soon he found out who she had eyes for, and being who he was, quickly gave up the pursuit.

Just then a shadow fell over their table. She looked up and saw Seth with Sandra hanging off his arm gazing up at him adoringly. Unlike Sandra who’s thoughts were written all over her face, she couldn’t read Seth’s expression but his eyes were on her and Red’s clasped hands.

“Seth.” Red said getting to his feet and shaking his hand. Then his eyes turned to Sandra as Seth introduced her.

Priscilla could see Red’s piqued interest in the movie star, but she hated to admit that it bothered her that Seth was out with the woman.

“Do you want to join us?” Red offered.

“Actually—” Sandra interrupted, “I haven’t been able to get him alone all week—”

Darn, thought Priscilla sarcastically, *sucks to be you*. At the same time she felt a twinge of relief.

“—We’ll have to take a rain check.” She stared up at Seth while wrapping her arm tighter around his possessively.

“I’d love to.” Seth said ignoring the other woman’s look of

surprise, then irritation.

Priscilla was amazed, how a few seconds later, she pasted a false smile across her face as Seth pulled out a chair for her. Yet she had to stifle her own laugh. Seth may have been charming, but he never let a woman lead him.

However, that didn't say she was seething with jealousy on top of it all. Yet she wasn't angry toward either one of them. Seth asked her to be with him and she turned him down. That left him open for anyone and Sandra must've jumped right in.

"How's the practice?" Seth said taking a seat next to Prissy after he seated Sandra next to Red.

Red grinned handsomely at Sandra, "Fine Seth, yours?"

He gave Pris an amused look, "Same I suppose."

It took Priscilla a minute to see what he was doing, but when she did she actually bit her own lip so she wouldn't burst into laughter.

"Red's a lawyer Sandra." Seth leaned over and explained to her, "He's got the most successful practice in town." He added shooting his eyes to him and getting an appreciative grin for his effort.

"Really?" she said with a new curiosity.

"I do." Red said in

The sly dog, Prissy thought while looking between the two men. Red was Seth's image opposite. He had dirty blonde hair and blue eyes that were a little paler than her own and like Seth, had women after him all the time. Yet, he had no immediate family. It was odd really because he was very handsome but she wasn't attracted to him at all. He was charming, but he had another side that people who dealt with him in the courtroom knew about. He was like a shark when it came to winning cases and quite frankly Pris didn't want a relationship with a man like that. Her eyes went to Seth.

She wanted one with him.

“Attorney practice is a very lucrative business.” Seth added.

Pris saw Sandra’s eyes light up like dollar signs. Little did she know that Seth and Alex were millionaires. Their house was big, but not a mansion. They didn’t brag about their wealth even though they had it. Seth could have driven a Ferrari or Jaguar, but he drove an SUV instead. Alex actually owned a Jag, but he only took it out for special reasons. Both boys were very practical, still worked, even more than their own employees most times, but they had humility. Even Alex who had the temper of a crazed rabid grizzly bear when angered would never expect his employees to do anything he wouldn’t.

Pris smiled at Seth when he winked at her, then she almost released a gasp as she felt his hand move over hers under the table. If he was upset that she and Red were out together, he didn’t seem like it. She remembered when her sister went to lunch with Red once. Alex threatened the man’s life after he tore Angel to pieces over it and they weren’t even seeing each other at the time.

It was unbelievable how opposite the brothers were. Part of her was disappointed because it would have shown some possessiveness on his part like he seemed to display in the file room, but now, she couldn’t figure out if he was playing with her or not.

Thankfully Red had completely occupied Sandra’s attention because Pris was having a really hard time trying to ignore Seth’s thumb tracing the palm of her hand.

Despite the distraction she actually enjoyed dinner. She watched the movie star closely and realized that she wasn’t far from that four years ago, the difference being that Sandra was a few years older than her and still acted that way. The woman was completely egocentric and talked about herself non-stop. Seth, being polite as he was, seemed completely interested. Red simply was. Sandra was beautiful with soft, short brown hair and

deep brown eyes. She had a lovely bone structure and was dressed very well for seduction. She was wearing a designer low-cut dress that showed her nice curves.

When dinner was over Seth stood and actually pulled out her chair first, not Sandra's while addressing Red. "I've got an early morning tomorrow Red, would you mind taking Sandra home. I'll drop Pris off."

"Not at all." He grinned.

It was then that Sandra seemed to realize that she lost one of the men's attention and stood threading her arm through Seth's, "Darling, you will be available for me tomorrow right? I have so much to ask you about your breeding program."

Pris was incredulous. What on earth did a woman like Sandra know about breeding horses?

"I'll find time soon." He said politely patting her arm before he removed it from his own and took Prissy's hand not caring if the other woman protested.

Pris saw her see the gesture then narrow her eyes on her but she didn't say a word to that effect.

Once out in the vehicle Pris laid her head against the leather seat and turned to look at him, "That was brilliant." She said referring to the way that Seth was able to direct Sandra to Red. "He'll appreciate that."

He grinned without looking at her as he started the vehicle.

"I mean it. I've never seen anything that smooth."

He glanced at her while he shifted it into gear and started driving, "She obviously needs the attention and Red will oblige her."

"She's really pretty."

"Yes she is." Was all he said.

She was a little disappointed that he never said anything else about it. She really wanted him to say that he wasn't interested in her, or he hadn't taken her up on her offers. Pris didn't know

if he did or not because he'd mentioned that he was thinking about it.

When they pulled up in front of her parent's house he cut the engine and turned to her.

"What?"

"The lavender banquet is in two weeks. I want us to go together."

Her eyes widened, "Us?"

He grinned, "Us." He confirmed.

"Why?"

He stared at her for a moment dropping his smile, "Why do you think?"

"Because we're friends." She added a little apprehensively.

"Because we're friends." He mimicked.

"And you don't want Sandra hounding you?"

"Perhaps." He said as his eyes dropped to her mouth.

She saw that and felt a shiver go through her.

His eyes raised to hers, "Or like I said before, I find you attractive."

She shrugged and turned her head away. She wanted more.

"Where are your parents?" he said looking at the darkened house.

"They went to some auction in the city this morning. Mother likes those things."

"Ah yes, she used to go with mine." He said sadly.

She reached over and took his hand, "I miss her too."

"She loved you."

"I loved her. She made me feel so welcome. I never had to pretend I was someone I wasn't around her." She felt herself swallow to try and hold back tears at Bea's memory.

"You don't around me either."

That was true.

His fingers threaded through hers, "Come here."

Her eyes darted to his. It was said deeply, seductively. “Seth—“

“Pris, quit fighting it and get your ass over here. If I have to stare at that incredible mouth of yours any longer without knowing what it tastes like, I’m going to come unglued.”

She felt her heart skip a beat at that confession and before she could say anything else he tugged her toward him cupping his free hand around the back of her head as he tilted his slightly to capture her mouth.

Flares went off inside her body when his warm hard mouth contacted hers. Ever since she was a little girl she dreamed of this. A kiss from Seth Harrison.

She used to watch him lunge horses and use his large gentle hands on them, soothing them and she fell in love with his tender nature. He was a kind man. Everything about him was basically perfect to her. Yet, this kiss wasn’t what she expected. Everything that she thought it would be was wrong. It was more, much much more.

Her whole body jolted when his hard mouth came down on hers and although it was a shock that he wanted to kiss her, she didn’t hesitate to respond. She wasn’t a stranger to kissing a man but he practically curled the socks off her feet. She found herself pressing closer to him and moving her hands over his hard chest.

This was dangerous. Priscilla thought that she could find fault with him she could use that to tear herself away, but everything about him just got more and more perfect. Now this. She quickly pulled back from him before she got in too deep. As it was she was sorely close to inviting him in. “I’ve got to go.” She murmured.

He studied her expression in the blue reflection of the dash lights. A slow smile spread across his face as if he just realized some sinful secret, “of course you do.”

She stared at him a moment longer before she nodded once

and jumped out of the vehicle.

“Pris.”

The tone of his voice was husky yet soft.

She turned to look at him.

“There’s nothing to be afraid of.” He said as soon as she met his eyes.

She should have known that he was able to figure out why she stopped. He’d known her all her life. “For you Seth.” She said, and that’s all she said before she shut the door and walked away without a backward look. For her, it was a lifetime of heartbreak. It was too bad he didn’t realize how much of her heart was invested in him. Oh, she knew he cared, but what he was asking of her was impossible. Tomorrow she was going to quit her job. It hurt her to be near him like that without having him all to herself. He would never settle down and she this was lethal to her. He actually touched her, kissed her and made her feel more beautiful than she ever did before in her life.

As expected for a gentleman, he waited until she unlocked her door and went in the house before he drove away. She was thankful that he didn’t try to follow her because she knew she couldn’t say no to him.

Dragging herself up to her room she reached up and unzipped her dress and didn’t even bother to pick it up as it fell down her body and landed on the floor of her bedroom. She went into the bathroom to brush her teeth and her hair while still wearing her underwear. Normally she threw her gown on, but she was out of sorts.

She rinsed out her mouth and went back into her room just as the phone rang. She stood by it wondering if she should answer it. There was enough time for Seth to get home and call her. She knew she shouldn’t have answered it because she was still shaken but she did.

“So honey. I have this suspicion that you’re ready to bolt.”

That deep sexy drawl of his should have been outlawed. At least she had the advantage of him not seeing the blush rise to her cheeks. “Absolutely not.” She lied while sitting down on the side of the bed.

“Liar.” Came the slow challenge.

She took a deep breath for courage, “You *are* the devil.” It seemed like she had no secrets where this man was concerned. He knew her too damn well!

He chuckled and she felt it all the way to her bones.

“First I’m nice, now I’m the devil. Priscilla, I like you more and more.”

“I still work for you.” She said referring to employee-employer ethics.

“I dare you to quit Pris. I know you’re thinking about it after I scared the hell out of you with that kiss.”

She never said anything and he had his answer.

“If you quit, I can’t be accused of fooling around with an employee.”

She still never said anything, but he seemed to know that he had her speechless, “So Pris, care to challenge that?”

“It was a silly crush. I was young—” she began blurting out. “—Don’t do this Seth.”

There was a brief pause on the other end and she wondered if the phone went dead. Then he spoke.

“You and I both know that wasn’t anywhere near a crush.” He said thickly, “And like your beauty, your feelings run deep.”

“Then leave me be. I can’t deal with losing you as a friend.” *And having my heart broken as a woman in love.*

“That will never happen. You have my word.”

His voice sounded so good, so hypnotic that she almost believed him—almost. “If you keep this up, I will quit.” He chuckled again and she pinched her eyes shut to try and block out what it did to her, but it was useless.

"I remember this girl, with long blonde pigtails and a flowery summer dress that I dared to walk across a log that lay over the creek down in the wash."

"She was stupid." Pris remembered that day as clear as yesterday.

"She was brave."

"If you remember—" she smiled to herself unable to help it, "—she fell in."

"She did."

"And, she couldn't swim."

"No she couldn't." he repeated, "Thank God I was around." he added teasingly.

"It was your fault." She let a small laugh escape.

"You didn't have to listen Pris, but you were so stubborn, much like now. You never backed down from a dare. So—I dare you."

Of course he did. Seth knew all about her, her strengths and most importantly, her weaknesses. "I'll see you Monday." She said and hung up. She was sure she heard laughter before the phone hit the cradle. That man was going to drive her crazy. For years she wished he'd pay attention to her, now, she was terrified of it.

As for that day he did jump in and save her. Her dress was wet and clung to her. She was twelve at the time. Seth, of course, still didn't recognize her feelings for him and the way she mooned over him as he carried her to shore soothing her with that deep timbre he possessed. You'd think it was a knight on a white stallion that leapt in to save her.

He apologized for daring her to walk across the log, that he really didn't expect her to do it. They were just taking a walk together and he teased her like he normally did, but she wanted to prove that she was brave. Boy did that backfire. She was embarrassed and felt vulnerable, but the way he spoke to her

afterwards, made her feel that they were the only two on the planet. The man had no idea how he could make a woman feel with the slightest amount of attention.

She jumped as the phone rang again. It couldn't be possible that he would have phoned her back. She lifted the receiver. His deep voice flushed through her like a heat wave.

"Honey, I wasn't done."

"You're killing me." She murmured.

He chuckled, "Tomorrow, I want to take you riding."

She couldn't speak. It was the way he said it that made her think it had nothing to do with horses.

"Pris?"

"I'm beginning to think that you are serious about me."

"I never said I wasn't."

"You are hard to read Seth." She swallowed thickly to try and stop her voice from cracking.

He chuckled again, "tomorrow. Be ready by ten." He hung up.

The phone woke her up around eight in the morning. She fumbled for it, "You said ten." She said sleepily.

"I did?" came the confused female voice on the other end.

She sat up, "Sorry Angel, I thought you were someone else."

"Uh-huh. Who?"

"Forget it. What's up?"

"Nice diversion." Her sister laughed, "There're filming some scene out here and that actress is hanging all over Seth and it's disgusting."

That bothered her. More than she liked to admit, "I'm not his keeper sis." She gritted out.

"Sure, that's why it sounds like you're grounding your teeth into ashes. Come over and save him. He doesn't look all that impressed if you want to know the truth."

“Right. Seth is a woman magnet, there’s nothing I can do.”

“No?”

“No.”

There was a pause before she spoke again, “You are lying to me and yourself if you’re still telling me you don’t love him. Remember I tried to do the same thing with Alex. As your sister and your best friend, do us both a favour, make yourself look fantastic and get your butt over here.” She hung up.

Pris stared at the phone, sighed, hung it up and stared out the window of her room. She *was* lying to herself, her sister, and most importantly Seth. He made himself clear last night that he was serious, but she was scared—no terrified of being hurt. He was her whole world and she’d spent four years trying to forget him, but look where that got her. She was miserable. Even thinking about another woman touching him upset her to the point of insanity. What would happen if he finally succumbed to Sandra’s blatant flirtations and slept with her? Her eyes guided to her closet. She didn’t have much there to make an impression. Glancing at the clock she remembered that Seth said he’d be here at ten. That wasn’t enough time to run to town.

She stood up and went to her closet. She’d have to rely on her own raw attributes instead of expensive clothing even though she was sure that Sandra had probably spent four hours in front of a makeup artist. At least she had enough time to shower.

Meanwhile at the Harrison’s the film crew was in between takes and Sandra narrowed her gaze as she saw Seth glance at his wristwatch for a third time in ten minutes. When the director yelled cut she rushed over to him. “Care to show me these horses that I hear so much about?”

“Actually, I have to pick someone up in about a half hour.”

“Oh, maybe I’ll come with you. We have a long stretch before we resume filming this afternoon.”

Seth was about to turn her down when the director showed

up saying that he was going to head into the house to speak to Alex and his wife about a few more arrangements and would Sandra like to come along. Seth remembered his promise to Angel and reluctantly agreed to take Sandra with him.

“Are you still waiting Pris?” Catherine said seeing her daughter standing in the foyer looking out the window.

“Yes, it’s not like him to be late.” She said looking at her watch seeing it was half past ten. “ever.”

“Maybe you should call him.”

She shrugged wondering if he just forgot. “Maybe I will.”

It was Angel that answered the phone. “He left well before ten Pris.” She said hesitantly.

“What is it?” she asked hearing the pause in her sister’s voice.

“Gosh, I’m sorry, but he left with Sandra.”

Priscilla could literally feel the blood drain from her face, “He did?”

“I’m sure he was on his way to get you. I don’t know what would keep him.”

“I do.” She said before she hung up. She thought about just leaving this whole thing alone, but he’d started it and she wanted, no—needed to know. If he was with Sandra, then she would cut him out of her life completely. Her gut started to hurt just thinking about it. Her mother would give her a ride to the Harrison’s.

She certainly didn’t have to wait long. It was half way in between their ranches that she saw the Navigator, or what was left of it. There was a highway patrol officer and a tow truck there, but before she could panic, she saw Seth talking to the officer and Sandra standing close enough to him that you would think she was painted on.

“Oh dear, at least it doesn’t look like either one of them were

hurt.”

Not yet, thought Pris as her mother eased the car over to the curb. She'd never felt such anger at seeing a woman hang off of Seth the way she was. It wouldn't have been so hard on her if he hadn't said things to her the night before on the phone. “This is fine mom, I'll only be a second.” She got out and Seth saw her. He shook the officer's hand and turned toward Pris.

Priscilla saw Sandra loop her arm through his, but that wasn't what caught her attention, it was the lipstick all over his shirt collar and some on his cheek. She paused.

“We're fine.” He said seeing the concerned look on her face and misinterpreting it.

Her eyes went over him. The top two buttons on his shirt were undone, the lipstick, and as she guided her eyes down his form she could see that his shirt was pulled out of his jeans, “I bet you are.” She said quietly.

It took him a minute to register what she was seeing, “—now wait a minute Pris—”

She held up her hand cutting him off and looked at Sandra, “good job.” Obviously there was something going on in the vehicle for him to lose control and the evidence was as clear as glass.

Sandra gave her a confused look on what that was referring to.

Pris gave him a final look before she turned around and walked back toward her mother's car.

“Wait a minute—” Seth started after her but Sandra pulled on his arm.

“Oh Seth, I don't feel so well.” Said Sandra, “Maybe I should go to the hospital after all.”

He looked down at her. He was driving when the accident occurred and one thing Alex didn't need was a lawsuit besides the publicity that was going to go with this. “Ah hell.” He said

while running his hand through his hair.

Then the sound of skidding gravel reached his ears and he turned to see one of the ranch trucks come skidding to a halt. *Oh shit*, he thought, *this just keeps getting better*. His eyes focused on the driver who was none other than his older brother getting out of the driver's side.

"What the hell did you do to the Nav?" Alex said gesturing toward the tow truck now pulling the vehicle out of the ditch.

"It was an accident." Seth said calmly. It wasn't as traumatic as it looked and they were both fine. He knew Alex's anger was out of worry not for the vehicle but him. He just wasn't very good at displaying that fact.

It only took a second to see the evidence that Priscilla did seconds ago, "Like hell it was. Are you insane?"

"Seth, I don't feel well." Sandra interjected again fluttering her lashes at him not even seeming to notice that Alex was angry and concerned at the same time.

"Jesus." Alex said looking at the two, "What a piece of work." He indicated toward the actress. She just stared back at him like she didn't know what he meant. He rolled his eyes out of exasperation and placed his hands on his hips, "Is that Catherine's car leaving?"

"Yeah, Pris was on her way over. I promised to take her riding." Unlike Seth, Alex had no problem venting his frustration. Seth knew how this looked and maybe there was valid reasons for everyone's interpretation.

Alex cursed and reached up to remove his hat to scratch his head. "Angel isn't going to like this Seth."

"Probably not." He answered knowing that this was about Priscilla.

His eyes guided toward Sandra, "Hell, we'd better get you checked out by a doctor that doesn't look like he's been raped so it's all legal like."

Seth actually glared at him. "Don't be an ass." Just the same he started straightening his clothing and running his fingers through his hair to neaten it out.

"Get in the truck and I'll take you in." he said ignoring his younger brother's comment.

Seth opened the door for Sandra and got in after her.

Everything checked out at the hospital, but someone alerted the press that was in town and of course Sandra didn't miss a photo opportunity.

The next day the photos were in all the tabloids and much to Priscilla's dismay, even the local paper.

Her father was reading it a breakfast, saw the cover and shot her an odd glance, "Well, it looks like Seth's popularity has skyrocketed."

"He was always popular dad." Pris said stirring her porridge absently. Normally she loved her mother's porridge, but she lost her appetite. He didn't even call her to explain anything from that accident. After some reflection she tried telling herself that it *was* an accident. Women were always throwing themselves at him, but the lipstick was everywhere, and his shirt was undone. She'd hoped that he'd care enough to tell her the truth, but there was no phone call. Even her sister didn't call her and she was sure that she'd heard the news by now especially with the papers.

"Here, but now he's world renown. I suppose it's put the Harrison ranch on the map too." He adjusted the paper so his wife could see. "Look at this it says that Sandra and her boyfriend were involved—"

"George!" Catherine shot at him, "I swear you have about as much compassion as a sock."

"I'm fine mom." She said getting up to take her dishes into the kitchen.

"What did I say?"

Pris went up to her room missing the rest of the

conversation, but from the tone of her mother's voice she was chastising him.

She lay down on the bed, stacked her hands behind her head and stared at the ceiling. She knew she couldn't stay in this house, or this town. Seth was like a bad habit and she'd never get over him staying here. A tear leaked from her eye and she wiped it away with the heel of her hand. She was such an idiot. She awoke with hope the next morning after he told her he was serious about her. Does he do that to every woman he was interested in? It made her feel cheap. More cheap than she ever did before in her life, because she fell for it.

A knock on the door brought her out of her self pity if even for a moment, "It's open." She rolled onto her side away from the door to hide her face, "I'm fine mom."

"It's Seth." Came the deep masculine response.

She pinched her eyes shut. Even the sound of his voice was hard on her heart, "What do you want?"

"To apologize and to speak to you about yesterday."

"There's nothing to say." She answered.

"If there wasn't, you'd wouldn't be acting like a wounded deer. Now roll over and face me."

She felt the bed shift knowing that he just sat down on the opposite side. Did he have to make himself so comfortable? Why couldn't he just leave? She took a deep breath and hoped that her eyes didn't look strained before she rolled over and propped her head up on her hand. He was still devastating. Wearing jeans and a black AC/DC t-shirt made him look so down to earth she could have cried. Her eyes guided to his forehead, there was a sign of a bruise, "You're hurt." She said softly.

"I'm fine." He reached up and moved a bit of his hair aside so she could see, "It's a small bruise."

"No airbags?" she asked.

He nodded, "My head wasn't in that vicinity or I would have

been able to see where I was going and not hit the telephone pole. But, yes, they deployed.”

She flushed and dropped her hand.

“I wasn’t going too fast though,” he said seeing her blush. Then he shook his head knowing what images were going through her mind at his confession, “And before you get any more ideas, it’s not what you think.”

“You have no idea what I’m thinking Seth.” She said defensively, “Besides, why do I care that you—”

He held up his hand to silence her, “I told you some things the night before, and I meant them.”

“Contrary to popular belief, I’m not a woman that overlaps men.”

“I never thought that—ever.”

“Then what do you expect? She said sitting up to face him, “I hear what you said, but what I see contradicts that.” She waved a hand at his forehead.

“You never let me explain.” He said softly.

“It’s hard to listen when you have a famous actress hanging off your arm like you’re the next messiah.”

He actually chuckled, “You have a way with words honey, but I’ve told you several times that she’s nothing next to you.”

“then tell me the truth of what happened.”

He paused guiding his eyes over her face. He could see that she was crying or on the verge of tears and the last thing he wanted to do was hurt her. If he told her the truth, it would probably make her cry and he didn’t think he could be responsible for that. “You won’t like it.”

“Because you and she—” she stopped not able to continue.

“I didn’t touch her Pris, she touched me.” He quickly explained, “And I didn’t entice her.”

Her heart started thumping in her chest with a mixture of fear and anger, “Touched you?” did he like what she did? Did he

change his mind about them over it? Further didn't Seth realize that being born enticed the entire female race?

He nodded, "I'm not interested in Sandra. I've told you that before."

Relief flooded through her. "You said she was pretty."

"I did, but I could've hopped into bed with her days ago when she offered herself to me but I didn't."

She frowned.

He softened his voice for what he said next. "Also I said she didn't hold a candle to you. Now, if you set aside your stubbornness and recall the things I've been saying to you and behaving around you, you could see that it's you I'm interested in."

"You're just saying that because you can read me so well." She said looking away for a moment, "I'm sure you can see that I'm close to tears. I'm as readable as an open book." She released a large breath and centered her eyes back on his, "How stupid."

"How sweet." He said with a smile.

"Nothing happened?"

He shook his head keeping his eyes on hers, "Honestly."

She didn't need the fine details because she did believe him. How could she not. He could have sold her the Brooklyn Bridge and because she loved him, she would believe him. Slowly she nodded, "Okay."

He reached over and brushed a lock of hair off her cheek but his hand stayed there. "Are we okay again?"

If he meant, friends, but not friends, or him keeping her teetering on the edge of insanity, she supposed so, "I guess."

"Help me with something will you?" He said while lowering his eyes to her mouth.

Anything. "Sure."

In a smoothly assertive yet graceful move he leaned toward her and took her mouth under his.

“Where the hell are we going?” George said as his wife took his arm and dragged him toward the front door.

“I need milk.”

“You need me to buy milk? We have a bloody milk cow!”

“Quit being such a fool George. I need paper towel too.” She said rolling her eyes and dragging him out of the house.

“Seth—I—” Pris managed to breath out against this mouth.

“shut up Pris,” he murmured back pushing her flat on her bed.

If his mouth didn’t hypnotize her, it was the pressure of his body on top of hers that did.

“Jesus, you’re so soft.” He said lowering his weight on her, “and we fit together perfectly.”

She stared up at him with her eyes wide yet dark with desire.

“I’ve been thinking about this a lot.”

“You have?” He has?

He nodded and lowered his head to hers again. She didn’t even remember what she was thinking. Seth was a master with his mouth and if that was just an indicator, she was in trouble, deep trouble. Before long she heard herself gasp out his name and then he adjusted himself so he could pull one of her thighs up his hip.

It brought her back to reality if only for a moment, “God Seth—my parents—”

“They left.” He said huskily. She may have not of heard the car leave, but he did.

She felt cool air on her chest as he undid the buttons of her blouse and brushed the material aside to reveal her lacy bra, but during that whole time he never lifted his mouth from hers. If there was any resistance in her at all, it wasn’t taking a stand. Pris was assaulted with the sweetest waves of desire that she’d

ever known. Her whole body was heating up and within a few minutes she felt her hands pulling the cloth of his t-shirt out of the waist band of his jeans and running her fingertips over his hard body underneath. Every inch of his was magnificent. She always thought so, but now she got to touch him.

“Yes.” He murmured as if answering a question.

“Yes what?” she said breaking her mouth away and arching toward him.

He lifted his head and looked at her, his eyes were smouldering. “You asked if I was hard like this all over.”

“Did I?” she said in wonderment not realizing that she spoke out loud.

He smiled sinfully and brushed her platinum hair off her cheeks, “Let me make love to you Pris.”

Her mouth parted and his eyes were drawn there. She wanted to say yes more than she wanted her next breath. “I’m scared.”

“I won’t hurt you.” He said bending his head and kissing her cheek, then the other before he took her mouth again.

Again she felt her body betraying her when she pulled his shirt up and he lifted so she could pull it over his head.

“I’m going to love to make you scream.” He murmured with another unlawful grin as he came back down on her.

And he did.

In fact she was thankful that they lived in the country because after he got her clothes off and took one of her breasts in his hot mouth, she did scream. At first it was a moan of pure undiscovered ecstasy, and then when he moved his attention lower, she just got louder. For the first time in her life, she experienced what it was like to reach that pinnacle of release. Yet, he wasn’t done and raised himself up to settle himself between her thighs.

“Open your eyes honey,” he said raggedly, “I need to see

them when I take you.”

She would have crawled naked on broken glass for him at that moment if he asked. That is until he entered her and she froze. This time her scream was that of pain.

Seth felt his heart beating in his ears at that discovery while at the same time an icy chill ran through him. It couldn't be! Priscilla was not a stranger to a man's affections. Oh hell, he just couldn't think. He was hot, turned on, and needed release. “Jesus.” He said stilling and looking down at her. Beads of perspiration formed on his forehead and his body trembled in restraint. “Pris—“

She took a shuddering breath to try and stop the tears but it was useless.

He brought his weight down on her and kissed the tears away, “God I'm sorry.”

“No, it's not—You didn't know.” She said with a hiccup.

“Stop crying honey.” He said brushing his mouth over hers. “You are breaking my heart.”

That confession was so profound and sincere that Pris gave in to him. She moved her arms around him and kissed him back. She loved this man more than anything else in her life, and she wanted to be with him, even if it was just this once.

Before long Seth felt her open to him. She moved her legs around his waist and he began to slowly move within her. She may have been a virgin but she fit him perfectly, moved under him perfectly, and matched him motion for motion perfectly. He should have stopped when he discovered her condition, but god help him, nothing had ever felt so good as this. She may have not realized it, and neither did he at that moment, but he made love to a woman for the first time in his life.

When he came it was as if fireworks went off inside his entire body, then to look down and see that she shuddered under him at that moment, was his ultimate undoing. This had to have

been the most perfect woman he'd ever been with. "Sweet God." He groaned while bringing his weight down on her, "I fucking died." He heard her release a muffled giggle followed by a moan of her own. Lifting up he saw her flushed face staring back at him. "You find that funny huh?"

"You never swear."

"I swear when no one is around, or if something's so profound that it warrants it."

She flushed further.

"A virgin Pris? Jesus, you should have said something."

"Would you have believed me?"

No, he probably wouldn't have, "why then?"

She shrugged a delicate shoulder and looked away.

"Uh uh, it's not that easy." He said fitting two lean fingers under her chin and turning her back to face him. "Right now is a good time as any to be truthful."

"I love you Seth. I always have." She said. It was surprising to her that it slid out so easily. Somehow she expected him to leap off her like she burned him but he didn't move. He just stared down at her with those gorgeous pale eyes of his. "You don't seem surprised."

"I suspected." He said softly.

"You're not upset."

"Should I be? You just gave me the world honey."

She flushed. How come everything was so easy for this man? Couldn't he at least tell her that he cared about her too? Yet there was nothing.

"Are you on the pill?"

Her eyes went wide and she shook her head. To her ultimate surprise he just smirked. "Well, hell, look at the two of us. Medical professionals in bed and no protection. Two of the dumbest smart people ever."

She couldn't help herself and laughed. Then the seriousness

of the situation hit her. She knew Seth didn't love her. And there's no way she'd pressure him if she was pregnant. "Seth—"

"Don't worry. If something comes out of this. I'll take care of it." He said trying to relieve her worries. It backfired.

Dread filled her, "Take care of it?"

He saw her expression, "That's not what I meant. I may be a physician, but I would never ask you to do that to our child."

She stilled taken back by the words *our child*. Oh how she'd love to have his child!

"Hey," he soothed kissing her, "Don't worry."

She kissed him back. She wasn't worried anymore after his confession. Of course him kissing her sort of help also. She'd relish this memory for the rest of her life.

"Whoa." He said suddenly getting off her while smiling. "I've got to go. You are so damn tempting and there are some things I need to do and I've already lingered to long—" he paused and winced. That sounded horrible. Turning he could see the shame reach her expression. "Shit." He reached for her and she moved away from him, "Pris, It wasn't meant to sound so callous."

She did her best to put on a false smile, "that's okay Seth. I'm just not used to this."

"To what?"

"Well a man just getting up and leaving after sex."

He narrowed his gaze, "That wasn't sex Priscilla. What we just shared was more than that. You just don't know the difference because you haven't been with anyone else. As for my idiotic statement a few moments ago, I apologize. I should be more sensitive to you." His eyes moved over her, "Jesus, you're beautiful!"

She took a deep breath staring back at him.

He reached over and took her hand, raised it to his mouth and kissed it, "Don't worry, nothing has changed between us."

Further, I'm sure that your parents wouldn't like to find us naked and in bed together either."

She didn't realize that there was anything between them so that statement wasn't much comfort but she wouldn't tell him that. However, he was right about her parents.

"I'll be back later. I'll take you out to dinner. Would you like that?"

She nodded.

He kissed her hand again before getting up and donning his clothes.

She watched him with a new knowledge of wonder. Seth was so beautiful. The way he moved was art in motion. All masculine and muscular.

When he was done he turned back toward her, leaned down and kissed her, "Dinner." He said when he pulled back slightly to see her expression.

"All right."

"No worries either Pris." He added searching her gaze for any apprehension.

"Okay."

One more heated kiss then he was gone. Then the emptiness set in. She was no different than any other woman that fell for his unequalled charm. Pulling her knees up she lowered her forehead on them and chastised herself for being so stupid.

After another few minutes of feeling like a fool, she got out of bed, stripped the sheets to wash so her mother wouldn't know what happened. Hopefully she'd have them washed and back on the bed before they got home, but she doubted it. So she made herself busy doing more housework hoping her sly mother wouldn't put the puzzle pieces together.

In the meantime, Seth didn't go home. He was sitting in his office going over files for Monday. Actually he was deep in

thought about the events that happened earlier.

Priscilla.

Not once in his life did he act so spontaneously, so stupidly. Priscilla deserved better than what he did to her. Oh it was amazing, but he should have treated her better. She was innocent and after they made love, she was very vulnerable, yet he left. He didn't want her to know that she'd thrown him completely off balance. Basically, she blew his mind.

Tossing a file on his desk he leaned back in his chair and folded his hands behind his head. Regardless, as far as he was concerned, she belonged to him now.

His phone rang. Only a few people had his direct line so he knew it was family. It was.

"Seth, where the hell are you? I need you to manage this damn crew or I'm going to get my shotgun."

"Alex, I had work to do." He almost laughed at his brother's threat, "Besides, I'm taking Pris to dinner tonight."

"Bring her here. For some bloody reason, the director wants us to sit down with those two actors. I have a sneaky suspicion that woman has her designs set on you and that stupid man thinks that he can manipulate you with her."

"Yeah, I got that when I wrecked the Nav. Anyway, I'm taking Pris out."

"Pris is family, bring her here. I'll get her sister to phone her and beg, so you don't have a choice." He paused, "Something going on between you two?"

"Yeah."

Another pause, "You tread lightly little brother. Pris doesn't need to have her heart broken. She's been through a lot."

"I will." He almost laughed. Alex wasn't sensitive toward anyone, but there was a lot of history with their families. In fact there was a time he told Alex to leave Angel alone for the same reasons.

“I’m just saying.”

“I know Alex, I hear you. Don’t worry about Priscilla.”

Another pause. “I won’t say another word about it. I’ll see you for dinner at six.”

Seth shook his head as he hung up the phone. He won’t take no for an answer, so he would oblige him. He glanced at his watch, stood up and took his coat off the coat hanger. Pris would hopefully understand that he changed their plans. There was nothing more than he wanted to do than get her alone again. He was thinking about going to the city tonight, take her to a play, dinner, and hopefully make love until the sun comes up, but that will have to wait.

Priscilla’s parents came home around five and her mother gave her a sincere hug for all the housework she did.

“We caught an early dinner in town. How is Seth?”

Pris turned away so she couldn’t see her blush, “He’ll be here soon, we’re going for dinner.”

“Really?”

“Don’t read anything into it mom.” It hurt to say that but she knew the risks of what she did earlier.

“Oh, sure.” She said unconvincingly.

Then to just reinforce that Seth arrived, knocked twice before he opened the door and stepped in the house.

Catherine lit up, “Oh Seth, how nice to see you twice today.” She beamed.

“Catherine.” He turned to Pris and to her ultimate shock bent down and kissed her on the mouth briefly.

Pris may have been in shock but her mother was practically catatonic at that display. She was actually speechless for once in her life while looking back and forth at the two. “I’ll see you later mom.” She near stuttered as Seth opened the door, took her hand and led her out of the house.

“You are really trying to give my mother a stroke.”

He chuckled, "It seems like she was aching for that for years."

Pris actually laughed too, "You know her well. However you do realize that she's planning our wedding the moment we walked out of that door."

"So?" he said with a glint while opening the door.

Her heart started skipping every second beat, "Seth please don't tease—"

He cut her off abruptly with a kiss and pushed her in behind the door so no one from the house could see what they were doing. His hands framed her face as he ravished her mouth with his. Only when she released this sexy little moan did he release her. He drew back a few inches and smiled slowly while searching her eyes, "Be quiet Pris. Let's enjoy this while we can."

That was so easy for him to say. It felt as if she was a puppet on a string. She released a slow breath and got in the truck.

He knew he was being unfair, but he would make it up to her as soon as he got her alone again. Although he had to admit, he was just as much a victim as she was. He loved the way she felt in his arms.

When he got in he turned to her, "Alex insists we have dinner at the ranch tonight."

"Why?" she didn't want to be around that actress no matter how much Alex wanted them there or how much Seth denied that he was attracted to her. She had a feeling that woman wasn't done trying to win Seth and she didn't want a part of it. Furthermore, she loved Alex but she didn't want anything to do with that film crew.

"Alex is getting cranky." He added with a helpless look.

She burst into laughter, "That is a nice way to put it."

"He wants us there as backup. It seems the director has it in his head that he could use Sandra to manipulate me and he wants to put a stop to it."

She stopped laughing, crossed her arms and raised a brow.

“Pris honey, that’s not ever going to happen.” He said knowing that she was thinking Sandra would try to get him in bed again.

After a moment she nodded and relaxed, “It better not.”

He chuckled and started the truck, “If you had more experience, this wouldn’t even be an issue—“ he shot her a look as he was backing up, “—but you don’t need any more experience.”

It was her turn to laugh, “Whatever you say, you’re the doctor.”

“That’s right.” He added with a firm stare before shifting the truck into drive and heading down the driveway. “Besides I have all kinds of images of the things I’m going to do to you and trust me, none of them have Sandra in the picture.”

She swivelled her head toward him wide-eyed.

“And—“ he added casting her a sensual look that curled her toes, “I’m going to take all night to show you exactly how to please a man.”

“Oh lord.” She whispered, “Do you have any idea how seductive you can be?”

He grinned sinfully, “Yes.”

If Priscilla expected a simple dinner she was way out of line. The house was packed with about fifty people. How Alex allowed that floored her, but Angel met her at the door with a smile.

“It’s all right. The kids are with May upstairs and Alex thought maybe a crowd would be okay. It sort of reminds me of when Bea was alive. She used to throw these amazing parties. Ryan somehow convinced Alex to do this. I think it’s for the same reason about Bea, and Ryan’s doing his best to suck up. He’s the one that hired the catering crew and I’m fine as long as I don’t have to clean it up.”

Actually that wasn't such a bad idea. Thought Pris. She turned and looked at Seth who seemed to be fighting a bit of a frown. "You look unhappy."

He smiled and looked down at her, "It's fine. I'm going to go find Alex." He said with a squeeze to her hand before he left.

Angel's eyes widened as he walked off, "Are you two—"

Pris held up her hand, "Don't even think anything into it. He hasn't promised me anything Angel and I don't even know how he feels."

Angel just stared at her as if she hadn't said anything, "does he know you love him?"

She rolled her eyes, "Yes, because I stupidly blurted it out today when he came to see me." She certainly wasn't going to tell her sister what else happened and rubbed her forehead, "I'm so stupid."

Angel took her hand, "No, don't ever think that. If you never said it and he was with someone else, you'd regret it."

"I would." She agreed.

Angel leaned toward her and lowered her voice, "He looks at you all the time."

"No, he doesn't." she said seeking him out in the crowd. It was easy because of his height. Alex and he were in conversation. Then she saw Alex nod, cast a glance toward them and lead Seth down the hall possibly toward his study for some privacy.

"He does."

"I think mother is already planning the wedding." She said releasing a frustrated breath. "It's no wonder that I can't get a decent date."

"I remember how that feels." She took her sister's hand, "However, none of that is going to bother us tonight because we are going to have fun."

Angel led her to the bar that had been set up outside by the pool. She asked for a glass of wine for her sister and a Perrier for

herself.

“Who are all these people?” Pris said taking the glass.

“Well, they’re all movie crew—” she turned and looked through the crowd, “—Sandra and her co-star aren’t here yet. Chances are they want to make some grand entrance.” She added with a tone of disgust.

“I told you that Sandra wasn’t interested in Alex. Angel, he thinks the sun rises and sets on you.”

Angel laughed, “It’s okay Pris, he’s convinced me that I’m the love of his life—” she pinked up a little not giving any more details, “—but that doesn’t mean that I can’t be angry for the way she’s been panting after Seth.”

Pris felt herself get angry.

Angel saw the change in her sister’s expression and felt terrible for mentioning it. “Sorry I shouldn’t have brought it up, but Alex told me what happened the other day. I didn’t call you because Seth asked me not to.”

“He did?” Her brows went up.

“he said he needed to apologize in person and to leave it alone.”

“Seth said that?” she repeated in disbelief.

“So he apologized?” Angel asked carefully while studying her sister’s expression.

Priscilla couldn’t help it, she blushed all the way to the roots of her hair.

“Oh lord, I see he did,” she said softly.

Her sister knew her better than anyone, so denying it would have been futile, “Please don’t say anything to Alex. The way he’s been lately, he’ll make Seth marry me yesterday.”

“He should. Seth knows better. He knows how you feel about him.” Angel said angrily.

Pris shook her head, “Yes, but I could have said no—”

“—sure you could.” She interrupted, “If he asked you to

jump off a cliff you would in an instant.”

“Promise me.” She said not denying what her sister said.

“That is not fair.”

“Angel, Seth and I are adults. We should be able to deal with this without interference.”

She had a point

At that time Sandra walked in on the arm of her co-star Wesley Banks and made sure that she was noticed not only by the expensive dress but by the low cut of it.

“Oh God help us.” Angel said.

“She’s sure persistent on being the center of attention.” Pris said quietly while sipping her glass of wine. It wasn’t that long ago that Pris felt the same way. She shouldn’t judge Sandra because of that. For all she knew they could have been friends if rivalry for Seth wasn’t involved.

Wesley’s eyes roamed over the crowd and settled on Pris. Then Angel watched as he leaned down and said something to Sandra who shot her sister a wry smile and answered him. Angel wished she could be a fly on the wall at that moment because from the look on Sandra’s face, she was a cat with a canary. “Heads up Pris.” Angel said as Sandra started to lead Wesley through the crowd toward them. “I smell a scheme brewing.”

Pris didn’t miss the look of interest that the man had given when he noticed her, but she was familiar with those looks and didn’t have any interest in encouraging them anymore. Although he was a very nice looking man, stylish and famous, unlike Sandra who had just started making a name for herself, she wasn’t interested. It was then she wished she didn’t dress up for Seth. She’d managed to find a white summery dress and left her hair long as he liked it.

Sandra acted as if Angel didn’t exist when she introduced Wesley, completely cutting her out of the conversation. Angel just smiled as if she thought she’d humour her. However, Wesley

really didn't notice her right away either, and she couldn't blame him. Priscilla hadn't dressed up like she was tonight for years and she was a blonde bombshell. Wesley took her hand in greeting and planted a lingering kiss on it.

Pris wanted to yank it away from him but she also didn't want to be rude.

"Wow, if I'd known the women were so beautiful in this town, I would have come last week to the set." His eyes roved down her form in unrestrained desire.

Angel made a cough and he directed his eyes to her, "the little sister?" He said taking her hand and doing the same thing.

She resisted from rolling her eyes.

"but Sandra says your married." He said making a mock expression of disappointment.

"Yes, to the enormous angry looking cowboy standing behind you." She smiled. Alex came out of the back doors just as Wesley took her hand and kissed it. He'd reached them in several strides, stopped behind Wesley and placed his hands on his hips.

Wesley dropped her hand and turned to face him, coming eye level with the man's chest. His eyes guided up to a furious expression then to muscle throbbing unmistakably in a clenched jaw.

"You touch her again and I'll snap your neck like a twig."

His jaw dropped.

Angel and Pris gave each other an amused look. Normally Angel would chastise her husband, but she was thankful that he showed up at that moment.

Sandra quickly excused herself as Seth came out of the house.

"I meant no offense."

"Yeah right." He said reaching around him and taking Angel's arm. "If you even look at her again, I'll follow through on

my threat. My wife, my house.”

“I apologize.” He stuttered to the both of them while turning beat red. Never in his life was someone so sharp with him. Also he never met anyone as menacing as that cowboy either.

Alex gave a stern nod that he accepted the man’s apology and left taking Angel with him.

“Jesus.” He said after they were out of ear shot and cast Pris and unsure glance. “That man is as scary as hell.”

Pris couldn’t help but laugh. She actually felt sorry for him, “Don’t worry, he rarely follows through on those threats anymore.”

“I’ve never met anyone like him.” He said still staring at Alex’s broad back as he led his wife through the crowd.

“He’s as rough as they come, unless it has to do with Angel. He’s a pussycat around her. As you can see he’s possessive and loves her to death.”

Wesley looked at the other woman for a moment.

“What?”

“Can I start again?”

“Start?”

He took her hand and shook it instead of kissing it, “I’m Wesley Banks. Wes to my friends. Sorry about the previous greeting. Sandra told me you like to be treated like that, but I get the feeling you don’t.”

“I don’t.”

He shook his head, “What a bitch.”

Priscilla burst into laughter causing him to smile.

“You’re refreshing Priscilla.”

“Thanks.”

He nodded toward the tall cowboy and his wife, “I’d sure love to give off that persona in the movie.”

“If you ask him nice, he might let you hang around him for a few days, just be careful not to offend him.”

Somehow Wes thought he'd be easy to offend.

"He does have a soft side." Priscilla said seeing the man's brow crease in thought, "It's just hard to find."

He shifted his eyes to hers, "Thanks, maybe I'll wait until later tonight to ask him."

"That'll give him time to cool off." Pris added with a smile.

"I'll take that advice." His eyes moved to Sandra who was now holding on to Seth's arm, "Is that your boyfriend?"

She frowned at the scene, "I'm not sure."

He looked at her, "It makes sense why she asked me to distract you." He returned his attention to her, "After seeing you, I near jumped at the chance, but it looks as if my efforts are in vain."

She shrugged, "Seth is a full grown man Wesley. He can always tell her no."

"So, have you actually met the woman?"

"I had dinner with her and a few others the night before." She said not elaborating that she actually wasn't with Seth at the time, Sandra was. Also, she didn't even really speak to her. However, she didn't want Wesley to think she was on the market.

"Well, then you should know that she's not used to being turned down."

Pris eyed him for a moment, "So you did."

"Hell no." he grinned widely, "We have a bit of a history, but honestly that's all it is. History. I don't like clingy women and Sandra likes to control everything." He lowered his voice, "Even in bed."

Why is it everyone felt completely at ease about discussing what went on in the bedroom. She cleared her throat and looked past him to Sandra who was trying her best to keep Seth's attention. As usual he was being polite and seemed to be talking to her. Her eyes went back to Wes who didn't seem to notice her discomfort at all. She figured it was because he was quite famous

and used to having his life open to the public so it never even occurred to him that not everyone discussed sex openly. On the other hand, Seth always seemed to be able to read her.

“so how serious are you about our host?”

She looked back at him, “Seth?”

“Yes. I assume he’s the physician that Ryan talked about. I understand now why he said stay clear of the big one, but—“ he glanced over his shoulder at Seth, “—to be honest they’re about the same size.” He returned his gaze to her, “However I can easily see the difference between the two.”

“It’s kind of obvious when they’re together which one is easier to approach.”

“Now back to my original question Priscilla.” He smiled and took a drink from his glass, “How serious are you about Seth Harrison?”

She allowed a shy smile to touch her lips, “Very.”

“Ah, my heart is breaking.” He said covering his chest with his free hand.

Pris laughed.

“I like you more and more.” He grinned. “And call me Wes.”

She nodded, “Okay.”

“So, I take it dinner is out of the question.”

“Dinner is at that buffet over there.” She nodded to the long tables on the other side of the pool piled high with every type of food imaginable, “Help yourself.” She added with a sly smile as she took a drink from her glass, “Have a nice evening Wes.” She said before she turned and walked away.

Wes’s eyes followed the sway of her hips and he slowly shook his head and let out a whistle. Smart, witty and beautiful, what a combination. Not to mention confident and seductive. Boy would he like to get her alone for a few hours.

Seth’s attention was drawn away from Sandra when he heard Pris laugh. His eyes glanced back and forth between the

male movie star and Pris.

He didn't like it.

He also didn't miss the exchange or the look the movie star gave Pris. Then he looked down at Sandra who was prattling on about her part in the movie. It may have worked on other men, but not him. His eyes were only on one female tonight. "excuse me." He said politely while removing her arm from his.

Sandra place her hands on her hips watching him move away from her through the crowd. She wore and expensive low cut dress, had her makeup artist work forever on her , just to try and get that man to notice her.

She was still stinging from her rejection when he crashed the vehicle they were in. she'd snuggled up to him and began kissing him. He had actually told her to leave him alone. When her hand went to his crotch he shoved her away causing the vehicle to go off the road. Prior to that, he told her he wasn't interested, but she thought he was lying or playing hard to get because no one ever turned her down. At first she didn't see the blonde as a threat because she thought she was much prettier. She also knew through talk among the crew that her family were long time friends of the Harrison's. Now she knew different. Seth had something for this girl. This wasn't good. She had made sure the press thought that they were in a relationship and even though bad publicity was good publicity, a movie star being dumped for a nobody didn't look good at all. She'd be laughed at by her peers. She narrowed her gaze. The blonde would have to go.

CHAPTER FOUR

Seth caught up with Pris by the stairwell inside the house circling his arms around her from behind and whispering in her ear, "I'll give my right arm to get you alone for five minutes."

"Seth!" she turned and looked at him, "You're incorrigible."

“Damn rights.” He said huskily topping it off with one of those jaw dropping grins.

Her voice dropped as several people passed them with curious stares, “You keep that up and your family will know what we’ve been up to.”

“Pray tell, what have we been up to?” his pale eyes glinted.

She pursed her lips. He was goading her and she couldn’t say it but that didn’t stop him.

Slowly and seductively he bent his mouth to her ear, “We made love in your parent’s house like delinquent teenagers.”

She blushed.

“*I am* willing to give up a limb to get you alone.” He repeated, then said “I don’t like the way that man was hovering around you.”

“Wes?”

He cocked a brow, “Wes is it?”

“It’s nothing. He told me to call him that.” She frowned knowing how that sounded.

“I bet he did.” Seth said dropping his gaze to her mouth, “Too bad for him.” He bent his head and brushed his mouth across hers.

“You are asking for trouble.” She said placing her hands against his chest and pushing, “Seth—” she started laughing. He really didn’t seem to care that people were everywhere and he was being so openly affectionate. This wasn’t like him at all.

She loved it.

His hand came up and cupped her cheek, “As long as we’re together, I don’t care.”

The laughter stopped and she stared at him seriously. Her heart beat started bouncing all over the place. When he combined a caress with that husky voice and undeniable charm and charisma, she was lost.

“Have you ever made love on a pile of straw?” he continued

huskily knowing she hadn't.

She glanced around to see if anyone heard them.

"I haven't either." He added with a sexy lopsided smile.

Seeing that no one was paying them any heed, she brought her eyes back to his. She doesn't know what possessed her to let a slow smile spread across her face in a challenge, but there it was.

"Oh hell," he said looking vulnerable under that sensual look she just gave him, "You are no longer getting a choice." He took her hand and led her out of the house but not before he stopped and grabbed a blanket from Alex's study.

The last person left at two in the morning. Angel and Alex were both exhausted. Alex never noticed that Seth and Priscilla had disappeared halfway through the evening. Angel did, but she didn't mention it.

"We're going to have to give May a raise." Angel said sliding into bed next to her husband, "Because I wouldn't have been able to stay up this late without her agreeing to look after the kids in the morning."

"I could hire you a nanny."

She gave him an incredulous look.

He laughed, "I thought so."

She pursed her lips, "Alex, I will raise our—"

He bent over and kissed her hard, cutting off her words. She was a very involved mother and he loved her for it, but he still couldn't help but tease her. Then he lifted his head and looked at you, "Whatever you wish. Now get your nightgown off."

She narrowed her gaze trying to look angry but it was ineffective because he was still grinning.

He was just about to kiss her again when the phone rang. "Ah shit."

"Alex, your language." She scolded.

He shot her a smouldering sideways glance before he reached over to answer the phone.

Her husband could still make her heart stop in her chest with those drop dead sexy glances.

“Yeah.” He said into the receiver while returning his still heated gaze to Angel, then he paused, “What do you mean she’s not home?” Alex said sitting erect feeling that familiar dread fill him. They had gotten a familiar phone call from George, the girls’ father when they didn’t return home from Bea’s birthday party one night. It was the night they nearly lost them both.

“Give me the phone.” Angel said softly to her husband.

He looked at her and after a few seconds he released a frustrated noise and handed it over. Her expression like her voice was calm and it only took him a moment to know that she knew something he didn’t.

“She’s fine mom, don’t worry—I know, but she’s old enough and—gosh, okay, she’s with Seth.”

Alex raised his brows but Angel ignored him.

“Yes I’ll get her to call you in the morning.” She said goodbye and gave the phone back to Alex to hang up.

“And you know this because?” He said plopping the receiver back in its cradle without taking his eyes off of his wife.

She frowned. She’d made a promise.

Slowly he reached over and pulled the blankets away from her tossing them down the bed. Then he moved his hand around her narrow waist and pulled her toward him.

“Don’t you dare.” She said completely unconvincingly. “I promised.”

He gave her a sinful grin and brought his body on top of hers.

After five more minutes she confessed everything. She’d seen Seth follow her sister into the house and knew that they’d gone to find privacy after that.

Afterwards, Angel was strewn across him sleeping sound. He was still covered in perspiration and had only just calmed his breathing after making love to her. His hand caressed her back and shoulder loving the feel of her. Angel was his world, and he loved her more than life itself. He'd fallen in love with her when she was sixteen but because of the age difference he had to wait until she was at least twenty. When he made his move, Angel was sceptical even mistrustful that he wanted her, but he did. More than he wanted his next breath. It was a difficult road but he finally managed to win her over. It wasn't as if he had a problem getting women in his past, but Angel was the only one that owned his heart.

Seth on the other hand, had a way of charming women without even trying and Pris was already vulnerable where he was concerned. Everyone knew that she was nuts about his brother from an early age. She was never secretive about it and there were times that Alex was disgusted with her flamboyant behaviour. His mother thought the world of her though, and always defended her to him. Just like Angel did. Angel was the sweetest gal he'd ever known except when it came to his insults to her sister. He smiled to himself thinking of how damn sexy she was when she got mad. Over the years his wife had rubbed off on him and along with the car accident four years ago, he'd become extremely protective of Priscilla. Also he had to admit the change in her was a blessing. She was more tolerable and despite his earlier feelings, he really liked her now, after all, she was family. He go hunting for them in the morning.

Priscilla knew that she'd never get enough of this man. He was so darn sexual. After he managed to unclothe her and toss her naked onto the blanket, she would have done just about anything to feel him against her again. Yet, he took his time, torturing her until she was begging him.

“Sweetheart,” he bent down and rasped in her ear, “I need to be careful. It wasn’t that long ago that I had you, and you’ll be sore.”

She shook her head and reached for him. He smiled and sat back on his heels out of her arms reach. She started to sit up and he pushed her back down widening that sexy grin of his, “stay put honey.” He then gripped her thighs pulling her toward him.

Priscilla was so wound up she didn’t understand what he was doing. He moved forward and guided himself into her causing her to arch off the blanket. This was nothing like earlier. It felt like a ribbon of excruciating pleasure just threaded through her when he did that. “Oh you like that.” He said breathing roughly. It was a chore to take it easy with her when all he wanted to do was ram into her. However, she was new to this, and was probably still tender from earlier, so he needed to be careful with her. It was killing him. She was so wet and feeling her tighten around him near had him undone.

“Oh god.” She breathed. What an understatement!

Then he shifted and reached down moving an arm under her arched back and lifted her onto his lap causing her to fit perfectly onto the crook of his thick thighs. “Seth this is—”

“—incredible, I know.” He ground out shoving himself deeper by gripping her hips and moving himself completely inside her.

She released a sexy moan and fell her head against his shoulder.

He tangled his fingers in her long hair to turn her mouth to his. Later she would hardly remember through the fever of passion he invoked in her. Seth was all man and knew how to use every inch of himself to satisfy a woman.

He released her hair to guide her hips and it only took a moment for her to comprehend. Not once did their mouths separate and within a few minutes he’d managed to guide her

into a rhythm that was literally blowing her mind.

“Here.” He rasped moving her around so she was flat on her back on the blanket, “I’m going to lose it soon.”

Pris didn’t hear a word. Her hands were moving all over him, her thighs were quivering and she was lost in the heat they created.

Seth moved so expertly that she’d remember from the soreness of her muscles later that he moved one of her legs up to his shoulder while arching up and moving with a controlled rhythm. She also remembered that she was digging her nails in his back and arching to try and get closer to him. Then her world exploded in a million pieces and she screamed in release. His hard mouth came down on hers cutting it off while shuddering and trembling above her as he gave a final thrust and groaned deeply into her mouth.

He still was kissing her tenderly and she began to weep.

“Hey.” He said softly lifting up from her slightly, “What’s wrong.”

“I don’t know, I feel stupid. Not about this—I mean—”

“You’re vulnerable.” He brushed her hair off her sweat covered brow and smiled.

“Why is it you know me so well. I find that so unfair.” She sniffed.

His eyes searched hers, “I don’t know. Maybe it’s because I was too stupid to realize that I watched you more closely than I thought, so I know you more than I wanted to admit. Remember though, this is a two way street. You know me too.”

She gave a hesitant smile, “you watched me.”

“Honey, you’re so beautiful that every man young and old watched you.”

She flushed, “be quiet.”

He bent his head and kissed her again.

She let him, she even encouraged him.

He groaned, “God I could have you again.” He said lifting his head to lock his eyes with hers. “I’m hard still.”

“Then do.” She whispered.

And he did. This time he showed her how he liked to be pleased and she was a naïve student but was more than eager to please him. He instructed her in a passion filled husky voice and from her involvement, didn’t think she was listening until he felt her tongue right where he told her to put it. His hands tangled in her hair, but he didn’t control the position, he let her have her freedom.

“Pris mount me.” He said tightening his grip in her hair pulling her head up, “I’m going to come.”

She raised up and hovered over him while he helped position her.

Her head tilted back and she release a sexy little noise from her throat as she sunk down on him, “Oh Seth.” She breathed.

“Say my name again.” He groaned gripping her hips and moving her. She did over and over again.

She was so damn beautiful straddling him that he hardly could hold back before she placed her palms flat on his chest, curved her back and reached her peak with a sensual moan.

Normally she would have screamed but she was completely exhausted.

That look alone pushed him into his own climax. “Oh damn!” he growled circling his arms around her to pull her down on him while thrusting his hips upward with a guttural yell. He thought the first time with her was mind blowing. This was apocalyptic.

When they were finished the second time she’d fallen asleep on top of her and that’s how they slept covered by the blanket he’d take from Alex’s study. It wasn’t until the next morning that he awoke, and not by choice. His brother’s booming voice reached him.

Pris blinked her eyes open, “what is *that*?”

He lifted his head and grinned at her, “Alex. Hang on.” He moved out from under her to peer over the side of the stack of straw. Alex was about fifteen feet down. It was funny because he didn’t really remember climbing all the way up there. Obviously he was so turned on for her he didn’t take notice.

At the same time Seth was moving toward the edge of the stack Alex bellowed again. “Seth Goddamit! I know you’re up there because your goddamn pants are down here!” Alex said standing inside the hay shed staring up at the tall pile of square bales. Just then his brother peered over the side with his upper torso bare. “Ah hell, can’t you be a little more discreet?”

“Can you?” his brother answered with a growing smile. It wasn’t that long ago that he shut the door to Alex’s study while he was in the process of seducing his wife in front of the household.

“Christ.” He said shaking his head and not answering his question, “Get Pris to call her parents, they’re worried” he said removing his hat to run his fingers through his hair to try and hide his discomfort, “and feed her.” he said turning and walking away while mumbling something about appalling behaviour for full grown adults.

Seth chuckled and rolled back to the warm body he left moments ago. He turned and looked at Pris who had already centered her gaze on him. She only lasted a few seconds before she burst into laughter.

Seth followed suit, “Looks like the cat is out of the bag.”

“That’s easy for you to say strutting around like a cock on the walk.”

He grinned, “Nice analogy.”

She flushed, “Don’t read anything into it.”

“Are you hungry?”

“Very.” She said.

“Me too!” he rolled on top of her causing her to screech.

Thankfully the crew and the household had taken advantage of the free bar the night before, because it seemed that besides Alex and Angel, Seth and Pris were the only ones up. They also kept ranch time. It was only six thirty in the morning and they had spent another hour together before listening to Alex. Seth did feed her breakfast before he drove her home, gave her a devastating kiss and waited until she got into the house before he left.

Her mother was up already and came rushing out of the kitchen when she heard the door open.

"You could have called." She accused.

"Mom I'm twenty five."

"I know—but that doesn't mean I stop worrying."

She nodded, "Okay, sorry. Next time I'll call." *And let you know that I've been rolling around in a straw stack with the neighbour all night*, she said to herself.

"I told your father that you were with Angel and the kids, not Seth."

Her mouth hung open and she flushed scarlet.

"Angel told me."

"Angel, but—"

"I really harassed her Priscilla, so don't be angry with your sister. I told her I was sending your father out to look for you. She confessed."

It would have been hard for Angel to do such a thing. She would never betray her sister, but her mother had her ways of dragging the truth out of anyone. "You're kidding." She said defensively, "I'm a grown woman. I haven't phone home in four years to tell you that I'm staying out."

"I know that, but your father doesn't. You're home now and the old rules apply."

"Rules?"

She sighed, "Honey I know you're old enough to be responsible but to your father you're still twelve." She explained, "And you should realize that. He may not seem like it but he's very protective of his girls. He threatened to shoot Alex when Angel was broken hearted over him."

"He did?" that was news neither one of them knew about.

"To his face." She added pointedly, "So just image what he's going to do when he finds out that you and Seth are—"

"Mother!"

Catherine stopped talking for a minute. Priscilla was right. She didn't need to answer to her parents, and she certainly was not a virgin bride when she married George. Although he was the only one she'd ever been with, they were so much in love that they couldn't help themselves. If Priscilla knew that she was the product of that first night, she would defiantly accuse her of having double standards. "Sorry. Just please be a little more discreet."

Pris sighed, knowing that was the second time she'd heard that in the last hour. However she did agree, but when that man was around, she couldn't think straight. "Mom, I shouldn't have to say this, but have you *seen* Seth, *our* Seth? He gives masculinity a whole new standard. A nun would cheat."

That brought a sparkle of humour to her mother's eyes, "Yes dear." She said before she turned and walked away.

Later that afternoon, Seth was saddling his prized thoroughbred for a long overdue ride but Pris was still in his thoughts. He would call her later to see if she wanted to go for dinner. Images of her naked and flushed with passion filled his mind.

What the hell was wrong with him? Why did this woman affect him so much? At first he thought this was just curiosity towards Pris, but now he knew better.

At that moment Alex came into the stables interrupting his thoughts. He turned and saw him before returning to his task. He expected him to find him sooner or later and speak to him about his behaviour. "you said you'd stay out of it." His brother never said a word until he was beside him.

"I did." He said shoving his hand in front of him.

Seth looked down and saw a velvet box in the center of his brother's palm. "What's this?"

"It's mother's."

Seth took it and opened it to reveal his mother's engagement ring before giving his brother a shocked look.

"She said that when you get sensible enough to do the right thing and marry Priscilla to give it to you."

"She said that?"

He nodded, "About a week before she died. That ring has been in our family for four generations Seth. She really loved Pris."

He ran his thumb over the large diamond, "Yeah, I know why." He said almost to himself.

Alex studied his expression. "I guess that woman saw things that we two thick skulled men couldn't."

"I guess." He said looking at his brother knowing that he was feeling that surge of grief over his mother just like he was. "why didn't she give it to you for Angel."

"Because she just didn't Seth. It doesn't bother me. She kept it for you and Priscilla. Maybe it was because Angel and she weren't as close as her and Pris."

"You're all right with this then?"

He nodded, "As right as rain."

"Thanks."

"You do love her, don't you? I mean, I'm not wasting our mother's priceless ring on a fling." He smirked.

Seth chuckled and stared at him for a moment before he

answered, "Is it supposed to hurt when I breathe every time I look at her?" he finished that statement with a smile already knowing the answer.

Alex gave him a rare grin, "Welcome to my life."

If that was any indication, he did love her. Alex loved his wife so much it was almost disgusting, "Hell, I can't go ten minutes without thinking about her."

"When are you going to ask her?"

He shrugged, "The Lavender Banquet is the Saturday after next." He said absently while snapping the box shut and placing it in his jeans pocket.

"You've actually been thinking about this for awhile?" Alex said in surprise.

"Yeah, since I went and saw her four years ago when she went off to school. There was something about her then, but I wasn't sure if I was ready. Now I know I am. I can't see myself without her." He brought his gaze back to his brother, "Don't tell Angel." He loved Angel but she'd be on the phone to her sister in an instant. He knew that Pris was vulnerable towards him, now more than ever since they'd been together and Angel would want to relieve her sister's anxiety but he wanted this done right.

"I won't." he answered. Again, Seth's business was his, but also a lot of things could happen in a two weeks. Seth may decide he needed more time, hell only knows what could happen. Yet, he doubted Seth did need more time. His brother never did anything without putting one hundred percent of thought into it and he wouldn't have touched Priscilla unless he did just that. He actually admired him in many ways because of it. He reached out and placed his hand on Seth's shoulder before he turned and left.

Seth watched his back disappear through the large door of the stables before he pulled out his cell phone and dialed Pris. Surprisingly it was her mother that answered her cell phone

when he asked to speak to her.

“No Seth she left about an hour ago. She must’ve forgot her phone, it was on the table by the door.”

“Would you ask her to call me when she gets in?” He wanted to see her already and they’d only been apart several hours.

“I actually thought she went off with you.” Catherine laughed, “Because she rushed out of here like her pants were on fire. She doesn’t do that much anymore.”

He thought that she was possibly meeting friends in town. Since she’d come back last week she’d been spending every living moment with him. Funny how that never occurred to him until now. Furthermore, it never even entered his mind that she was meeting another man. Pris was in love with him, she said so. “Thanks Catherine.” He hung up and tucked his phone into his back pocket before he turned and finished cinching his saddle. If she was visiting he had time for his ride before going to see her.

“Hey Seth, do you want some company?”

Seth turned to see his younger half brother Max walk into the stable. “Sure.” He said with a smile, “Go get that sorrel gelding in the first stall.”

“Cool!” he turned and ran back to the door where the horse was. He had been riding for four years now since he came to live with his brothers. Normally they didn’t like him going out on the range without one of them because of the wildlife, but to catch one of them alone and not busy was next to impossible lately. He never really knew what having a family was like until Seth and Alex took him in. Oh, he loved his mother, but she was more of a socialite, not a stay home mom. Angel gave him anything he needed along that line, and if he asked for something, his brothers made sure that he had it. He’d made a promise never to take them for granted.

Angel smiled as she saw the brothers ride off together. Her

hand slid to the small mound of her abdomen savouring the baby growing within. She certainly loved her family.

CHAPTER FIVE

That night at supper Seth seemed restless to Angel. He had checked his watch for the tenth time in a half an hour.

“Is something wrong?” she asked.

“Yeah,” he looked around the table, “Excuse me for a moment.” He tossed his napkin on his plate as he got up and left the room. He’d called Pris almost five hours ago and still hadn’t heard back from her. Maybe her mother forgot to tell her he phoned.

Angel gave a look to Alex, who stared back at her for a minute before he sighed and followed his brother. “Thank you.” She said as he left grumbling.

Alex walked into his study just as Seth was hanging up the phone. The look on his face spoke for him. “Pris?”

He nodded, “her mother said that she didn’t come back from her trip out earlier.”

“Trip where?”

“I don’t know. She never said. Catherine said she thought she went with me. She took a cab.”

Alex walked past him and picked up the phone without a word.

“What are you doing?”

He dialled a number, “Yes, Reidsville cab company.” He said on the phone while looking at his brother.

Angel appeared in the doorway at that time, “What’s going on?”

“We’re not sure.” He said seeing her glance back and forth to the both of them.

“Alex looks worried.” She said her observation out loud and

from that started worrying herself.

Alex had hung up and dialled the cab company next and was talking abruptly to someone on the phone. Seth turned and guided Angel out of the study closing the door behind him, "It may be nothing Angel."

"Is it Priscilla?"

He nodded, "I couldn't get a hold of her earlier and your mother said she'd gone out."

"Did you try her mobile?"

"She forgot it."

She tilted her head, "That's hard to believe." She stared directly at him, "It's like her purse."

"Catherine thought she was with me." He clarified.

"Priscilla wouldn't go out on a date with another man Seth. She's still crazy about you."

He nodded and gave her a partial smile to assure her, "I know. That's not even a consideration. Do you know of anything that she had scheduled today?"

"Not that I know of." She swallowed, "Seth—"

"Look sweetheart, don't worry, Alex and I will find her. She's probably just out with her friends."

Angel began shaking her head.

Seth pulled her into his arms to console her. He had to give it to her though, she didn't cry but he did feel her tremble.

The door opened then and Alex told him to meet him in the truck. "We're going to the cab company. The driver is off shift in less than an hour." He looked at Angel, "don't worry honey, we'll find her."

"I know you will Alex." She said finally pulling back from Seth, "I just hope she's okay."

The trip into town seemed long and they arrived just in time. The cab driver was just leaving. After a brief discussion, he'd told

them that he dropped the gorgeous blonde off at Soames office.

Even though it was another man, Seth didn't feel worried at all. He knew how Pris felt about him, and knowing that she'd never been with another man made him confident that Red and she were just friends as he said.

Alex had already pulled out his phone and was calling Red.

"Thanks." Seth said to the driver before he left. Then he waited patiently while Alex talked to Red on the phone.

He thanked him, hung up and cursed.

"What?"

"She's with Sherri."

"Our cousin?"

Alex nodded, "At the boutique. She and Red went out for lunch, then she mentioned that she needed a gown for next Saturday called Sherri and had Red drop her off.

"Oh for crying out loud." Seth said rubbing his face with his hand, "I'm such an idiot."

Alex laughed seeing his brother lose his legendary calm composure, "Well, I know how you feel." He said flipping open his phone.

"What are you doing?"

"Just making sure." He said with a glint in his eyes as he set the phone to his ear.

Seth watched as Alex spoke to their cousin and he nodded to Seth with an expression of relief. Despite earlier when Red told them she was with him, he actually felt himself relax seeing Alex give him that nod.

"Thanks Sheri, Seth will pick her up, so don't let her call for a cab." He hung up.

"I feel like an ass." Seth said.

"Well, I think those women of our have us on edge because of what happened years ago. No one wants to feel like their world falls to pieces again."

“I suppose.”

Alex gave him the keys to the truck, “Go pick up Pris. I’ll call Angel.”

“Thanks.”

Priscilla was in the middle of trying on what she was sure of the twentieth dress when the phone rang pulling Sheri away from her. Sheri was the Harrison’s cousin and owned the fanciest boutique in town. Her dresses rivalled that of the ones in the city and she was actually open on a Sunday because of the upcoming Lavender Banquet. Only in a small town could someone do such a thing and have it packed.

A moment later she was back, “Oh, Priscilla that looks wonderful.”

One thing about Sheri that she admired, is that she wasn’t in it for a sale. If she didn’t like the dress she said so. She was a slender older woman with greying hair and about as honest as they come.

Do you think so?”

“Yes pale green is definitely your color.”

She turned around and smiled at her, “Maybe I’ll take this one then.” Her face softened as she looked past Sheri to the ranch truck that just pulled up and no other than Seth got out. It was just this morning that she’d seen him last, but you’d think it was years from the way she reacted. Seconds later a smile spread across her face almost splitting it from ear to ear.

Sheri turned to see her cousin coming in the store, “Well, what a surprise,” she mused not sounding surprised at all.

Seth opened the door and spotted Pris right away. There were at least another dozen women in the boutique but his eyes were centered only on one. One who was adorned in soft pale green. ‘Wow’ he mouthed seeing her.

“This is unfair.” She said when he approached her, “You’re

not supposed to see the dress.”

“That doesn’t count for this occasion.” He said tilting his head slightly.

“What are you doing here?” she blushed slightly. He was right and from that look knew exactly what he was referring to. A wedding. If only she’d be so lucky! Seth would never settle down. She knew that, but she also knew that she was going to make sure every moment she was with him, would be special because she didn’t know how long this would last.

He grinned, “Can’t a guy seek out his girl if he missed her?”

His? she blushed more, “I suppose.”

“How about a movie? You missed supper.”

“I’ve been busy.” She paused, “Red took me to lunch.” She wasn’t sure how’d he react because of the conversation they had last week in the clinic, but Red called and they were friends.

“I know.”

“You do?” How did he know? Did he run into Red when he was downtown? It would explain why he knew she was at Sherri’s.

“Go get changed.” He said

Smiling, she rushed into the back as fast as her legs could carry her.

“You be nice to that young lady Seth.” Sherri said coming up to stand beside him.

“I will.” He said giving her a charming smile.

“Oh no you don’t. That sex appeal doesn’t work on relatives.”

He chuckled, bent down and kissed her cheek. “Hi cousin. I guess I’ll be buying that dress. If you don’t mind. Preferably before she gets out here and protests.” He pulled out his wallet and gave her a credit card

“So courteous.” She smiled taking the card without hesitation, “I’ll ring it up with a family discount of course.” She

said with a wink turning back toward the counter. If Seth Harrison was going to buy that pretty gal a dress, she certainly was going to let him.

“Doctor Harrison what a surprise.”

Seth turned to see Natalie Miller, the Mayor’s niece. “Miss Miller.”

“I’m so surprised to see you here, in a woman’s shop.”

“My cousin owns it.” He said without any other explanation. Quite frankly, the woman was a pain even though he didn’t let on to anyone. She would come in almost five days a week to see him at his clinic using the most ridiculous excuses. She wasn’t his type. She was too pushy and too sure of herself. The funny thing was, she wasn’t gorgeous like Pris even though she’d must’ve spent several hours in a beauty salon each day before she came to see him.

“Oh yes I forgot.” She fluttered her lashes, ‘Are you going to the Lavender Banquet next week.’”

“Yes, Alex and I are sponsoring this year.”

“Alone?”

That question was a relief to answer, “No, I have a date.”

Of course he did, she thought, the man was every girls dream. Her eyes guided over him. Usually she knew him when he was wearing a three piece suit, but today, he had on jeans and a two tone brown striped western cut shirt. She was in love with him as she was sure every girl from here to the county line was. All her friends talked about was Seth, even the married ones. She was sure the man was a legend between the sheets too. Unfortunately he didn’t date women in town so she had nothing to base that on. However, just seeing his physique in the clothes he was wearing now made her know that his body was superb. When he turned away to answer a question that his cousin asked, her eyes cast down his front to the bulge in his jeans knowing that he probably was well built there too.

To hear that he was bringing a date really bothered her. She hadn't seen him with anyone except his family the last two times the banquet was held. It made her worry a little. However, she still had two weeks to convince him that she was the better choice. She would not take no for an answer.

Her dreams were filled with Seth Harrison and as far as she was concerned she was the only one for him. She just had to do a little convincing. She smiled sweetly when he turned back to her, "I suppose I'll see you there then. Bye Doctor Harrison."

Seth watched her go thinking that he had told her several times to call him Seth just like he did all of his patients. This was a small town and he'd grown up with most of the people he treated. Yet she insisted on using his professional name.

Just then Sherri came back with a bag containing Pris's dress and handed back his credit card, "That one has claws." As he took the items.

"I know she does Sherri." He said pulling out his wallet and sliding his card back in.

"Of course you do Seth." She said staring up at him, "You could write a book on how to read women."

He chuckled shaking his head slightly, "I seem to hear that a lot lately."

"Well, with your looks, I'm sure you do."

"Okay Sherri," he said with a smile, "Enough."

"Modest." She laughed and walked past him to another customer who needed her help.

Priscilla came out of the dressing room smiling, "Ready—what's this?" she said looking at the bag he was holding.

"Your dress." He answered.

She stepped close to him, looked around the shop and spoke in a low voice, "Did you purchase it?"

"I did."

"Seth, there is half the female population of the town in

here.”

“So?” he said frowning. Never in his life did a woman complain about him buying things for them. Then again, like he thought before, Pris wasn’t normal. She was unique.

“It’s not right Seth. I can buy my own things.”

He looked past her head seeing several women stare at them curiously. That wasn’t abnormal, but he felt an argument coming on and no one needed to know that. He took her arm, “The truck.”

She went with him willingly because she didn’t want the gossip either.

Once in the truck he started it and pulled away from the curb without saying a word. Pris waited. She knew Seth was a man of deep intellect and right now he was thinking of how to approach the subject. Little did he know, she was thinking up ways to counteract his reasoning.

However it did not go as she planned. About ten minutes out of town he pulled down a rarely used road and parked in a field out of view of the highway. Then he cut the engine and turned toward her.

He never said anything just looked at her.

She crossed her arms and stared back at him.

The standoff might have lasted a whole two minutes before Pris couldn’t handle it anymore. His expression was unreadable, his eyes were, pale, gorgeous and seeming to see right through her, and it was driving her crazy, “I won’t be a kept woman.” He cocked a brow looking entirely too sexy. “Seth?” she added with exasperation. If this was an argument, he never said a word and she already felt as though she was losing. How possible was that?

He let a slow smile spread across his face and at the same time reached over and took her hand pressing something into it.

“What is—“ she looked at her hand and saw Bea’s

engagement ring. Her wide eyes guided slowly up to his as a dawning expression of shock fell over her expression.

“So what do you say honey?”

A soft feminine noise left her throat. She lost all ability to speak.

“I figured that as your husband I can buy you whatever the hell I please.” He continued with a sloppy sideways smile.

“*Husband?*” She said in disbelief.

He nodded.

“You shouldn’t tease Seth—” tears filled her eyes.

He dropped his smile and shook his head, “I would never break your heart Priscilla. It would be unforgivable.” He said sincerely while searching her gaze with his.

Her eyes guided down to the ring, “I loved this ring.”

“She must’ve known. She left it for you.”

Those words made her burst into tears. Somewhere in the back of her head she heard a seatbelt come undone and moments later she was gathered in strong arms. Bending his head he murmured endearments in her ear.

It seemed like he’d held her forever when she finally got her tears under control and lifted her tear stained face to his, “Why?”

He smiled, “Because I’m crazy about you.”

She physically trembled with the thrill that went through her. It may not have been a confession of love, but to her, it was close enough. Seth wouldn’t propose marriage lightly.

“I mean it.” He reinforced when she didn’t answer, “My mother must’ve seen something in us because she told Alex to give me the ring to propose to you with it when I wised up.”

She laughed despite her tears. That sounded exactly like Bea.

“She was right.” He said seriously

“So this has nothing to do with the fact that I might be pregnant.

“Of course not,” He said easily, “If you are it’s a bonus deal.” She laughed through her tears again.

“I should have asked you that night we had dinner four years ago.”

Her eyes darted back to his, “Really?”

“It entered my mind briefly when I saw you weep that night. It made me realize how deep your feelings went. Boy did you hide them well.” He confessed, “Just think about it. I never came to see you again. It was too tempting. In my mind I saw you with children that night.”

That made her breath seize in her throat, “*Children?*” She would love to have a child, especially Seth’s.

“There was no face to the woman at the time, but now I only see one. I want to have children with you. As many as you want.”

She threw her arms around him and sobbed into his shoulder.

“So dove—” he said bending his face to the top of her head and inhaling her scent deeply, “Does that mean I can buy you the dress?”

CHAPTER SIX

The next two weeks passed quickly. Not that Seth and Priscilla noticed. They were inseparable. They spent the following weekend riding and Seth told her he wasn’t going to touch her again until after the wedding. That lasted a whole seven days.

Pris’s parents went to the city the following weekend so she wanted to invite him over for dinner. He came in the house, took one look at the soft white dress she wore and ravished her on the kitchen table.

Dinner was untouched.

“You know, this is crazy right?” Pris laughed. They had

finally made it to her room. “I mean, I was a virgin and I even know this is insane for two people.”

He flashed her a sinful smile, “Well, I’ve done some pretty crazy things, but I don’t think I could possibly look at that table again and not burst into laughter. Your mother would kill me.”

“That’s the best thing she could do.” She giggled, “I think that table is two hundred years old. If she knew what we did, she’d probably resort to slow torture.”

“Well they don’t make them like that anymore. Because if it was any other we would have snapped the legs in half with what I was doing to you.” He added without skipping a beat.

She laughed.

He started to get up.

“Where are you going?”

He paused, turned back and leaned over her, “Just to the washroom. Don’t worry, I intend to take all night with you. I’m in no hurry to leave just yet.”

He slipped out from under the sheet and walked naked toward her bathroom. They had discarded all of the other blankets because they heated up the bed and themselves, just like he said they would in the restaurant.

She sat up, gathered the sheet to her breasts and watched him. “God Seth, you’re so gorgeous.” She murmured seeing his broad shoulders and dipping her eyes down the strong curve of his back she studied the perfect shape of his bottom then to the muscular backs of his thighs.

He paused and turned around baring his whole body to her not the least bit shy about it. She wasn’t the only one that was looking. He was too.

Priscilla looked as if she was carved from fine porcelain. Her long platinum hair was strewn about her shoulders and her head was tilted ever so slightly as she clutched the sheet with an edge of innocence. He was spellbound. He was smitten. He did

love her. "Look all you want honey." He said with a slight crack in his voice.

She flushed but didn't avert her gaze and she did look. She'd seen plenty of naked men in her line of work, some were quite well built, some weren't, but nothing compared to the man standing before her like a Greek god.

"I love your interest in my body Pris, but I really have to use the washroom." He added with amusement. Truth of it was, he was getting turned on again, and trying to use the washroom with a hard on was not an easy task.

She sighed and flattened herself out on her bed, "Sure ruin a girl's fun."

He laughed and went into the washroom.

Word had already spread through Reidsville that they were a couple, but they decided to keep their engagement to themselves until the Lavender Banquet. That is, except for letting Angel and Alex know. Of course Alex already knew what Seth intended to do but he just moved the proposal up a week because she was upset. In a way, maybe he couldn't help himself and wanted to tell her sooner.

So Saturday before the Banquet they told them.

Angel nearly choked the life out of her with a very excited hug.

"I wasn't sure you were going to go through with it." Alex said nodding his approval to his brother.

He glanced over his brother's shoulder to Pris who was still being squeezed tightly before he returned his gaze back to his brother, "Can you blame me? Look at her?"

Alex burst into laughter. That was the same thing that Alex said at the banquet when his wife was pregnant with Shane.

Seth gave him a sheepish smile, "Well you may hear that again in a few weeks."

Alex just shook his head, “Jesus Seth, you’re a damn doctor.”

“Yeah.” He smirked. Alex was referring to his lack of birth control with Priscilla, but like he said before, he really couldn’t help himself. “And—” he added, “You’re one to talk.”

Alex gave him a look that he didn’t know what he was talking about.

“Asshole.” He stated in a low voice so the women wouldn’t hear.

It wouldn’t have mattered anyway because Alex’s laughter that followed would have drowned it out.

At the same time a very angry woman was getting ready for the banquet. She dawned her red sequined evening gown that she’d purchased in the city a week before. As far as she was concerned there wasn’t a decent place to shop in this town. Before that, she’d spent four hours at a local salon to make herself look as beautiful as possible with one purpose in mind. Seth Harrison.

If he didn’t notice her tonight, she was going to take care of things. There was no way he’d be occupied with that blonde tart that he’d been with the last week. It didn’t help that the woman worked for him, but she figured once he had a taste of her he wouldn’t look back.

Regardless, she wouldn’t take rejection. She’d already decided that.

As usual the Lavender Banquet was sold out. It was the biggest event in the county and everyone who was anyone was there. Of course it was more of an event this year because news got around that Wesley Banks and Sandra Lang were attending.

After Seth had proposed Priscilla no longer felt insecure about having her around which was probably a good thing, because somehow she ended up sitting on the other side of Seth.

She had come with Wesley who was busy talking with Natalie Miller who was usually worshiping her fiancé, but she supposed with a movie star like Wes, Seth didn't look as important. She had actually come with Red. On the other hand, Red was trying to gain Sandra's attention. *It was like a soap opera* she thought to herself with a smile. All through the meal she watched them with clear amusement.

When both women first arrived, Pris had to stifle a laugh because they were wearing almost the identical crimson red gown. Angel also saw that and shot an amused glance at Pris especially when they exchanged indignant looks.

Other people at their table were Angel, Alex and Ryan Spencer.

"Come on baby, dance with me." Seth leaned over and whispered huskily in her ear, "I'm dying to have your body against mine."

"Letch." She mouthed back at him making him chuckle. He got up and helped her to her feet before leading her to the dance floor.

Once there he pulled her close.

"You're making a scene." She laid her head on his shoulder with a smile.

"We're announcing our engagement tonight anyway. So I don't care." He answered while turning and kissing the top of her head.

A thrill went through her. Maybe it still hadn't sunk in yet that she was engaged to the love of her life and maybe she kept expecting something horrible to happen to take away her happiness. Regardless, there still seemed to be something lingering that told her this wasn't true, that it was all a dream and soon it was going to end.

At the table a pair of dark eyes narrowed at the intimate display. Not once did Seth acknowledge her except to say hello.

Now she knew for sure. She was rejected.

When Seth and Pris returned he seated Pris and excused himself. At the same time Sandra got up and left the table to go to the ladies room.

Red sat next to her a wicked smile, "So?" he nodded toward Seth who was shaking hands with a prominent businessman in town.

Pris blushed and shrugged her shoulders.

He sat straight and stared down at her, "I'd have to say it's about time that man noticed you honey. I was thinking I was going to have to propose to get him to jump into action."

She laughed, "You're a good friend."

"So when's the big date?"

"Date?" said Natalie who was within earshot. "Date for who?"

At the same time Sandra came back to the table, "What date, date for who?"

Priscilla turned the ring around on her hand. She'd been hiding the stone so no one would question her until Seth had a chance to announce their engagement. "Well, I guess the cat's out of the bag." She said with a shy smile.

"He's marrying you!" Natalie said with vivid anger.

"Hey." Red said shooting her a look of disgust, "That's not how we congratulate people around here Natalie. You know better."

The loud voice brought a lot of eyes in their direction and within seconds Seth was beside Priscilla, "What's the problem?"

She pointed her finger at Pris, "How could you! I mean look at her."

"Natalie!" Red said shocked at her behaviour.

Seth looked back and forth from Pris to Natalie, "What the hell's going on?"

"You're marrying her?" Natalie continued, "I spent hours

looking my best for you. Don't you know how I feel?"

"God god." He said under his breath at her appalling behaviour.

Pris stood up and moved close to Seth who slipped a protective arm around her waist. She may have expected some protest from the single females community but this was completely unexpected. People started to gather around them as Natalie's voice heightened to a shrill screech.

"Why her? Do you like sloppy seconds?"

"That's enough." Seth ground out beginning to get angry.

Priscilla wished the floor would open up and swallow her whole. The whole room was silent now and Natalie's shrill voice was echoing off the tall ceiling. Her skin was so scarlet she felt she would ignite.

She waved an arm toward Red, "Is it in you to steal your friend's girlfriend?"

"She was always *just* my friend Natalie." Red defended, "A plutonic relationship contrary to gossip and common belief. However, if you want to talk about intimacy, why don't you tell the five hundred people here that have all their ears and eyes on us what we've been doing for the past few months?"

Her face paled to the point that it was almost transparent. A strangled noise left her throat and she finally looked around the room to see that everyone's eyes were on her. Most of them were in appalled revulsion. Seth was well respected in town and so was Priscilla's family. Natalie's family had some pull too but she just realized that she'd just disgraced them. Her eyes went back to Seth and Priscilla and the way he was holding her protectively against him. She was so consumed with jealousy and obsession that she let her social tact disintegrate. "Oh God!" she breathed before she turned and rushed out of the room.

Alex made his way through the crowd, "What the hell's wrong with all of you, show's over." He bellowed to the crowd,

“Are you okay hun.” He said seeing Priscilla’s expression. She was humiliated.

Angel just hugged her.

‘I’m fine.” She finally said.

Seth gathered her close again, “Wow, I didn’t expect that.”

“Well, you have a fan club little brother. I’m sure that’s not the last of it.”

He was right.

A subtle yet familiar click made Alex turn to see Sandra holding a gun directly at the four of them. His instinct was to yank Angel out of the line of fire and shove her unceremoniously into the crowd toward Red, “Red, get her out of here!”

Red quickly did as Alex asked even through the protests she was emitting. Red was a big man. Not as big as Alex and Seth but he could certainly toss a woman over his shoulder and carry her out.

As soon as other people saw the weapon they were beginning to rush out of the banquet room.

“I’m sick of it!” Sandra shouted causing people to release gasps and noises of fear. Seconds later several women screamed and people started running out of the room.

Pris turned white.

Seth stood beside Pris and as he reached out to grasp her arm Sandra turned the gun toward him.

“Stop!”

He froze with his arm halfway toward her. “What are you doing Sandra?” he said softly.

“Oh that’s right.” She spat, “the man with the golden tongue. “ she shifted pointing the gun back to Pris. “You have it so easy—“

Pris opened her mouth to say something but Sandra cut her off.

“—Shutup! You don’t get to talk. Look at you. I bet you

don't spend five minutes in front of the mirror. Do you know how long it takes me?"

To afraid to speak, Pris just shook her head.

"Two hours!" she spat out, "On a good day!"

None of the people left there understood what this was about and none of them could have even thought that this woman was capable of using a gun and threatening Priscilla.

Alex heard the faint sound of sirens.

"You get everything don't you?" she added waving the gun toward Priscilla.

"I what?"

"you get looks, a figure, that isn't augmented in anyway—and you get him!" she said nodding toward Seth.

"Sandra put the gun down." Ryan said trying to sound stern.

"You shutup! You told me that you would replace me with her if I acted like a spoiled actress again!"

Ryan snapped his jaw shut.

"You said that?" Alex said shooting the man a menacing look, "You son of a—"

"Enough!" Sandra shouted cutting him off, "I'm tired of not being a billboard star."

"I'll give you top billing if you put the gun down Sandra." Ryan said.

She turned her attention on him. He was pale and sweating. She knew a liar when she saw one, "Do I look like some stupid girl? Of course you won't."

"I will. I promise."

"Liar!" she screeched causing him and the rest of them to flinch.

She turned back to Seth, "We could have been a hot item."

He shook his head.

"I practically handed myself to you on a silver platter Seth."

"It was unnecessary." He answered softly, "My heart was

already taken.”

She pinched her eyes shut for a moment, but not long enough for him to step forward and take the gun. “Because of her.” She said indicating with a gesture of the gun toward Pris who stepped back, “Don’t move! I’m not done with you.”

“I’m in love with her Sandra. There’s no chance that you and I will be together.”

Pris’s jaw dropped, “What did you say?”

“It was going to tell you when we made the announcement.” He said without taking his eyes off of the woman with the gun. “So sorry baby.”

Tears flowed down Pris’s cheeks and suddenly the woman with the gun was completely forgotten, “Seth—“ she choked.

He finally directed his gaze to her, “I do love you Priscilla. It seems redundant to say it now but I mean it.”

Sandra cackled almost inhumanly, “Oh dear. Did I ruin the surprise?”

With that show of insanity Pris moved to step closer to Seth in fear. It was instinctual, but Sandra saw the movement, aimed and fired just as Seth stepped in front of the line of fire.

A second popping sound went off after that followed by a screech of pain. She heard Alex yell along with a spray of red that soaked the front of her dress.

Everything went in slow motion and Seth crumpled in front of her along with Sandra.

Priscilla didn’t see anything else after that but Seth. Blood was oozing out of the wound and she and Alex had set to try and stop the bleeding.

Derek Thorton, the Sheriff stood across the room and lowered his gun. His deputies came rushing through the door to secure the scene. Ryan knelt beside Sandra.

“The ambulance is right behind us.” Derek said just as if on cue, the paramedics came in and with Alex bellowing at them,

went to Seth.

Derek rolled Sandra over and she screeched again. Without hesitating he bent down and cuffed her despite the bullet wound in her shoulder. “suck it up princess.” He growled in her ear.

“Hey, don’t hurt her.” Ryan said. Standing up as she was hauled to her feet. “She’s my star.”

“Not for the next twenty years.” Derek said, shoving her unceremoniously toward one of his deputies.

Alex felt like busting Ryan’s jaw for that statement. Goddam Hollywood people. However, his brother was his main concern. “Is he going to live?”

The paramedics hoisted him onto the stretcher, while working over him, “Not sure yet.” Was the blunt answer.

They were busy trying to get him to the hospital as fast as they could.

“I’m going with him.” Priscilla said determined not to take no from either paramedic. One of them just nodded as they finished belting Seth in the stretcher.

“Okay, I’ll meet you there.” Alex answered.

Angel was sobbing into Red’s chest outside the hotel and when they brought Seth out on the stretcher unconscious she released a strangled cry. Pris was walking unsteadily along the side of him hanging on to his hand. Blood covered the front of her gown. Seth’s blood.

“Pris!”

“Meet me at the hospital. We’ll know more then.” She sounded too calm, but she was in shock.

As soon as both doors were shut the ambulance raced out of there with the sirens blaring.

When Alex, Angel and Red arrived at the hospital they found Priscilla in the waiting room. She had folded her arms across her

midsection and was bent forward rocking slightly with tears pouring out of her eyes.

“Oh Jesus.” Alex said. Angel let go of her husband’s hand and rushed toward her sister embracing her.

“Do you have any news?” Angel asked her.

She nodded, “He’s in surgery right now.” She sucked in a moist breath, “The surgeon doesn’t think the bullet hit a blood vessel or his heart.”

“Well that’s good news— isn’t it?” Alex asked. He knew nothing about the profession at all. He knew how to doctor cattle, but he also had never removed a bullet from one. This was entirely out of his league.

“He says Seth lost a lot of blood.”

Alex already knew that. However, he was sure that Pris was able to help stem the flow. He didn’t know how she was able to do it. He was falling to pieces seeing his baby brother laid out like that. It brought back horrid memories of the day when he nearly lost Angel.

It was a good thing he never went into medicine like his father wanted. Seth was able to take charge in the situation with the women, and he felt like a bumbling idiot. Now even though Priscilla was in shock, she reacted with skills he never thought he’d see from her.

“If it wasn’t for me this wouldn’t have—“

“Be quiet Pris.” Alex interrupted knowing what she was going to say, “Seth made a choice and it was you. He can’t help it if there are crazy women out there. You’re the best thing that happened to him and he knows that.”

She looked at him and gave a slight nod. Words like that coming from Alex were profound. He never complimented people. Maybe Alex was right. After all, that last girlfriend that Seth had was a very selfish woman. She also thought that she had Seth completely manipulated. It was a shock to her when he

through her out on her ear after the incident with Angel and Priscilla.

Looking down she saw the diamond ring he'd given her on her finger. Seth would never make a commitment like that unless he was on hundred percent sure it was what he wanted.

Just the surgeon appeared still wearing his green scrubs and cap.

Everyone stood up abruptly as if they were under the scrutiny of a drill sergeant.

He looked around the room at everyone and smiled. The relief was so profound that it was almost audible. "He'll be out until next morning, but he was one lucky son of a bitch."

Priscilla burst into tears.

"Thanks Doug." Red said to the surgeon. As with everyone, it was a small town. Red golfed with the man on the weekends.

"No problem. It would have been horrible to lose the town's most prominent physician." He jested. "I'll stop in and see him in a few hours, but he's stable and can have visitors, but two at a time if you don't mind."

"Alex, Pris, you go." Said Angel, "Red and I can wait."

EPILOGUE

The hospital rooms always had an ominous feeling about them. It didn't help that everything was painted sterile white and it had that scent to go along with it. but the squeal of an infant cut through it like a knife followed by a series of joyous congratulations from the delivery of a healthy baby

"You did it baby." Seth leaned down and kissed his wife's forehead that was draped in perspiration. "It's a girl. A beautiful baby girl with a ton of black hair." He added with pride.

She wept and laughed at the same time. "Can I see her?"

"Give them a minute, the doctor has to make sure she checks

out.”

Almost if on cue a nurse placed the infant on Priscilla’s chest. She was swaddled in a warm receiving blanket, “Oh gosh!” she wept again looking down at the blotchy red face of her newborn daughter, “She *is* beautiful.”

“Jenna Lynn.” Seth said leaning over her while brushing a finger down her tiny cheek. The infant wailed and he chuckled. “and perfectly healthy.”

“That’s a perfect name.” she said staring up at Seth with her emotions clearly readable in her eyes.

“No Pris, you’re perfect.” He said right before he bent over and kissed his wife.



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