This ebook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This ebook may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you’re reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your use only, then please return to Smashwords.com and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author’s imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales, is entirely coincidental.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the author except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

****

**** All characters depicted in this work of fiction are 18 years of age or older. ****
Twenty-seven-year-old Libby Turner walked into her parents’ house and their heated conversation without being noticed. Not that she was trying to sneak in and eavesdrop; she’d been invited to dinner and let herself in with her key. Hearing their raised voices caught her by surprise. Her parents never argued unless it was about her grandmother. And lately, that topic was becoming an everyday occurrence. She knew because her mother called her almost daily to complain about it.

Libby walked as far as the archway leading to the large formal living room and halted, waiting for them to notice she was there. Her mother was sitting on her fancy settee like a lady of royalty, dressed in a tailored linen pantsuit and heels, pearls in her ears and around her slender throat. As far as Libby knew she was the only one invited to dinner. But, that was her mother.

Always poised and dressed to perfection. Her father was pacing the room as she’d seen him do so many times while growing up. The lion’s expression on his face warned her he’d made up his mind and was determined to see it through, to his liking. Libby guessed by his expensive suit that he hadn’t been home from work for very long. He was a successful lawyer with his own firm and well known for his tenacity.

“We have no choice but to put her into an assisted living facility,” her father said with strong conviction. “After what happened last weekend she can’t remain living on her own anymore.”

“But—”

“No, Doris. Your mother’s seventy-nine years old. She could have burned the place down! Are you prepared for the financial consequences?”

Her mother released a sound of annoyance. “But she didn’t.”

“Only because someone saw the smoke before it became a fire. Thank God there was a fireman present; what are the odds to that?”

“For goodness sake, it was outdoors, a barbecue. It was an accident.”

“My point exactly, Doris. It was an accident. And not the first one, I might add. Remember when she left the faucet on in the tub and then went to play bingo for three hours? The place was flooded…”

“That could happen to anyone.”

“What about the time Rufus climbed up on the roof and she climbed up there on a ladder to get her, and the ladder fell, leaving her stuck up there almost all night?”

“That was two years ago.” Her tone revealed her frustration level was rising, right along with her blood pressure, too, if Libby knew her mother. “Do you always have to remember the worst?”
“Well, what happens next time? What happens if she falls and breaks a leg or a hip and lays there for days before someone notices they haven’t seen her for a while? What happens if —?”

“Enough, John! You’ve made your point! You’ve wanted to put mother into one of those…those places for years now. You know this will kill her. She’s been so independent since Daddy died.”

His tone dropped down a notch, and Libby knew that was only because he sensed he was gaining ground. “It’s for her own good, dear. We can’t be with her twenty-four hours a day. And hiring a live-in is out of the question. It’s too expensive and you know as well as I do she won’t take money from us. Not to mention it would be a nightmare trying to find someone we can trust.”

“She has her own money.” Her mother’s tone sounded dejected.

“Which will barely pay for her to move to an assisted living complex.”

“There has to be another solution, John.”

“Well, if you can think of something, I’m all ears.”

“Well, I think…”

Libby swung away from her parents with a heavy heart, stepping into the family room. She turned toward the picture window that faced the pond outside their home and promptly tuned them out. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. They were actually discussing putting her beloved grandmother into an old folks’ home, as though she were an old gray mare needing to be put out to pasture. Sure, her mother wasn’t a hundred percent on board with it, but Libby knew it was just a matter of time until she gave in. She always did. However, there was one thing she agreed with her mother about. This kind of move would surely kill her grandmother.

Sighing, Libby folded her arms, wondering how her grandmother would cope under those conditions after living on her own for so long. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. They were actually discussing putting her beloved grandmother into an old folks’ home, as though she were an old gray mare needing to be put out to pasture. Sure, her mother wasn’t a hundred percent on board with it, but Libby knew it was just a matter of time until she gave in. She always did. However, there was one thing she agreed with her mother about. This kind of move would surely kill her grandmother.

Sighing, Libby folded her arms, wondering how her grandmother would cope under those conditions after living on her own for so long. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. They were actually discussing putting her beloved grandmother into an old folks’ home, as though she were an old gray mare needing to be put out to pasture. Sure, her mother wasn’t a hundred percent on board with it, but Libby knew it was just a matter of time until she gave in. She always did. However, there was one thing she agreed with her mother about. This kind of move would surely kill her grandmother.

Sighing, Libby folded her arms, wondering how her grandmother would cope under those conditions after living on her own for so long. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. They were actually discussing putting her beloved grandmother into an old folks’ home, as though she were an old gray mare needing to be put out to pasture. Sure, her mother wasn’t a hundred percent on board with it, but Libby knew it was just a matter of time until she gave in. She always did. However, there was one thing she agreed with her mother about. This kind of move would surely kill her grandmother.

Sighing, Libby folded her arms, wondering how her grandmother would cope under those conditions after living on her own for so long. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. They were actually discussing putting her beloved grandmother into an old folks’ home, as though she were an old gray mare needing to be put out to pasture. Sure, her mother wasn’t a hundred percent on board with it, but Libby knew it was just a matter of time until she gave in. She always did. However, there was one thing she agreed with her mother about. This kind of move would surely kill her grandmother.

Sighing, Libby folded her arms, wondering how her grandmother would cope under those conditions after living on her own for so long. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. They were actually discussing putting her beloved grandmother into an old folks’ home, as though she were an old gray mare needing to be put out to pasture. Sure, her mother wasn’t a hundred percent on board with it, but Libby knew it was just a matter of time until she gave in. She always did. However, there was one thing she agreed with her mother about. This kind of move would surely kill her grandmother.

Sighing, Libby folded her arms, wondering how her grandmother would cope under those conditions after living on her own for so long. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. They were actually discussing putting her beloved grandmother into an old folks’ home, as though she were an old gray mare needing to be put out to pasture. Sure, her mother wasn’t a hundred percent on board with it, but Libby knew it was just a matter of time until she gave in. She always did. However, there was one thing she agreed with her mother about. This kind of move would surely kill her grandmother.

Sighing, Libby folded her arms, wondering how her grandmother would cope under those conditions after living on her own for so long. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. They were actually discussing putting her beloved grandmother into an old folks’ home, as though she were an old gray mare needing to be put out to pasture. Sure, her mother wasn’t a hundred percent on board with it, but Libby knew it was just a matter of time until she gave in. She always did. However, there was one thing she agreed with her mother about. This kind of move would surely kill her grandmother.

Sighing, Libby folded her arms, wondering how her grandmother would cope under those conditions after living on her own for so long. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. They were actually discussing putting her beloved grandmother into an old folks’ home, as though she were an old gray mare needing to be put out to pasture. Sure, her mother wasn’t a hundred percent on board with it, but Libby knew it was just a matter of time until she gave in. She always did. However, there was one thing she agreed with her mother about. This kind of move would surely kill her grandmother.
The only question was—would her outrageous plan work?
“Come on now, old girl, you have to keep up or we’ll miss the good doughnuts and end up with the ones with the holes in the middle!”

The good doughnuts meaning the jelly and cream-filled ones. Libby rolled her eyes, fighting the urge to tell her grandmother that she could run circles around her and her old cronies, if she wanted to give herself away. Every five minutes she was forced to remind her grandmother that she was an old friend and supposed to be acting like a seventy-year-old woman. All of which usually fell on deaf ears.

She bent to drag up a sagging knee high doing her best to catch up, imitating the surprisingly rapid gait of her grandmother, while at the same time trying to insert a little age into her step. Goodness, you’d think she hadn’t eaten a doughnut in a month, not just the Monday before. Libby thought about the pancakes they’d had on Friday. If this kept up she was sure her one hundred and ten pound weight was going to double by the end of the summer!

“I’m doing the best I can, Gram…Margaret,” Libby said in the scratchiest voice she could muster. Even after a week she was still having a difficult time remembering to call her grandmother by her first name. Old habits were hard to break.

“Good morning, Reba!”

Libby shot a quick glance next door, waving gaily at the elderly man sitting on his porch sipping coffee. “Good morning, Vincent!”

“Don’t encourage him or we’ll never get away from him!” her grandmother whispered harshly, uncaring if she was overheard.

“Gram!” Libby scolded under her breath, skipping to catch up. “Be nice.”

“The old fool is interested in you,” Margaret continued, not breaking her brisk stride.

“I’ve seen the way he looks at you. You’re new meat. He’s nothing but a big flirt and he’s old enough to be your grandfather!”

“Well, he doesn’t know that.” Libby chuckled, waving back at him one last time.

Her grandmother made a disgusted sound beneath her breath and nearly swung the club house door off its hinges when she opened it to walk through. Libby remained on her heels, knowing the drill by now. No time to stop and chat with any of the fifty or so elderly who’d come to the meeting that morning.

The first priority was the small buffet table someone had set up with hot coffee and a colorful array of every kind of doughnut one could think of.

“Margaret…” An overweight woman close to Margaret’s age greeted her. “I was wondering—”
“I’ll be right with you, Lois.” Margaret made a beeline for the table. Libby grinned beneath the heavy makeup she was wearing, watching her grandmother snatch up a paper plate and cream-filled sweet in one smooth swoop.

Libby paused in the foyer to the large dining room, grimacing at her reflection in the mirrored wall. She’d gotten her money’s worth. The heavy theatrical makeup she’d purchased at the local theater certainly did what it was intended to. No one, unless they were looking for it, would be able to guess her secret. And with the age limit restriction of fifty plus, Libby knew the importance of that. She’d never be allowed to live there if anyone knew the truth.

She took a moment to straighten her hair, which was really a wig in the prettiest shade of blue silver she could find. It hadn’t been easy stuffing her waist-length hair beneath it. She’d even contemplated cutting off the red gold locks, but she’d always had long hair and couldn’t bring herself to get rid of her best asset, or so she’d been told most of her life. Clear green eyes peered out from beneath a pair of fake bifocals that had the thickness and color of coke bottle glass.

Libby glanced around and almost laughed out loud. Pedal pushers, as her grandmother referred to capris, and sneakers seemed to be the normal summer wear for most of the women around there, while the men opted for baggy knee-length shorts, white socks up to their knees and sandals. What was it with elderly men, socks and sandals anyway? Her own father had tried to sneak out of the house once wearing them and her mother had nearly had a heart attack!

Well, Libby wasn’t making a fashion statement either in her borrowed clothes. She couldn’t get by with capri style pants; there wasn’t enough makeup in the world that would give her the lumps, wrinkled skin or varicose veins that seventy-year-old women wore like a badge of achievement. Libby was forced to wear baggie dresses that hung past her knees and thick ugly support hose, or long pants, which didn’t go well in the stifling Florida heat. And she had to wear a blouse with long sleeves too, or reveal the fact that her underarms didn’t flap like a free-blowing flag in the wind. The body suit she sported gave her figure a full, slightly sagging appearance.

She tried not to make a face at the sight she presented in the multicolored dress hanging almost to her ankles and gold sandals, reminding herself it was all for a good cause. Every time she looked at the happy face of her grandmother she knew she’d made the right choice, even if her parents still had reservations. It had taken Libby a long time to convince them just to give her plan a try. Three months, her father had stated with authority, three months’ trial period and then they’d, meaning him, would make a final decision.

“Reba, come get a doughnut!” her grandmother hollered, remembering her name for a change. She’d calmed down now that she had her breakfast and had joined some of her friends. They were making their way to one of the empty tables, laughing and talking as they moved along.

“Yes, join us, dear,” Joan encouraged. “After we eat, Vincent’s grandson is going to talk to us about fire prevention and the different types of fire extinguishers.”

“Yes, he’s going to tell us how to put a fire out,” Libby’s grandmother added, smiling. “He’s certainly lit a few fires around here!” Someone else chuckled.

“Gertie!” Joan chastised, turning her head to hide her own smile.

Is the woman actually blushing? Libby glanced around the room, looking for the retired Adonis that still had the power to make a woman turn pink at the mention of his name. If he was the same man who’d saved her grandmother, she wanted to thank him.
“Good timing too, considering what almost happened here a couple weeks ago,” another of her grandmother’s friends mentioned.

“Yes, thank God Logan was around then, too.”

It sounded like Logan was around a lot. Libby vaguely wondered if he had a love interest living there. “What makes him an expert on fires? Just because he’s a fireman doesn’t mean he’s an expert on fires,” she teased. She looked the strawberries over for just the right one. She popped one into her mouth, her lips curving upward at their sweet and juicy taste. Maybe she wouldn’t double her weight by the end of August...

After a couple seconds of devouring the delicious fruit, Libby glanced up and fell headfirst into a pair of laughing gray eyes. Her jaw dropped, and she knew for certain that she was staring into the face of Adonis himself. Oh my! She felt the heat spread up her neck and settle onto her strawberry stuffed cheeks. He looked wicked and wild, like something right off the cover of Playgirl. The gleam in his eyes was mesmerizing. There was nothing retired about this man—he was in the prime of life.

His face was bronzed by the wind and sun, and it was obvious he spent a good deal of his occupation outdoors. His lips were firm and sensual and curved with humor over her remark. Laugh lines fanned out from his eyes. His handsome features were rugged beneath the thick unruly cut of his streaked, tawny-gold hair. Libby’s eyes continued her silent inspection of the man, taking in the powerful build of his six-foot-plus body dressed in a sleeveless t-shirt that revealed the well-defined muscles of his powerful arms and faded jeans he looked like he was poured into. She couldn’t help dropping her curious gaze to the male attributes so clearly defined behind his straining zipper. There was actually a prominent bulge there! She caught her breath, praying her instant reaction to his charisma wasn’t noticeable.

Dear Lord! No wonder Joan had blushed at the mention of his name. And what gave him the right to dress like some hot stud around a community full of elderly, weak-hearted women? Did he want to give them all heart failure? Libby’s gaze shot back up to his face. She began to choke on the strawberry when it slid down her throat the wrong way.

Concern quickly spread across the man’s face. When he made a sudden move to come around the table she panicked and waved him back.

“Let me help you, ma’am, I’m a firefighter,” he explained as Libby coughed out of control.

Her eyes began to water and she felt her glasses slipping down her nose. She didn’t care what he was. She didn’t want him touching her in any way, shape or form. She shook her head, feeling her wig slip and grabbed for it wildly. “I’m not on fire,” she said between coughs, backing away from him. Her rump came in contact with a chair and she nearly stumbled to the floor.

“You look red enough to be on fire to me,” someone had the nerve to say with a loud laugh.

Was that her grandmother’s voice? Libby glanced in her direction to see the merriment dancing in her ageless eyes. “Gr—Margaret!” she stuttered in a shocked tone, praying her grandmother took the unspoken hint to behave herself.

“Don’t be so critical of the poor dear!” a frail voice said, chastising her grandmother for being insensitive. “Do something, Logan, help her.”

Adonis was moving closer and Libby knew if he touched her it would all be over. One attempt to dislodge the strawberry would send her padded boobs flying right out of the oversized bra she was wearing, and her secret would be exposed. She cleared her throat
and reached for someone’s water glass—she didn’t care whose—and gulped enough down to cool her suddenly overheated body. She was actually sweating, and that was big trouble for someone wearing the amount of heavy-duty makeup she was!

“Ma’am?”

Libby forced herself to meet Logan’s eyes. Steel had replaced the humor, turning his eyes into charcoal as they moved over her quickly and efficiently, all with respect and concern and not the least bit interest. Libby was a little disappointed. Well, how did she think he was going to look at her? With the same lust in his heart as she had in hers?

He was close, yet he kept his distance, obviously not sure of her. “I’m fine, young man. It just went down the wrong way.” For once Libby didn’t have to work at making her voice crack with age. “You can go put out someone else’s fire.” Laughter erupted around her and his brows rose and Libby realized what she said.

“You all right, Reba?” Vincent, Logan’s grandfather, made his way to Libby’s side in an uneven gait that was characteristic of him. Compliments of an old war wound, he’d told her. “Logan’s trained to save people, honey. He can do CPR and mouth to mouth.”

Mouth to mouth! Libby felt faint all of a sudden, her heart racing out of control by just the thought.

“Oh for goodness sake, Vincent, she’s okay!” Margaret snapped from her chair. “Come sit down so we can listen to what Logan has to say about fires. And bring me one of those cream-filled doughnuts when you come.”

“Guess I’m good for something around here,” he grumbled good-naturedly. He gave Libby a wink. “You go ahead, Logan. Say what you need to before the old fool burns herself up in a fire. She’s the reason you’re here.”

Logan’s eyes moved over Libby one last time, as though to judge for himself that she was okay. Satisfied, he gave a slight nod and turned away. Libby released a sigh of relief, still thinking about what Vincent had said about mouth to mouth. Just the thought of Logan’s sensual mouth on hers sent a sharp rush of intense heat throughout her body.

Goodness, she was already experiencing hot flashes!

* * * *

“Wasn’t that interesting? Logan sure is a handsome devil and he knows what he’s talking about too. If it weren’t for him I wouldn’t be here today.”

Libby grinned, deciding not to remind her grandmother that the little grease fire she’d caused had hardly been life threatening since it had happened out of doors during a cookout at the pool.

“Maybe next time you’ll make sure whatever you toss into a cardboard box isn’t still on fire,” Libby quipped, noticing how slowly her grandmother walked when there wasn’t the promise of free coffee and doughnuts at the end of her trek.

She couldn’t argue with her comments concerning Logan. He was more handsome than any man had a right to be. And just thinking about him stirred Libby’s blood surprisingly fast. She reached up and wiped the sweat off her upper lip. If she didn’t get out of these clothes soon and cool down she was going to suffer heatstroke.
Her grandmother decided to ignore her comment about the fire. “Did you happen to notice how gray Logan’s eyes were?”

As gray as silver lightning and just as exciting. “Yes,” Libby responded.
“Did you notice how tall he is?”
At least six foot four. “Yes.”
“And those manly muscles! Did you notice how well built he is?”
Like the Viking warrior on the cover of the romance novel she was reading. “Yes.”
“And that face. Have you ever seen such a strong, handsome face? You should see him when he’s all dressed up in his fireman garb. Vincent has pictures.”

Finally her grandmother’s words got through to her.

“Gram, if I didn’t know better I’d swear you have a crush on the man, when you should be interested in Vincent. He told me he’s been a widower for three years. I think he’s lonely.”

Margaret snorted. “He’s a tomcat on the prowl, chases anything in skirts.”

Libby’s brows arched high on her forehead. She’d been living with her grandmother for a week now and hadn’t seen anyone in a skirt. She started to pluck at her loose blouse. The heat was getting to her and it was only ten in the morning. She’d love to be able to throw on a tank top and pair of shorts.

Wouldn’t that cause a stir!

“Oh dear!” Libby followed her grandmother’s gaze, glancing up the huge oak tree until her eyes fell on the object of her interest, calmly sitting on a branch as though it was a throne.

“So, that’s where Rufus has been. Poor dear is probably stuck up there and can’t get down.”

“I’m sure he’ll come down when he gets hungry enough,” Libby pointed out, shooting the old tomcat a scowl. She and Rufus didn’t get along. And on top of that, she was tired of having to rescue him from the same predicament. Her grandmother seemed to have a selective memory when it came to remembering that Rufus had managed to come down the tree all by himself until she moved in.

“But what if he doesn’t? I can’t bear the thought of him being hungry. He’s been up there for at least two days already.”

“He’s probably made a meal of some poor old bird,” Libby said, continuing toward the house. “There’s probably a nest full of helpless babies he’s tormenting.”

“Come on, Rufus, come on down, baby. Come to Mama.”

Releasing a long breath, Libby halted when she heard her grandmother gently calling to her old cat. Guilt consumed her when she thought of how much her grandmother loved that beast. Libby couldn’t just go inside and not do something.

“Here, kitty, kitty.”

Libby frowned; Rufus hadn’t been a kitty for a long time. “Gram…” She quickly looked around when she realized her mistake. “Margaret, he’ll come down when he’s ready.”

“No, he won’t. He’ll go hungry. Or maybe he’ll fall because he’s so weak from hunger.”

“I can’t go up there after him, Gram,” Libby said beneath her breath. “I’m supposed to be an old woman, remember?”

The sudden gleam in her grandmother’s eyes should have warned Libby. “No, but you can go up there as my visiting granddaughter,” she pointed out without hesitation. “You have before.”

Libby glanced up at Rufus, then back at her worried grandmother. She couldn’t argue with that, and besides, she was hotter than heck. The thought of slipping into something
cooler, if just for a few moments, decided it for her. “Just give me a few minutes while I run inside and change.” Maybe if she were lucky Rufus would come down while she was changing.

It didn’t take her long to strip out of her clothes and peel the cumbersome body suit down. She groaned when the cool air hit her warm body, and then wiggled into a pair of cutoff jeans and a tank top. Snatching off the wig, she shook her hair free then quickly removed her makeup and washed her face before heading outside.

“I haven’t climbed that tree in at least five days, Gram, so you might end up with both of us stuck up there,” Libby said sarcastically, grasping the first limb and hoisting her up.

“I’ll call the fire department if that happens, dear.” Margaret laughed softly.

Libby released a grunt when she slipped, just managing to grab a branch in time. It didn’t take her long to reach the limb Rufus was perched on. For a moment they eyed each other with disdain. “Come on, Rufus.” Libby reached for the overweight orange feline. But as soon as she held her arms out, he released a hiss and scampered further up the tree. “Rufus! You…” She bit down on her lip to keep from swearing. He was higher than he’d ever gone.

“Careful, dear, don’t fall,” Margaret cautioned from below.

“I’m okay,” Libby grumbled, glaring at Rufus, who remained just out of reach as if he knew the trouble he was causing and enjoying every second of it. “But I’m not making any promises about Rufus,” she finished in a low tone so her grandmother wouldn’t hear. “Come on, Rufus, give me a break. I just want to get you down so Gram will stop worrying about you. Aren’t you hungry?” He didn’t look hungry; he looked like he could miss a week of meals and be okay. Libby continued to climb. “If I didn’t love Gram, you’d stay up in this tree until Christmas.”

“Not too high, dear!” Margaret warned loudly.

Libby could hear muffled voices beneath her, aware someone had joined her grandmother. Probably one of her neighbors. She didn’t glance down, keeping Rufus in eyesight as she continued to climb the giant oak. Once again she was within grabbing distance, only this time she didn’t lunge. If he climbed much higher she wouldn’t be able to follow him.

She offered the grinning cat a smile. “Hello, Rufus, you mean, ugly, smelly old cat,” Libby said in the sweetest voice she could muster. “You see that sweet little old lady down there? She loves you, so be a nice kitty and come here so we can both get out of this tree.”

All of a sudden Rufus’s eyes got big, his back arched like a tightly strung bow, and he hissed like Libby had never heard him hiss. For a moment she reared back, afraid he was going to lunge at her with his exposed claws. She forgot where she was, losing her balance. As she fell back, she let out a scream of pure fright.
“Is anything wrong, Margaret?”

Logan had stepped onto his grandfather’s porch to see the older woman standing at the base of the tree dividing their property, staring up toward the sky as though looking for a sign from God. He was going to leave her alone until he heard her talking. Then curiosity got the better of him.

“Oh, thank goodness you came along when you did, dear,” she began in a tone that told Logan she was worried sick about something. “My granddaughter climbed up the tree to rescue my cat and now it appears she’s stuck up there too.”

Logan glanced up and nearly had heart failure. Never mind that the kid had climbed high enough to break her neck if she should fall, but he was gazing at a pair of the best looking legs he’d seen in a long while. Long, shapely and tanned all over, disappearing beneath a pair of shorts that from his viewpoint didn’t do much to hide the shapely swell of her… He quickly slammed the brakes on where his thoughts were heading and averted his eyes. Damn, how old is Margaret’s granddaughter?

“I’m so worried my little Libby is going to fall,” Margaret said next to Logan, drawing his attention back to her. It was about that time he noticed several nearby neighbors, including his own grandfather, heading in their direction.

His glance returned to the girl in the tree, most of her body blanketed by a thick fall of red gold hair. She’d climbed higher, and higher still was the cat she was trying to rescue. He thought about his healing injuries and hesitated for only a second, and then began to climb. Saving cats wasn’t all that exciting, he’d had to do it once or twice. Experience reminded Logan that most felines came down when they were good and ready. But he couldn’t just stand by and not do anything when it involved a kid, no matter what his doctor told him. He didn’t call out to Libby as he moved closer to her, knowing that if he did he could scare her into falling. But he no sooner stopped directly beneath her when the cat spotted him and then all hell broke loose.

The cat went ballistic. Logan heard the kid scream. His heart stopped when he saw her lose her balance and begin to fall backwards. He didn’t have time to waste. In a lightning fast move he shoved himself up and over her body, catching her with his own and pinning her against the tree. “I’ve got you, honey!” he rasped, grabbing the limb over their heads and bracing himself for her full weight. The impact of her slight body sent a rivet of sharp pain through him, but Logan ignored it and held fast.

“Please don’t move.” He grated low in his throat and closed his eyes, fighting a wave of unexpected dizziness. He needed a moment for the pain to subside.

“What? Who…” She ignored his plea, wiggling around until she was facing him. His arms effectively held her trapped against the trunk of the tree, and at that moment Logan didn’t know what was worse, having her backside against him, or her breasts.
“Where did you come from?” she asked breathlessly in a surprisingly adult tone that immediately sharpened Logan’s instincts.

In the blink of an eye he came to the realization that Margaret’s granddaughter was anything but a kid. The womanly curves pressed against him were a testament to that and instantly wiped away the guilt of his earlier thoughts. He tried to chuckle but it came out like a groan. “I don’t think now is the time to discuss the birds and the bees.” His eyes captured hers, and Logan was reminded of someone, though he couldn’t think who.

“It’s a good thing you showed up when you did. I was about to fall.”

Logan’s gaze roamed over Libby’s pretty peaches and cream complexion, sliding down her slender throat and exposed collarbone before smoothing over her nearly naked shoulders. He tried not to look but failed miserably, lowering his eyes to take in the swell of her breasts above the tank top.

“Your grandmother said you were stuck up here.” It didn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out she wasn’t wearing a bra.

Her breasts, outlined so enticingly against the tee-shirt style top, were perfectly round. Her nipples were hard little crowns, pointing at him as if accusing him for being in that state. Damn! Logan felt something hot uncoil in his gut and realized it was arousal. The feeling moved to his cock. He inhaled deeply to try and calm down but all that did was fill his lungs with her warm, subtle fragrance.

“Well, I was doing just fine until you showed up and scared Rufus,” Libby pointed out, glaring up at the contented feline above them. “Thank you for saving my butt.”

As if knowing the two humans were displeased with him, Rufus suddenly went into action, hissing and crying threateningly like any cornered cat. Sensing what he was about to do, Logan leaned further into Libby. Shielding her with his body and taking the brunt of the angry cat as he scampered over them, continuing down the tree. Grunting in pain, Logan closed his eyes and sucked in his breath.

“Are you okay, Logan?”

No, he wasn’t okay. Besides Rufus using his shoulders and back for a ladder with those sharp claws, a pain of another nature shot through his body when his chest came in direct contact with Libby’s soft breasts and those pointed little nipples. It had nothing to do with the healing scars from the serious burn he’d received several months ago and everything to do with lust. He hadn’t been with a woman in months. He clenched his teeth and tried to ignore the full-blown arousal throbbing between his thighs.

“Logan?” A soft voice persisted, more concern in it than desire, which only showed that Libby was nowhere near the same state as he was at the moment.

He clenched his teeth and tried to think about anything that would kill the burning rush heating his blood. Being flush against Margaret’s shapely granddaughter reminded him of that fact. It also reminded Logan why he was living there. It wasn’t just his body that needed healing. Not once in the three months he’d been at Cypress Glen had he felt the urge to have sex. But then, until now he hadn’t come across anyone under the age of sixty.

“You’re beginning to scare me, Logan. I thought you were rescuing me,” Libby remarked with humor in her voice.

Logan’s eyes flew open. Not because he wanted to reassure Libby, but because it suddenly dawned on him that she’d called him by name. And not for the first time. “How did you know my name?” He didn’t recall any introductions between them. Something flickered in her lovely moss green eyes. The longest, thickest lashes he’d ever seen on a woman effectively shut
him out, falling against flawless skin that made him want to reach up and see if it was as smooth as it looked.

“Ah, didn’t you tell me?” She didn’t sound so sure, and she wouldn’t look him in the eyes.

“No.” Logan leaned away from Libby as much as he could without falling out of the tree before she became aware that he was aroused. Two nights ago at the bar down the street he’d had a woman plastered against him during a dance, and it hadn’t affected him in any way. Why now, and with her?

“Well, I, ah, must have heard Gram mention you. That’s right; you’re Mr. Knight’s grandson, the fireman.” She smiled, finally raising her catlike eyes.

Yeah, Logan supposed that made sense. He swallowed hard, falling headfirst into those innocent orbs before lowering his gaze to take in Libby’s full bottom lip. As though knowing how he was responding to her, she proceeded to dampen it with the tip of her small, pink tongue. Damn, this isn’t good. The urge to press his mouth to hers to see if her lips tasted as sweet as they appeared took him by surprise. With his luck she’d probably give him a shove that would send him tumbling to the ground, undoing months of rehabilitation and therapy.

“Are you two going to spend the day up there? Rufus came down half an hour ago!” Margaret’s voice cut through Logan’s thoughts, effectively dousing his hard-on and any notions he had about kissing Libby. For a moment he’d actually forgotten where they were.

“Maybe they’re both stuck up there now!” someone chimed in, getting a good laugh from the gathered crowd. “Need help getting down, Logan?”

Logan glanced down to see about twenty neighbors standing around the base of the tree, all staring up at them with huge grins on their wrinkled faces. It didn’t take much to amuse the elderly and his grandfather was no different.

“Do you think it’s safe to go down?” Libby questioned, her eyes dancing with amusement. “They look pretty hungry.”

They looked like sharks circling a dying whale. His gaze returned to hers, his mouth twitching. “Don’t you trust me to protect you?”

Libby’s smile grew wider. “You are a big, strapping fireman,” she said as though reminding herself. “I guess it will be okay, as long as you don’t toss me over your shoulder or anything.”

“Come on then. I’ll keep you between my body and the tree and we’ll take it one step at a time.” She didn’t as much as blink. “I promise not to let you fall. Just do me one favor.”

“And that is?”

“Let me control our movements.” Logan was thinking about the tender scars lining his chest. If she jabbed him in the wrong place the pain could very well send them both crashing to the ground. He waited for her nod. “Good, now turn back around so you’re facing the tree again.”

As Libby did as he asked Logan arched his back to give her room. He was still holding onto the thick branch over their heads and when she was finally facing the trunk again he relaxed against her slowly. He realized as soon as Libby’s bottom brushed against his fly that he should have thought it through. Now it was too late. All he could do was clenching his teeth and close his eyes as a moment of heightened pleasure spiraled through him.

“Frightened?” he asked when Libby caught her breath and stiffened. Had she felt something too? A breeze came from nowhere, sending the long silky strands of her hair swirling around them and binding them together.
Libby shook her head and Logan released a sigh of relief.
“Good. Now, just follow my lead.”
Climbing down turned out to be the longest journey of Logan’s life. Every step of the way, every movement, made him sharply aware of Libby’s lithe body brushing against his front, keeping him aroused to the point of pain. The light fragrance of her hair as it whipped about his face continuously teased his senses with something clean and mildly sweet. Innocence that screamed of wildness, and heaven.
“Are you okay?”
Her concern produced a chuckle from Logan that had little to do with humor. She wasn’t a kid; she had to know the state he was in. And her soft, barely audible gasps didn’t go unnoticed either. They told him she wasn’t unaffected by their close proximity. He resisted the urge to rub his hungry flesh against her, just to see what her response would be. Then squashed the idea by remembering they were little more than strangers.
It was a miracle they made it to the ground in one piece, even if they did fall the last few feet. Miscalculating the distance, Logan jumped, advising Libby to follow suit. All he knew was he had to get away from her and that was the quickest way he could think of. Only before he knew it he was on his back, and she was on top of him. He shut his eyes, feeling a hell of a lot more than a little discomfort on his chest. He thought about flipping Libby on her backside and planting one on her lips, but he couldn’t move. And besides, they were surrounded by a dozen or so curious on lookers.
“Is he dead?” someone asked in a bored voice that didn’t sound very concerned.
“I can’t tell if he’s breathing,” someone else commented.
“Your granddaughter looks comfortable though, Margaret.”
“He’s okay, just had the wind knocked out of him.” The closeness of his grandfather’s voice revealed he was near to where Logan and Libby lay beneath the tree. “You okay, boy?”
Logan grunted, praying that by the time he opened his eyes they would be all gone. Libby was squirming like an eel out of water and a man could only take so much. Her movements weren’t doing anything to diminish his hard-on and her hands seemed to be everywhere at once. His eyes bolted open and he growled in a voice that only she could hear.
“Stop moving, damn it!” Maybe he did come off a little hard but a mixture of sexual frustration and pain ruled his emotions.
Libby’s eyes opened wide and she stilled instantly. “I was just trying to find a safe place to put my hands,” she said in a hurt tone.
“That isn’t the problem, baby,” Logan explained roughly.
Something in his tone must have gotten through to her because all too soon she was blushing with embarrassment. “Oh.”
“Libby dear, hurry and get off Logan, he looks like he’s in pain,” Margaret rushed.
At that point Logan’s hands fell to Libby’s waist and he quickly and easily lifted her off his body and set her on the ground next to him, then jumped to his feet.
“You okay?”
“Just peachy,” Logan responded, nodding at his grandfather but glaring down at Libby, who was smiling sweetly up at him with all the innocence of the child he’d first thought she was.
There was something about her that still nagged at him, and when she glanced away Logan was certain it was because she sensed his perplexity. Is she afraid of
something? Her somewhat guilty actions proved she was and he was determined to find out why.

“Goodness, Libby, that’s the third time this month you’ve had to go up that tree for Rufus,” Lois from across the street said, not realizing what she’d just divulged to Logan. He reached down for Libby’s hand and tugged her to her feet. Why hadn’t he noticed her around before now?

“That’s how I get my exercise,” Libby joked, yanking down the back of her shorts as though it just occurred to her they were too short. “Maybe now Gram realizes he’ll come down on his own.”

Logan watched her movements, noticing how her back arched when she reached behind her, causing her perky little breasts to jut forward. Her wild hair stopped just short of the flare of her slim hips, gleaming with fire now that she was standing in the direct sunlight. He fist his hands, fighting the urge to slam them in his pockets. Afraid that if he moved anywhere near that zone it would only bring attention to the bulge behind his zipper.

“Well, I’m still not convinced he would have come out of that tree without a little persuasion,” Margaret joined in, bending to scoop up the old cat, which immediately began to purr. Her gaze flew to Logan. “Thank you for rescuing Libby.”

“I didn’t need rescuing,” Libby insisted, her glance daring him to rebuke her. But Logan had already heard enough to realize that her grandmother had set him up. The question was, why?

He smiled at Margaret anyway, never one to question the actions behind someone old enough to know better. “It was my pleasure, Margaret. Anytime.”

Libby’s mouth fell open and someone chuckled. The small crowd started to disperse now that the excitement was over. Logan had been staying with his grandfather long enough to know that anything out of the norm was considered thrilling and thus worthy of careful consideration. Gossip traveled like wildfire among the elderly in a tight-knit community. By coffee hour next Monday everyone in the community will have heard about the episode between the fireman and Margaret’s lovely granddaughter. By evening time they’ll be engaged. He scowled at the thought. He’d been engaged once and that was enough.

“Don’t forget bingo tonight, Margaret,” a plump woman who reminded Logan of Mrs. Claus said as she pulled herself into a golf cart. “And bring your friend with you, what was her name again?”

Margaret made an impatient sound. “You forget everyone’s name, Ruby, it’s—”

“They’ll be there,” Libby cut in, shooting her grandmother a look Logan found very interesting. He stood there and surveyed them for a long moment, trying to figure out what the deal was, and then shrugged deciding he didn’t care. He turned to catch up with his grandfather, who was walking back to the house.

“Logan, wait! Your back!”

He should have kept walking, but it wasn’t Libby’s voice shouting at him, it was Margaret’s. And Logan had been raised to respect his elders. Dismissing the amused look his grandfather shot him, he sighed reluctantly and turned around. “Yes, ma’am? What about my back?”

It was his grandfather who replied with a startled sound of concern. “Looks like Rufus used you for a sharpening post, boy. You’ve got blood all over your shirt.”
“Come to the house so we can doctor you up,” Margaret insisted. Her tone left no room for refusal. She didn’t wait for his reply either, just turned and started walking. “Those scratches have to be tended to at once.”

She disappeared through the front door before Logan could insist that he could take care of them. He knew the “we” included Libby and he didn’t know if he could stand being around her much more that day. He exchanged glances with his grandfather, looking for an ally.

The old man just grinned and shrugged. “Might as well give in and go. I’ve lived around Margaret long enough to know she’s a pistol when riled. And believe me; you don’t want to get on her bad side.”

Logan wanted to ask his grandfather to go with him but swallowed the childish thought. His gaze went to Libby, who was standing there smiling at the whole exchange. She’d slapped her hands on her shapely hips, her eyes flashing with bold amusement that warmed his blood and at the same time scared the hell out of him. At that moment he’d like nothing better than to wipe that seductive grin off her pretty face.

“What are you afraid of?” she had the nerve to ask.

What was he afraid of?
Libby led Logan through the front door and into the small kitchen without words, intensely aware that his eyes were on her. For the second time that morning she noticed he was too damn sexy. Several times while they’d been climbing down the tree she’d been conscious of her bottom against his fly, and something else, his erection. The fact that he was aroused had held her captivated and fueled her own desire. The fact that she turned him on fed her wounded ego.

Her gaze moved around the small kitchen. Where was her grandmother? She expected to see her waiting for them there with her first aid kit in hand, but the kitchen was empty. “Gram! We’re in the kitchen,” she called out, hoping her tone conveyed her wishes that she hurry up. Logan’s larger than life presence filled the small area, making Libby nervous.

“The first aid kit’s under the sink!” her grandmother hollered back. “Start without me, I’m temporarily tied up!” Tied up? Libby frowned but faced Logan anyway. “Take your shirt off, soldier,” she ordered and turned to the door beneath the sink. She couldn’t believe she had Adonis right there in her kitchen, and that he would soon be bare-chested. “I’ll have you fixed up in no time.”

With the kit in her hand, Libby turned back to face him. She was forced to take a step back, not realizing he’d moved closer to her. Her gaze fell in the vicinity of his impressive chest, unwillingly recalling what it felt like having her breasts crushed against him. She knew firsthand that Logan’s muscles were every bit as rock-hard and unbending as the old oak tree outside her grandmother’s door. A pleasant tingle raced through her body, zeroing right in on her puckering nipples. His nipples were taut, too. Libby wandered what he’d do if she were to put her mouth on one and roll it around on her tongue. Lord—where had that thought come from?

Her gaze wandered lazily up the thick muscles in his neck to the firm set of his jaw and tightly pressed lips. The tension on his face and the stony silence in his winter frost eyes showed his anger, but over what? That he was forced to be in her company again?

“You’re not scared, are you, Logan?” she teased, placing the kit on the counter next to him and opening it. Libby glanced his way, taking in his arched brow.

“Why would I be afraid of you?” Logan demanded, tugging his sleeveless tee-shirt over his head and ruffling his hair in the process. “Unless you’re going to sharpen your nails on me like that damn cat of yours. A few more scars aren’t going to make any difference now.”

“Rufus isn’t my cat,” Libby corrected him, pulling a cloth and some antiseptic from the kit before facing him again. Oh my! She paused from what she was doing, momentarily mesmerized by Logan’s naked chest. Adonis had a few puckered scars but it didn’t disguise the definition of muscles that even now were tightening beneath her curious gaze. She gulped, her heart skipping a beat.
“Not a very pretty sight,” he said at her hesitation. “There’s more.” Libby’s gaze slowly moved up his chest, detecting the anger in his clipped words. A muscle twitched in his lean jaw and then her eyes met his. What she saw there caused her breath to lock in her throat. Libby knew when a man lusted after her and it wasn’t always evident in outward signs. Logan’s fierce expression revealed his hunger.

“I wasn’t staring at your scars.” It was the truth. Libby had been enthralled with the powerful shape of his male form. How the width of his broad shoulders tapered to a lean waist and hips.

His jeans didn’t disguise the thickness of his solid thighs nor the fullness behind his zipper. Lord, he must be huge! Her body responded to the thought of what it would feel like being filled by such an impressive…then right in front of her eyes the object of her interest jumped. She raised her eyes to find Logan watching her like a predator waiting for the right time to swoop. “Gram!” she called out nervously.

“What are you afraid of?” Logan asked in a low tone, repeating her earlier challenge. Libby squared her shoulders. “Nothing. Turn around so I can douse those scratches with antiseptic.”

He complied, presenting his back, and Libby caught her breath on seeing the damage done by Rufus’ sharp claws. Despite the scratches marring his flesh, Logan’s shoulders and back were smooth, evenly tanned and beautifully sculptured. She found that her hand was shaking when she raised it to clean the pencil-thin lines beaded with blood.

Logan’s muscles tensed the second Libby touched the soaked cloth to his skin. “I’m sorry if I’m hurting you,” she said softly, gently dabbing the wounds. He only responded with a heavy sigh. “If it’s any consolation you don’t have to worry; Rufus has had all his shots.”

“I wasn’t worried about it.” His tone was short and abrupt, ending the conversation before it had really started. When all the blood was cleaned off, Libby reached for the tube of antibiotic cream and carefully spread some across each scratch. Beginning at his shoulders, she worked her way downward to the hollow in his back where it disappeared into his jeans. As her fingers smoothed the ointment into a scratch above his belt, Libby couldn’t help but admire his tight buns so enticingly displayed in well-worn jeans. She released a sigh that revealed more than it should have.

Without warning Logan spun around and he was suddenly facing her at only a breath’s distance. The kitchen was closing in on them. She would have taken a step back if it hadn’t been for the magnetic pull of gunmetal eyes.

She found her wrist seized. “That’s enough,” Logan said, his chest heaving with each breath, his expression sharp and hungry. He slowly pulled her closer.

Libby tried to swallow, aware of the powerful sexual pull between them. She opened her mouth to call for her absent grandmother but like a fish out of water, only gulped in air. Logan’s gaze fell to her mouth and the bottom of her stomach fell. He started to lower his head and she knew he was going to kiss her.

She leaned away as far as the counter against her back would allow. “What are you doing?” Her whisper was so soft that it was a wonder Logan could hear her.

The slightest grin lifted the corners of his mouth and his eyes glazed over with lazy intent. “Don’t you know when you’re about to get kissed?”

His arm curled around her waist and Libby was jerked against him. His crooked smile didn’t fool her; Logan reminded her of a dangerous wolf looking for an easy meal. Her gaze moved between his eyes and approaching mouth, her pulse racing with increasing desire.
“Gram!” It came out as a pitiful squeak.

Logan laughed softly, those sensuous lips of his moving ever closer. So close that Libby could feel his warm breath against her own mouth. She gasped. Just as he was about to plant one on her the phone began to ring, echoing loudly through the small kitchen. Libby jumped and laughed at the same time, but Logan didn’t so much as blink an eye. Slowly, as if he had all the time in the world, he allowed Libby to straighten. His hand uncurled without hurry, releasing her wrist. The arm around her waist slid away, allowing her to step back.

“Saved by the bell,” she joked in a trembling whisper. Neither one made any effort to grab the receiver on the wall by the door.

“You weren’t saved by anything.” His tone was slow and lazy.

“For goodness sake, someone pick up that phone!” Margaret rushed into the room with a stern look. She gave them an once-over then walked to the phone. “What ails you two?”

Logan slipped his shirt back on. “Stay away from me, Libby,” he said, surprising her. Hadn’t he been about to kiss her? “Unless all you’re interested in is just plain sex, because that’s all any woman will get from me.”

Libby couldn’t imagine having sex with someone like Logan would be anything but plain, and didn’t believe him. Oh, she believed he wanted her to stay away from him, but his comment was just a tool to see it done. She thanked God her grandmother was caught up in a conversation and hadn’t heard his remark.

What was he afraid of, that she wanted something from him? Well, he could relax. She wasn’t interested in a relationship. Scott had broken her of that. Apparently someone had cured Logan of that too. Why else did he sound so bitter? As he continued to stand there, filling the kitchen with his masculine presence, Libby straightened her slim shoulders and raised her chin a notch. Perhaps he hadn’t meant his words to be a challenge, but Lord it pushed her buttons.

She brought her hand up, using the tip of her fingernail to draw an imaginary line down the center of his chest until she reached his belt buckle. The whole time their gazes clung, and Libby had the satisfaction of seeing Logan’s pupils dilate. She had the crazy urge to see what he would do if she allowed her finger to continue down, over the belt and further, outlining the ridge in his jeans. Only her dear grandmother’s presence prevented her from carrying out her thought.

She made sure her grandmother was deep into conversation before saying, “That’s a very interesting proposition, Logan. I happen to like sex—a lot of it. Let me think it over and get back to you.” With each word uttered Logan’s brows raised a notch higher. He stared at her for a long moment before turning and leaving, with a curse.

Libby released a breath she hadn’t known she was holding, her heart racing in her chest. She walked to the screen door and watched Logan’s sexy gait until he disappeared into Vincent’s house. She wondered what he’d do if she were to take him up on his ridiculous offer. Why hadn’t her grandmother warned her that the very hunk who’d been around to put out her little fire was none other than her neighbor’s grandson, and that he lived right next door? Well, temporarily anyway.

“We have to hurry and get ready for bingo,” Margaret said as soon as she hung up the phone. Her eyes moved around the kitchen. “Where did Logan disappear to?”

“He went home, Gram. And bingo isn’t until tonight.” Libby’s lips curled as she made her way to her bedroom. Bingo, at her age! If her friends found out they’d never let her live it down.
“Bingo!”
A sea of gray and white heads began to bob like apples in a bucket of water as everyone searched through the crowded room for the lucky winner. Libby guessed there were at least a hundred people present in the small community hall. There wasn’t a vacant chair anywhere and the tables were full of bingo cards, chips and markers.

“Bingo!” A second person called out, which meant they had to share the pot of forty-seven dollars. More than once Libby hid a grin, lowering her head so no one would notice. If anyone had asked her a month ago what bingo was she would have laughed and said it was the name of a dog.

“Look at that old fool.” Libby grunted after being elbowed in the ribs by her grandmother. “Just because he won twenty-three dollars. You’d think it was a million,” Margaret grumbled.

“Twenty-three and a half,” Libby corrected, returning Vincent’s enthusiastic wave. The fact that Logan was sitting next to him unnerved her, but there was no way he’d recognize her now. She could ogle him till her eyes fell out and he’d just think it was some crazy old lady with raging hormones.

She watched the muscles flex in his arms as he ran his hands through his thick hair, clearly ill at ease. Maybe he was feeling the same way she was about being there. He had no business flaunting his muscular body in that clinging tee-shirt. What was he trying to do, give the women at his table a heart attack?

“What are you grinning at?” Margaret asked, following the direction of Libby’s interest.
Libby shrugged. “I think you like Vincent,” she began, desperate to put the object of her curiosity on him and off Logan.

Margaret snorted. “That shows what you know, young’un. I…”

“Gram!” Libby leaned in close. “Be careful or you’ll give me away.” Her eyes touched on the people sitting closest to them, thankful to see everyone was intent on setting up for the next round and could care less what was happening around them.

Her grandmother made a sound, waving Libby off in a gesture that said she was worried over nothing. Libby’s gaze shot toward Logan again. It struck her funny bone that Vincent had managed to coerce him into playing bingo. She couldn’t help wondering what his story was. Libby knew he was there recuperating from an accident. But her instincts told her there was more to Logan’s reasons for hiding out at his grandfather’s. His reaction to her that afternoon had her convinced it was woman problems. His strong suggestion that she stay away from him couldn’t have been clearer. He’d practically uttered the same exact warning she’d screamed at Scott just before she stormed out the door of their apartment not to return.

Trouble with the opposite sex caused her ex-fiancé’s face to swim before her bifocal eyes. What a rat he’d turned out to be! And her parents liked him. If they knew half the things he’d done to her before she smartened up and sent him on his way, they’d be appalled. Her breakup with Scott had been a long time in coming. The signs he’d been cheating on her had been there for a long time, only she’d brushed them aside. Then he’d gone too far, and her days of making excuses for his actions were over.
The night in question came to mind, like it had happened yesterday. Scott had just returned home from a business trip that had gone from one night to a whole weekend. Libby would never forget the look on his face when she opened his suitcase to unpack, only to discover it filled with women’s clothing. She could grin now, thinking about it and the long silence that had followed as he stood there, staring with disbelief at the sexy undergarments tossed haphazardly on top. He’d mistakenly grabbed his girlfriend’s suitcase instead of his own. After that Libby had packed a bag and left.

And he’d been trying to get her back ever since. She couldn’t understand why. Cheating on her was obvious proof there was something lacking in their relationship, and that she hadn’t made him happy.

“Bingo!”

Libby started, realizing she hadn’t even been playing. “I’m going for a drink, want one, Margaret?”

“Break’s not for another ten minutes,” was all she said, not looking up as she prepared the twelve bingo cards in front of her.

Libby didn’t know how she did it when she could barely keep up with two. With a shrug she left the table, weaving her way around the various chairs of people in her way. She was going to have to walk right past Logan, and was about to swerve in another direction when Vincent glanced up and caught her eye. “Evening, Reba,” he said with a big smile.

She couldn’t very well ignore him now. “Hi, Vincent, I saw you win earlier, congratulations.” Libby tried her hardest not to glance at Logan but she was very much aware of his silent scrutiny. Swallowing, she decided she’d better look at him or he might get suspicious. “And how are you doing tonight, young man?” She pushed her glasses up her nose so Logan couldn’t get a clear view of her eyes.

His friendly smile took her breath away. It also sent a flash of unexpected desire through her body. “Fine, ma’am. I can’t remember the last time I’ve had so much excitement,” he joked good-naturedly.

“Logan’s a good grandson,” Vincent piped in, visually ruffling Logan’s blonde hair. “Not every grandson would spend his evening keeping his old grandfather company at bingo.”

“Yes, well…” Libby tried to smile but it was hard when it suddenly felt like a furnace burned inside her body. It had to be the lack of air conditioning. They never turned on the air, or if they did kept it on low. And she was dressed to cover anything the body suit didn’t disguise. “We should all be so lucky.” She grabbed the collar to her long-sleeved blouse and began to fan herself.

“Are you all right, Reba?” There was real concern in Vincent’s cracked voice. “You look danged flushed all of a sudden. Maybe you should sit down.”

“Hot flashes,” Libby answered quickly, forgetting that most women her supposed age were well past that stage. She pushed her glasses back up when they proceeded to slip down her nose. Lord, she was melting right before their eyes. “I was just going for a drink.”

“Why don’t you go with her, Logan, just in case she feels faint or something,” Vincent advised. “You’re not playing bingo anyway.”

“No need, really. I’m fine.” Libby didn’t care if her sharp voice gave cause for raised brows. She turned and walked as fast as she could to the concession stand, resisting the urge to look over her shoulder because she knew Logan was there. She smiled at the man selling drinks and snacks. “Can I please have a glass of water?”
He handed her a glass. “That will be a nickel for the glass and ice. The water fountain is around the corner.”

A nickel? Libby didn’t have a penny on her. “Oh damn…” she swore beneath her breath, forgetting about Logan.

“Here, let me,” he said, his breath stirring the hair at the back of Libby’s neck.

She reached up to stop it from tickling her, turning at the same time. She made the mistake of glancing down just in time to catch Logan with his hand in his jean pocket. The action caused the material over his zipper to stretch to the max, outlining what she already knew was a very sizeable body part.

Oh Lord! Libby turned hotter, not realizing her mouth had fallen open as she waited for Logan to produce the nickel he was digging for. Didn’t the blasted man ever wear anything other than skintight jeans? She began to fan herself in earnest, unaware that in doing so a couple buttons came undone at her throat. Logan’s eyes narrowed on her. Misunderstanding the frown that followed

Libby quickly commented, “Goodness, it’s warm in here.”

“Maybe you’d better sit down, ma’am, your face looks hot. I’ll get you that water.”

Libby didn’t bother protesting, glad for the break when Logan disappeared around the corner with her glass of ice. Maybe now was a good time to escape. But he wasn’t gone long enough. She took the water from him, careful not to touch his fingers, and drank it down greedily. She wouldn’t be surprised if steam rolled off her body.

“Are you wearing anything under that blouse?”

What? Libby’s eyes widened with shock. Yeah, she was wearing something beneath her blouse, but she doubted he was talking about a lacy bra. “Excuse me? I-ah…what?” She realized she was stammering but surely she hadn’t heard him correctly.

“You look overheated,” he explained, concern in his expression. “It’s the middle of summer and if you’ll pardon my observations, ma’am, you’re a little overdressed. If you take off that warm blouse...”

“Young man!” Libby gasped, within an inch of tossing her darn glasses away as she pushed them up her nose for the hundredth time. She was sweating like a pig, positive her glasses weren’t going to be the only thing slipping off her face before long. She tried to get up but Logan was standing too close and she lost her balance, landing back in her seat with an undignified grunt. “Oh!”

“Let me help you,” Logan insisted, taking her by the arm before she could find her voice.

“I don’t need your help!” Libby said sharply, feeling the sweat roll down her brow. “I’m perfectly capable of undressing myself!” What was she saying? The shocked look spreading across Logan’s expression gave Libby a quick dose of reality. She unwillingly met the curious stares of the people sitting at the table nearest them. “I mean I’m not wearing anything under this!”

Oh Lord, she hadn’t meant to say that either. Libby just wanted the floor to open up and swallow her. If there was anything worse than an oversexed teenager making a play for an older woman, it was an old woman who had the hots for a man young enough to be her grandson. She couldn’t see any way out of the hole she’d dug. For a moment she stared up at Logan, forgetting all about her disguise. Another wave of heat enveloped her body when she allowed her eyes to touch on that chiseled mouth, wondering what it would taste like. Would it soften with a kiss? Would her toes curl? Would he mind if she nibbled on that sexy bottom lip just a little bit?

“Ma’am?”
It was obvious by the concern in Logan’s tone that he didn’t have a clue what was going through Libby’s mind. And why should he? “I need to go to the bathroom,” Libby managed to get out, jumping to her feet. “By myself!” The action caught Logan by surprise and he jumped back, having no choice but to let her step around him.

“Bingo!”

Libby recognized her grandmother’s ecstatic voice, glancing up in time to see her raising her arms in victory, but she didn’t let it keep her from continuing to the bathroom. Just as she was about to close the door she heard the announcement that there would be a ten-minute break. Once inside she leaned against the door, wondering if there was a back way out of there. Maybe she could crawl out the window, only there wasn’t one. Almost immediately someone began pushing the door from the other side and Libby had no choice but to let them in. It didn’t take long for the tiny bathroom to fill up and she slipped back outside, thanking God when she didn’t see any sign of Logan. Everyone was up and moving around, stretching their legs and visiting with friends at different tables. Some were lined up at the concession counter for something to drink, or a snack.

“Li—Reba, dear, are you okay?”

Libby swung around at the sound of her grandmother’s concerned voice. “Actually no, I’m afraid I have a terrible headache coming on. I think I’ll skip the next round of bingo and head home.”

“Yes, maybe that would be best. I’ll see you later.”

The headache wasn’t a total lie. There was a dull pounding behind her eyes that indicated she was in for a doozy if she didn’t find a way to wind down, and cool off. She couldn’t wait to get out of her disguise, practically running home. One thing was certain—she was going to have to learn to ignore her run-ins with Logan or she was going to be a basket case by the end of summer. She wondered how long Logan planned on staying. Surely his recuperation was almost over. He certainly didn’t appear to have any physical impairment that would keep him from doing anything he wanted.

She was half-naked by the time she reached her bedroom, ripping off things as she went along. Yanking the curly wig off her head, she shook her hair free, running her fingers through the silky strands and massaging her sore scalp. Maybe a swim at the community pool would help relieve the stress. It would certainly cool her down.

Libby’s gaze shot to the clock on her dresser when it dawned on her that the pool had closed an hour ago. Well, she needed to cool down and at least she would have the pool to herself. She quickly changed into her swimsuit, grabbed a towel and wrote her grandmother a note. Reba was gone and Libby was going for a swim.
Something was bothering Logan only he couldn’t put his finger on what it was. His
instincts were usually good but lately they’d failed him when he needed them most. Maybe he’d
been at Cypress Glen too long. The sort of stimulation offered for the elderly was a little too
tame for him. Even if his grandfather’s social life was a lot more active than his was at the
moment, he needed something more electrifying than a night of bingo, which was exactly where
he’d left his grandfather a short time ago.

Logan didn’t know why the thought of something exciting caused him to think about
a little redhead in a tank top and cutoffs. Libby was trouble. He didn’t need instincts to
know that. And he’d do well to stay the hell away from her. At least that might not be too
difficult, unless she made a habit of visiting Margaret often.

The moonlight guided Logan directly to the gate leading to the pool. He turned the
handle, swearing beneath his breath when he found it locked. Why the heck would they think it
necessary to lock the pool when the whole darn place was surrounded by a high-tech security
gate system? It didn’t make sense. He stared at the shimmering water, seeing the moon
reflected upon the quiet surface. It was hot and he’d been counting on that swim. He
wondered how much trouble he could get into disregarding the rules and going over the top. It
wasn’t all that high. Tossing his towel to a nearby chair he grabbed the top of the gate,
heaved himself over and landed spryly on his feet.

He went straight to the deep end and dove in without hesitation, taking several
vigorous laps from one end of the pool to the other, before stopping in the shallows by the
stairs to catch his breath. Swimming had been about the only exercise he’d been allowed
since his accident. And being in the cool water felt damn well against his healing body. But
lately Logan had been working out at the small gym on the property. Sooner or later he was
going to be cleared to go back to work and he wanted to be ready. He was ready now.
Mentally if not physically, though some of his doctors might argue that point with him. Being
pinned beneath a burning tree could make some firefighters toss in their hats and walk away for
good.

Logan was thinking about how close he’d come to making that decision when a small
sound penetrated his silent musings. He was resting against the edge of the pool, water
lapping around his neck. He turned his head enough to see someone doing the very thing he’d
done a few minutes earlier, only with a little more grace. Damn, all he’d wanted was a nice quiet
swim alone. Maybe with a little luck they’d never notice he was there in the shadows. He
remained quiet.

It was too dark to see who it was but once they stepped into the moonlight and
dropped their towel Logan got a clear view of a slim form and jutting breasts. As the woman
continued to the deep end he sucked in his breath, his heart literally ceased beating.
Without hesitation she reached behind her to undo her bikini top, letting it float to the pool deck before shimmying out of her bottoms with enough hip action to make a belly dancer jealous. She stepped up onto the diving board, and for a moment she was suspended in a slim ray of moonlight.

He released a low whistle between his teeth, realizing at that moment the seductive nymph he was ogling was none other than Margaret’s granddaughter, Libby. He tried to swallow, almost choking on his tongue. Her form was willowy slim yet had all the right curves to tempt a man into losing his mind. Her long hair hid her breasts from his view, stopping just short of her belly button. The lower half of her body was hidden in the shadows. The fact he couldn’t see her clearly didn’t stop his cock from swelling.

His body didn’t have any trouble recalling what her luscious bottom felt like against it. What her breasts had felt like smashed against his chest. His mouth ached to taste hers. Then suddenly she raised her arms and flipped that fiery mane behind her shoulders before diving gracefully into the cool water. It was the sound of her hitting the water that broke the spell Logan was in, and for the first time in what seemed a lifetime he sucked in air.

Damn! His hand moved down his body to adjust his boxer style swimsuit, but the wet material wouldn’t cooperate. It clung to his tingling shaft like a glove. He couldn’t remember getting a full-blown hard-on so fast. His gaze remained fixed on the water in front of him, wondering where Libby would appear. She surfaced about halfway in the middle, running her hands over her face to brush the hair out of her eyes.

Logan was mildly surprised she hadn’t spotted him yet. Maybe she had a lot on her mind. He watched her wade to the other side of the pool, where a large tree grew close to the deck. For a moment she disappeared in the dark shadows it cast upon the water. His eyes narrowed, adjusting against the darkness until he could make her out again. He watched as she hoisted herself out of the water and headed back to the diving board.

This time when Libby stepped into the moonbeam Logan clearly saw everything the lady had to offer. Her hair was wet and slick, sticking to her body. He took in her lissome figure again, her shapely breasts and slim waist, the graceful curve of her hips and long, lithe legs. His eyes finally narrowed on the tuff of hair covering her mound. His shaft responded by throbbing painfully, hungry to slip inside her warm body. He had no doubt she’d sheathe him in tight, wet heat.

Hot.

As she dove a second time, Logan slowly waded forward until he knew he was in the moonlight when she surfaced. He sensed Libby’s awareness of him long before he heard her soft gasp of surprise.

“Oh my God!” She exclaimed. “I thought I was alone!”

Logan could make out the slightest movement of her arms as she fought to keep her head above water. “You could have warned me you were here,” she accused spiritedly.

“And miss the show?”

There was a brief pause. “I hope I didn’t disappoint you,” she said with mild sarcasm. “There’s nothing indecent about the naked body,” he defended himself, wading slowly closer. It was as though he was being guided by his rock-hard shaft as it strained toward the source of its hunger. “Are you ashamed of it?”

“No, I’m just not in the habit of parading around naked in front of strangers I haven’t slept with...yet.”
Her words enflamed Logan, which he was sure were her intentions. His breath turned heavy. “Strangers? We’re hardly that, or have you forgotten I’ve already held you in my arms?”

“Don’t remind me,” Libby said. “If you were any kind of gentleman you’d leave.”

“What makes you think I’m a gentleman?”

“You’re a fireman,” she reminded him curtly. “Surely firemen have honorable scruples.”

“I’m a man first,” Logan corrected softly, making certain Libby understood that. “Would it make you feel any better if I removed my trunks?” he joked.

Libby let out an unladylike snort that quickly turned into a husky laugh. Logan had the feeling she didn’t like the little sound of betrayal and ducked beneath the surface to cover it up. He laughed, but didn’t follow her. She couldn’t go far, and a hunch told him she wasn’t about to give him the satisfaction of viewing her shapely form again. The light of the moon was enough to reveal that Libby had swum back to the deep end. She reached for something near the diving board, reminding Logan she’d dropped her swimsuit there.

There was a trace of laughter in his tone when he realized what Libby was doing. “Need any help?”

“No!” She turned around as though to make sure he hadn’t moved from the middle of the pool. “Just stay where you are!” She quickly turned back toward the deck.

That was all it took for Logan to do the exact opposite. He didn’t like being told what to do, especially by some smart mouth troublesome female who was snapping at him as though he was a five-year-old in trouble for stealing a cookie. Her tone reminded him too much of what it had been like growing up with five older sisters who never wanted him around. He didn’t think twice about kicking off the bottom of the pool and swimming in her direction, surfacing right behind her.

A grin spread across Logan’s face as he watched Libby struggle to slip into her bikini bottoms with one hand while the other gripped the edge of the deck to keep afloat. He waited until she reached for her top and then let her know he was there.

“I told you I’d help you.”

“Oh!” Libby shrieked, and spun around. The bikini top slipped from her fingers and Logan watched it float away on the surface of the water.

The situation wasn’t so amusing anymore when he raised his eyes to realize the light of the moon was resting squarely on Libby’s breasts. The crystal clear water did nothing to shield how perfect they were, or the fact that there was enough flesh to fill his hands, and then some. And he’d thought her skinny? In spite of the cool water Logan felt his blood pressure reach the boiling point, his heart rate skyrocket. He was about to explode and for a crazy moment he was tempted to reach out and touch Libby.

His balls tightened beneath his cock, demanding release of the lust bubbling there. A wise man would turn and swim away from her before he did something stupid. He’d made bigger mistakes but right now he felt like this was the granddaddy of them all. It wouldn’t take much to make him lose control. Damn…he wanted to lose control!

“Why don’t you just kiss me and get it over with?” She sounded angry but Logan quickly picked up on the huskiness of her tone.

He arched a brow. “What makes you think I want to kiss you?” he countered arrogantly, grinning in spite of himself. Kissing her wouldn’t do much to eliminate the lust fire in his blood. Contradicting what his body wanted, Logan retrieved Libby’s bathing suit top where it
came to rest at the side of the pool. He held the tiny scrap out to her and she snatched if from his fingers with a grudging thank you. Instead of putting it on she held it against her breasts.  

“How long are you going to be here visiting your grandmother?” he suddenly demanded. Maybe he could disappear for a few days. He had a friend in Ft. Lauderdale who’d been bugging him to visit.  

“I, ah, on and off the whole summer,” Libby replied with clear reluctance.  

Logan watched her carefully, interested in her slight hesitation and wondering at the reason behind it. His curiosity piqued when she refused to look him in the eye. Then her words registered and he frowned. Great, they were going to be running into each other on a fairly regular basis.  

“Do you mind pretending you’re a gentleman long enough to turn around and give me a moment of privacy?” Libby questioned in a voice dripping with feigned sweetness.  

“Who’s there?” A voice boomed out of the darkness without warning, startling them both. They’d been so absorbed with each other they hadn’t heard anyone approach. Then suddenly there was a flashlight beam directly on them, from someone standing on the other side of the fence.  

“I bet it’s Ben and Maurine,” a feminine voice whispered half under her breath. “They’re always breaking the rules.”  

Libby gasped and Logan moved until his body shielded hers from the light. But his chivalry cost him. He could feel her breasts brushing against his chest. Those hard little nipples were causing him a mixture of pain and sweet pleasure as they raked mercilessly across his scars.  

“Well, speak up! We aren’t blind; we can see you!”  

“It’s me, Mr. Kramer,” Logan replied, recognizing his grandfather’s poker buddy’s voice. “Logan.”  

“Oh, it’s Vincent’s grandson, Harry,” the woman said with relief. “That nice, handsome fireman. Harry and I are on patrol tonight, dear,” she explained in a friendly tone.  

Libby chuckled softly but didn’t remove her hands where they’d fallen on Logan’s shoulders. She was using him to stay afloat, and the buoyancy of the water caused their bodies to bounce against each other.  

“We’re sorry about breaking the rules,” he offered.  

“Who’s that with you?” the woman asked.  

Logan glanced down into Libby’s eyes. “She’s a…friend,” he replied, not sounding too sure.  

“A girlfriend, dear?”  

“Well, she’s certainly a girl. I don’t know if she’s a girlfriend, yet,” Logan joked.  

He couldn’t take much more. With her hands upon his shoulders Libby’s nipples rubbed along his chest like little fingers, keeping him aroused. “How long are you two on patrol tonight?” he asked, attempting to change the subject. Then he felt her pelvis brush against his hard-on and groaned, a low sound like an animal in pain. His hands slipped down from her waist to her hips until he felt the spaghetti thin straps holding her swim suit bottom in place. Logan was sure he felt her slight shudder when his fingers slipped beneath the tie, running along the edge of it. He couldn’t help wondering why she was allowing him such liberties. Could it be that she wanted him as much as he did her?  

“From eight to ten.”  

From eight to ten? Logan had no idea what they were talking about, acutely attuned to the tempting goddess in front of him.
“For goodness sake, June, let’s leave these love birds alone so they can get on with, ah, whatever it is they were in the middle of.”

They weren’t in the middle of anything, but before Logan could tell them that they turned off the light and left. He held Libby’s gaze, swallowing hard when she brushed against his erection a second time. He wondered if she did it on purpose. His fingers continued to trail along the tie to her bikini bottom, all the way to where the tiny triangle of cloth covered her mound. She sucked in her breath. He hesitated, waiting for her to say no. When she didn’t he took that as an invitation and slipped his fingers inside.

Her gasp was sharp and telling. Logan felt her hands clench into his muscles. She arched her hips against him. His fingers toyed with the soft curls covering the most private part of her before tenderly running along the velvet soft lips guarding the core of her. He ran his tongue from the base of her throat up to the sensitive spot behind her ear, and then suckled gently at the delicate lobe. His finger flicked across her clit.

“Oh!” She trembled violently against him.

Logan ground his hips against her thigh, finding some relief at the contact, realizing it wouldn’t take much effort to make him come. He wanted to come! He lowered his head, fully intending to take her mouth. She made it easy by turning her face upward toward his. Then the inevitable happened. The sound of voices reached them as bingo had come to an end and everyone began leaving the community center next to the pool.

The moment between them was abruptly over and Libby pushed him away so she could slip into her top. Logan turned and headed for the shallow end, giving her privacy and proving he could be a gentleman when he wanted.

“Thank you for, ah, shielding me,” Libby said from behind him.

Thank you for raking my chest with your hard little nipples and turning me on, Logan wanted to snap right back at her. But he wisely kept his mouth shut. He was glad when he turned again and she was in the shadows, where he couldn’t see her. He could at least pretend that she wasn’t there. Ignoring the ache in his cock was another matter.

“I guess I’ll be going,” she murmured after a moment.

So much for pretending she wasn’t there. In the next instant Libby was in the moonlight again, swimming toward Logan until she could touch bottom. His eyes followed her when she slowly waded toward the steps, her enticing form becoming more visible with every step she took. He’d already seen her naked, so Logan wasn’t expecting much could top that.

How wrong he was. Libby’s curves outlined in the brief bikini whet his appetite more than he would have thought possible. The little scraps of nothing only covered what it needed to. With her long hair plastered to her body she looked like a mythical mermaid rising out of the water. And Logan nearly swallowed his tongue when she glided past him up the steps. He closed his hands to keep from reaching out and grabbing her to him. And then what? Pull her down onto his lap and make love to her? His cock twitched wildly with the thought.

“Don’t leave on my account,” he finally said, sorry he’d cut her swim short. He watched her grab up her towel and brings it around her hips, hiding those magnificent legs from his view.

“I just wanted a dip to cool off,” she admitted, then paused, glancing down at him. Logan wasn’t sure but he thought he could make out the ghost of a smile on her face. “I was hot.”

Yes, so was he. When he didn’t comment she turned and walked away. And it was then that Logan took a deep breath, not realizing he’d been holding it until then. Damn… He hoped
his run-ins with Libby were few and far between. For the first time he was glad his grandfather lived in a retirement community so Libby’s visits would have to be sporadic. This meant, with a little luck, he could avoid her.

Chapter 5

“Cart patrol! Gram, what have you gotten me into now?” Libby rushed out with mild irritation, forgetting to lower her voice. The plate she was washing slipped from her fingers, crashing back into the sink and soaking the front of her flowered dress all the way through to the heavy padding beneath. “Darn it!”

“Hush your voice, honey,” Margaret cautioned from the rocking chair she was sitting in, just outside on the enclosed porch. “The neighbors might hear you.”

Libby rolled her eyes, biting the inside of her cheek to keep from snapping something back. Especially when she could hear the smile in her grandmother’s voice and knew she was teasing her. She loved the old woman dearly but the heat was starting to get the best of her. She could feel the sweat rolling down between her breasts. For some strange reason being hot made her think of Logan.

“You’re very quiet in there, Reba, cat got your tongue?” Margaret chuckled.

Libby’s eyes automatically searched out Rufus, who was lying like a beached whale on the small rug in front of the stove. “I was just wondering why you can’t go with Vincent tonight,” Libby lied, letting the water down the drain after washing the last glass. “After all, you’re the one who signed up for it.”

Margaret made an impatient sound that carried to the kitchen. “I told you, I’m getting one of my headaches. By the time eight o’clock rolls around I’ll be in bed.”

Libby knew when her grandmother started in with one of her migraines she could be bedridden for days. “I’m sorry,” she began, instantly sympathetic. She stepped out onto the porch, drying her hands on a towel. “Do you want one of your pills?”

Margaret smiled up at her. “No, thank you, dear, I already took one.” Her smile quickly disappeared. “Will you go for me tonight? We’re not supposed to go out alone and I’d hate to let Vincent down.”

“That’s what you said last night. I’m going to go with you, Gram.” Libby glanced in the direction of Vincent’s house, wondering where Logan had gone. His motorcycle wasn’t in the driveway next to Vincent’s small sedan. If he were home she imagined he could go in her place. She released a sigh, unwillingly recalling what happened between them the other night. If they hadn’t been interrupted she had no doubt they would have made love.

“What exactly will we be doing tonight, anyway?”

“Neighborhood watch, dear. I’ve told you about it. Pairs of us take turns riding around the neighborhood in a golf cart for a couple hours after dark, protecting the residents. If we spot anything suspicious we’re supposed to call the police. There’s a canvas bag on the cart with all kinds of supplies in it like bug spray, a cell phone, flashlights.”
Libby supposed she and Logan were lucky the police hadn’t been called when they’d been discovered at the pool after hours. Had it only been a week ago? And he’d been gone ever since. Not that she cared. Liar! For the first time in her life she’d been reckless, and it had felt good. He had felt good. Pleasant warmth pooled between her thighs when she thought about his fingers there. Teasing her with bits of heaven and hell.

“I’m surprised you’re willing to let me drive around with Vincent by myself after dark, since you’re convinced he’s after me,” Libby joked. “What happens if he gets fresh?”

“Bah, the old fool’s full of hot air and that’s all,” Margaret responded, surprising Libby. “If he puts the move on you push him out and make him walk back.”

Libby thought about it for a moment, not at all worried about Vincent. But going on cart patrol would certainly break up the monotony of just one evening in a row of many to come. She wasn’t the type to sit in front of the TV, and could only stomach so many reruns of The Golden Girls. But then, she’d known what it was going to be like when she made the decision to become Reba and move in with her grandmother. Besides, she was doing it for love.

It was that exact reason that prompted her to say, “Maybe I shouldn’t leave you alone tonight.”

“No, no, I’ll be fine. You go get ready. Once my pills kick in I won’t feel a thing for hours. All I need is rest.” To prove her point she leaned her head back against her chair and closed her eyes, effectively dismissing Libby.

Smiling, Libby hurried to her bedroom to get ready. She was just putting the finishing touches on her makeup when she heard a rap on the door, indicating Vincent had arrived. She knew she was overdressed for the hot July evening but could do nothing about it. Even a dig through her grandmother’s closet hadn’t produced anything useful. As she walked to the door, she chuckled at her reflection in the large mirror over the sofa. Hopefully Vincent’s eyes weren’t that great, and under the cover of darkness he wouldn’t pick up on the fact that she wasn’t wearing a slip beneath her dress. She’d eliminated some of the padding too, in exchange for comfort.

“I’m coming!” Libby called out when there was a second knock. “Gram’s in bed,” she continued, hoping Vincent toned down his eagerness.

The front door was still open but it was too dark to see Vincent through the screen door. Reluctantly slipping into a lightweight sweater, Libby flipped on the light switch just as she reached the door. “Oh!” She stopped short, meeting the seriousness in Logan’s eyes and wondering the cause of it. “What are you doing here? Where’s Vincent?”

“At home in bed, with a stomach ache,” Logan replied respectfully. Then before Libby could catch her breath from his unexpected appearance he asked, “What did you say a moment ago?”

“What did I say a moment ago?” she repeated as though in a daze. He was as handsome as ever, and she couldn’t help but notice the new tan beneath the gloom of the porch light. His white tank top outlined the sculptured muscles of his chest and emphasized his powerful arms. Her gaze halted at his belt because Libby knew if she looked any further south he’d see an old lady swoon at his feet.

“You said Gram was in bed,” he reminded her with suspicion in his tone. His eyes moved over her appearance, making her uncomfortable. Praying that he couldn’t see through her skirt, she had the sudden urge to turn off the light, but that would be obvious.

“I did, when?” she asked innocently, swallowing with difficulty.

“Just after I knocked on the door.
Her voice cracked. “Are you sure?”
“I know what I heard, ma’am.”
Libby had to think fast. “Then maybe you’d better have your ears checked because what I said was, ‘Gret’s in bed.’ Short for Margaret, get it?”
Libby could tell by Logan’s expression that he wasn’t completely buying it. She decided to take control of the situation by opening the door and brushing past him. Pretending the whole thing was no big deal. “Come along, there are people counting on us to protect them.” She purposely sharpened her tone, knowing she could get away with it.
Libby didn’t wait for Logan to acknowledge her. She continued down the porch steps toward the golf cart, her heart pounding out of control. It took conscious effort to remember she was supposed to be an old woman. How was she ever going to make it through the next two hours with him sitting there next to her? Lord, she was already hot! By the end of the evening she’d be a puddle of makeup and nerves on the vinyl seat beside him.
She climbed into the cart, watching Logan approach in that sexy saunter of his. He was overly quiet and Libby guessed he was mulling over what just happened. Did he think she was a cranky old bitch? She turned her face to hide a smile, thankful for the cover of darkness. But the golf cart rocked briefly when he climbed in, prompting her to glance his way again. He tossed her a quick look as he turned the key, and then backed up.
“Have you ever done cart patrol?” Libby inquired in a crackling tone that reeked with authority.
“Yes, ma’am, a couple times with Granddad.”
“Good, then I don’t have to waste my breath explaining what the process is,” she practically snapped. It occurred to Libby that she didn’t exactly know what the process was. Except for what little her grandmother had told her. She supposed the men knew what to do and the women just went along for the company.
“No, ma’am,” was his polite response. He barely gave Libby a glance, pushing his foot on the pedal and taking off down Grant Street. It amused her to see there was a small lamppost at the end of each driveway, all of them lit in accordance to the rules.
Next to them were glossy brown mailboxes, some of which were adorned with colorful mailbox covers. Once again Libby wondered how she was going to get through the evening with a hunk like Logan next to her. Why did she have to find him so attractive? She caught the scent of his aftershave, something warm and spicy, and definitely stimulating her senses. Closing her eyes, she inhaled deeply, filling her lungs with his sexy scent. Images of them at the pool, when his fingers had teased her, flooded her senses.
“Allergies, ma’am?”
He must have heard her sniffing. Libby was thankful for his assumption, feeling the heat of embarrassment crawl up her neck. “Ah, yes. Something in the air is getting to me.” Oh Lord! She might as well have come right out and told him it was his aftershave. She sensed him looking her way but ignored him, focusing instead on the scenery they passed. Not that she could see all that much.
Libby soon found out that cart patrol consisted of driving up and down each road at a snail’s pace, much to her dismay. Once in a while, just to make things a little more exciting, she aimed her flashlight between the darkened spaces between each house as if searching for anything suspicious. Almost wishing the small ray of light would land on something to get excited about. Only nothing moved, and the monstrous shadows were nothing more than trees or lawn adornments.
“Would you like me to take you home? I think I can handle this by myself.” Logan’s warm voice broke into Libby’s quiet thoughts. She didn’t doubt he could handle anything on his own.

“We’re not supposed to do it alone,” she responded, appreciating the concern in his tone. “In case something happens.”

She was thankful for the silence that followed. It amazed her how many people left their curtains open with the lights on, but then, what did they have to be frightened of? She was able to see couples in their kitchens making dinner, groups of people sitting at their dining room tables, playing cards or some other kind of game. Once, she even caught glimpses of a couple making out, for lack of a better term. Unfortunately kissing reminded her of the man sitting next to her.

She self-consciously glanced at Logan, surprised to see the white of his teeth as he too had observed the scene. She made a disgusted sound with her tongue. “You’d think people their age would know better than to leave the curtains open.”

A hearty laugh escaped Logan as he turned a corner. “Never had a kiss stolen at an inopportune time?”

Of course she had! “Many times,” she admitted, turning away when she realized she’d used her natural voice. “I mean, in my younger days, of course.”

“I’ll bet the men beat a path to your door,” Logan surprised her by saying. “If you don’t mind my asking, how long have you been a widow?”

Libby caught her bottom lip, trying to recall the story her grandmother was passing around. They’d come up with a couple different scenarios before deciding on one, but darned if she could remember which one. Was she the longtime friend who’d starting grade school with Margaret and kept in touch over the years, recently losing her husband to a heart attack? Or the distant relative on Margaret’s husband’s side of the family who was left a widow with no insurance and nowhere to go?

Releasing a sigh, she decided to play it safe. “Too long,” she responded vaguely, hoping he didn’t press her for more. “What about you? Anyone special in your life?”

Logan remained silent for so long that Libby was about to give up hope of getting an answer, until he said, “There was someone special, once, but not right now, ma’am.”

Oh, what could she say to that? Thoughts of her failed relationship came to mind. Scott had been Libby’s prince charming. A rising young lawyer with a steady job, handsome, from a wealthy family, everything a girl could ask for in a man. Or perhaps she’d only felt that way because he’d been her first true love. Now she was sorry she’d given him her virginity.

All at once a shadow detached itself from one of the houses, running away and drawing Libby’s attention. “Logan, wait!” She whipped the flashlight up and took aim in the direction they’d disappeared, almost losing her seat when Logan slammed on the brakes.

“I saw him too,” he stated, sliding from behind the wheel before the vehicle came to a full stop.

“What are you doing; where you going?” Libby whispered sharply, flashing her light in his face and causing him to squint. “We shouldn’t do anything but call the police!”

“I’m sure it’s a neighbor. I’m just going to check it out.”

“But…” Libby slipped from the golf cart too, and hurried to catch up with him. “What if it’s not? What if it’s a burglar? There have been a few break-ins lately or what if it’s—”
Logan whipped around and took Libby gently by the shoulders, drawing her to a halt. “Reba, calm down or you’re going to hyperventilate. I think it’s best if you stay here, where the cell phone is. If I don’t come back in five minutes then you can call the police.”

“You might need me,” Libby said without thinking, drawing a gentle smile from Logan. “Ma’am, what I need right now is to know you’re safe, by remaining here.”

His hands were still on her shoulders and Libby’s eyes nearly bugged out of her head when he gave her what was supposed to be a reassuring squeeze. Her heart literally stopped beating and she held her breath, watching his expression for any sign that he thought it was odd she was wearing shoulder pads. But all Logan did was remove his hands and turn away sprinting in the direction they saw the silhouette.

Libby watched him disappear around the corner of the house before realizing she was holding her breath. Lord, what if it was a burglar? So far no one had been hurt. But several residents had returned home to find that someone had broken in and stolen their prescriptions, a common problem in retirement communities, according to the police. And no telling what could happen if they were caught by surprise.

What if they were violent?

She went back to the golf cart and began searching the supply bag for something that could be used as a weapon, just in case. The phone, maybe it could double as a gun. It was dark and would be impossible to make out that it wasn’t the real deal. But then her hand encircled a can, and she whipped out the bug spray. That could certainly be substituted for mace. The can was rusty and looked like it had been in the bag a long time, so she took off the cap and tested it to make sure that it worked.

Without hesitation she hitched up her skirt and dashed in the direction she saw Logan run. The homes on either side of her were pitching black, which wasn’t an unusual occurrence for this time of year. A lot of the homes were used as vacation or winter homes for retirees who lived up north. As Libby dashed between the two houses she could definitely hear the sound of voices. Her eyes riveted to the house in the distance with the lights on, realizing their windows were open and it was the TV she was hearing.

Relaxing slightly, she narrowed her eyes, searching the area for any sign of Logan. Where had he gone? She heard the snap of a twig, followed by a ruckus, and let out a small sound of alarm. She was definitely not cut out for this! Spinning around, she nearly lost her balance, and shined her flashlight wildly to see if someone was there.

“Let me go!” she heard a youthful voice demand.

“I will as soon as the police arrive,” Logan responded. “I think they might be interested in why you were snooping around these vacant houses.”

“I wasn’t doing anything wrong! My grandparents live here and I’m just visiting,” the kid snapped.

“Yeah? Who are your grandparents?”

Libby remained where she was when she realized they were heading her way. Finally Logan stepped into view, dragging a young teenager by the back of his collar. The kid couldn’t have been more than thirteen, tall and lanky, his features hidden behind a curtain of stringy hair.

“What are you lookin’ at, old lady?” he hissed when his gaze landed on Libby. He shook his head until the hair was out of his glaring eyes, every bit the defiant teen.

“Mind your manners!” Logan barked, giving the kid a shake. “Reba, I asked you to stay back at the golf cart,” he chastised in a kind voice laced with impatience.
Told was more like it but Libby wasn’t going to remind him of that. She focused her gaze on the kid instead, taking in his baggy jeans and stained shirt. Deciding to call his bluff she said, “Tell us where your grandparents live and we’ll take you home.” He only snorted and glanced away. Libby looked at Logan and shrugged. “I guess we’re left with no choice but to phone the police.” She turned to head back to the cart to retrieve the phone.

“No!” She swung back around and watched as the kid hung his head low before saying in a barely audible voice, “My grandparents are the Buckleys on Carter Street. And…and I’m sorry for calling you an old lady.” He sounded thoroughly whipped, and surprisingly sincere. Her gaze went to Logan. “I know Joan Buckley, from coffee in the mornings. He must be telling the truth.”

Logan gave a curt nod. “I know Carl, he plays poker with Gramps.” He gave the kid a jerk to get his attention. “We’re going to let you go this time but don’t think you’re off the hook. We’ll be calling your grandparents.”

“Yes, sir.”

He took off running the second Logan released him. For a moment they stood watching him until the quiet became too much for Libby. She chuckled nervously. “I’ll bet we don’t see him out after dark again.”

“Not if he’s smart,” Logan agreed with a flash of teeth. “I don’t think I’m cut out for this cart patrol thing, too much excitement for me.”

She started walking briskly back to the cart, remembering at the last minute to alter her pace. Maybe she should just tell Logan to take her home. If he didn’t figure out who she was before ten o’clock came it would be a miracle. His presence unnerved her, causing Libby to forget who she was supposed to be half the time. “What time is it anyway?” she asked, fanning her face. Surely it was almost ten.

Logan waited until they reached the front of the house where the lamppost was, then angled his wrist to check the time. “Nine, why, do you need to take a pill or something?”

Yes, her birth control pills. “Thanks for reminding me,” she murmured under her breath. “Ma’am? Did you say something?”

“Nothing.” To her mortification Libby felt one of her support stockings fall down around her ankle. She quickly bent to yank it back up, moaning with pleasure at the slight breeze that sneaked up the back of her skirt.

The next hour was the longest one of Libby’s life.
Libby had just slipped into a pair of white shorts when she heard the doorbell ring. She zipped them up, glad it was the weekend and she could be herself for a change. Her eyes darted to the clock on her dresser as she rushed through her bedroom. When the doorbell rang a second time she picked up speed. Her grandmother was taking her afternoon nap and she didn’t want it to wake her, especially since she went down with another one of her headaches.

She pulled the kitchen door open without thinking, nearly going into shock when she saw her ex standing on the other side. What the heck is he doing here? “Scott?”

Before she could gather her wits he opened the screen door and walked in as if he owned the place, cloaked in that cocky attitude Libby remembered, and now realized she detested. He had a lot of nerve, just showing up like this. She had no choice but to step out of his way or be mowed over.

“What are you doing here?” She was aware her tone wasn’t exactly welcoming, but he was the last person she wanted to see.

“Well, hello to you too, beautiful,” he said cheerfully, letting the screen door slam shut with a bang behind him.

“Be quiet, Gram has a headache!” Libby hissed, not the least bit happy to see him. In fact, she hadn’t seen him since breaking if off with him. “How did you know I was here?” She swallowed nervously when he advanced. He reached out to finger a curl lying against the side of her temple, and she leaned away.

She’d just gotten out of the shower and had barely dried off. Now she was sorry she hadn’t taken the time, painfully aware her clothes were clinging to her damp skin. The self-assured gleam was evident in his crystal clear eyes, reminding Libby he was good at getting what he wanted, and rarely taking no for an answer.

“Your parents told me you were spending the weekends here.”

His admission infuriated Libby. Her parents liked Scott and obviously thought they were doing what was best for her. “That doesn’t explain why you’re here,” she reminded him, crossing her arms. “I thought I made myself perfectly clear when I told you it was over and I never wanted to see you again.”

“I was hoping you’d had time to cool down and come to your senses,” Scott replied, running his gaze over her in a way that used to make her blood warm. Now it only annoyed her. “Haven’t you missed me?”

“Give me a few hundred years.” There was a look in his blue eyes that Libby knew very well. Only now it scared her more than turned her on because she was certain he was going to try something. “Don’t come near me, Scott, I mean it!” She whispered, backing right up against the dining room table. “We’re over for good. You’re not going to charm your way back into my life again.”
The smile that spread across his handsome face told Libby he thought that was a good possibility. “Really? That’s not the impression I got from your folks.”

“That’s because they don’t know the truth about you.” She attempted to scoot away but calculated too late. Scott’s hand snaked out, catching her by the upper arm and whipping her back against him. Only a couple inches taller than her didn’t make him any less threatening. And where most men might resort to using strength to overpower a woman, Scott was great at turning on the charm and mesmerizing her into forgetting what she wanted and giving him what he wanted.

Libby didn’t have any trouble keeping a clear head by remembering his betrayal. She stiffened when he lowered his head, turning her face away. “I’m warning you, Scott…” she gasped, just loud enough for him to hear. “I don’t want this.” She put her hands against his chest to push him away.

“Come on, beautiful. Don’t you think I deserve forgiveness? I screwed up; I admit it. But don’t throw away what we had.”

“It’s been two months. There’s been no communication at all between us; how can you think I’d just pick up where we left off?” she demanded in an exasperated tone. “I don’t feel anything for you. And for the record, you threw away what we had. Now please leave.”

Libby thought finally she was getting through to him when his hold slackened. But she should have remembered Scott also had a devious way in working things out to suit him. As she relaxed she made the mistake of turning to meet his eyes, slightly surprised to see the anger shimmering there. The Scott she knew always kept a cool head.

“Please, Scott, leave,” she said, making an attempt to put distance between them. She gasped when he jerked her against him.

“You used to like being in my arms.” He lowered his head.

His breath was hot against Libby’s cheek. “You forget, I know what a hot little number you are. You could never get enough.”

“Scott, no!” Libby pushed against his chest with all her might, enraged that he was intent on forcing himself on her. “No!” He easily forced her arms behind her back and Libby felt a moment of real fear. She’d never seen him like this before.

“Let…me…go! Please!”

“Why should I?” he said in a defiant voice.

“Because she said please.”

Logan! What is he doing here? It was a toss up who was more surprised to see Logan standing at the screen door. The quiet emphasis in his deep voice affected Scott almost comically, causing him to trip over his own feet as he hastily stepped away from her. No telling how long Logan had been standing there, watching them quietly. How much he’d heard. But Libby wasn’t about to look a gift horse in the mouth. She was just thankful he was there.

For a moment the two men eyed each other like adversaries, sizing each other up before a battle. Logan’s expression was hard to read, his eyes glaring coldly at Scott, while Scott’s expression paled slightly in his pitiful attempt to stand up to the threat of Logan. Libby tried not to grin but she couldn’t help it. Scott wouldn’t stand a chance against Logan, and he had obviously come to the same conclusion. He was a good head shorter, and standing next to Logan, he looked more like an underdeveloped teenager. His gaze shot her way. She tried to erase the smile off her face before he saw it, but his quick scowl told her she hadn’t been fast enough.
“Now I know why you’re spending so much time here,” he accused in a nasty tone. Without another word he pushed through the screen door and past Logan.

While the door was open Logan stepped into the room, and suddenly Libby was reminded of the incident at the pool. Why couldn’t she get that thought out of her head? The answer was simple. She wanted Logan. She felt her cheeks flush with heat and tried to push those thoughts aside. “Thanks for coming to the rescue, again.”

“You ex?” he inquired, running his gaze over Libby as if making sure she was okay. Unlike Scott’s thorough look, Logan’s scrutiny made Libby melt inside like ice cream on a hot summer day. She nodded. “My parents think he’s good for me. What are you doing here, Logan?” He looked sweaty and hot, as if he’d just had a hard workout. But that didn’t make him any less appealing in gray sweats.

“I could ask you the same thing,” he returned, running his hands through his damp hair. “You seem to be around here a lot lately. Hiding out?”

That’s not what she meant by asking him what he was doing there. Libby thought about coming clean with him, but decided it was too soon to know if she could trust him. She leaned against the counter and crossed her arms, returning his curious smile.

“How would you bother me?” Logan returned, his eyes dropping down the length of her in a lazy sweep that caused Libby’s pulse to race and her breath to catch. She wanted to die when she felt her nipples pucker against the thin top she was wearing, wishing she’d taken the time to put a bra on after her shower. But it never occurred to her that she’d have company. By the time Logan’s gaze traveled back up her body Libby was nearly squirming. He’d cleverly turned the tables on her, proving that he was the one bothering her, and she didn’t like it one bit. He had sexy eyes, the color of warm metal. And he looked just as hungry.

“Like what you see?” Where had that come from? It was all she could do to stop her hand from flying up and covering her mouth.

Logan burst out laughing, surprising Libby. “In answer to your question, I like what I see, a lot.” There was a brief moment of silence. “You don’t unnerve easily.” He took a step in her direction.

His comment caused a wild flutter in Libby’s stomach. She would have taken a step back but there was nowhere to go. A tingle ran down her spine as he advanced on her. Left with no choice but to tilt her face up she raised an eyebrow, hoping to intimidate him. Or at the very least give him something to think about. Luckily he halted inches away from her. Libby had to look a long way up to meet his eyes. “You should remember that,” she said saucily.

Logan’s eyes revealed his amusement over her statement. “Maybe you should eliminate using the word please next time you want a man to leave you alone. Because, from where I was standing, it was having the opposite effect on your ex.”

“I can handle Scott,” Libby insisted. “Or any man for that matter.” There were ways to bring a man to his knees.

“I hope you’re not relying solely on kneeling a man where it counts,” Logan said, as though reading her mind. Libby’s eyes rounded when he inched closer. “If a man’s really determined to kiss you, Libby, it’ll take more than that to stop him.”
“Then he might get more than he bargained for,” she countered, slipping away to get a glass from the cupboard, before she embarrassed herself by throwing herself into his arms and begged him to kiss her. “Would you like a drink of water? You look like you’ve been working hard.”

“That’s why I’m here.”

“For a glass of water?” Libby said in astonishment, looking over her shoulder at him.

Logan laughed, the deep rich sound running like smooth velvet over her and making her aware of him as a desirable man more than ever. “No. I’m here to mow the lawn. Gramps said Margaret likes to take naps in the afternoon so I thought I’d better check first.”

Considerate, caring, handsome, Logan seemed to have a lot of the qualities Libby was looking for in a man. “Goodness is there no end to your talents?” she teased, filling the glass with water from the fridge. “Gram’s napping now but should be up any moment. I can mow the lawn later.”

“No, ma’am,” he said, taking the offered glass from her. “I need that job. In case it’s slipped your notice, I’m a firefighter out of work.”

Libby scrutinized Logan for a minute, trying to determine if he was being cute, or telling her the truth. His expression was guarded, but he couldn’t hide the glimmer of truth in his eyes as he brought the glass to his lips. He tossed his head back to take a long drink, and Libby took the opportunity to watch the play of muscles in his powerful throat. Their eyes met when he straightened again.

Libby swallowed with difficulty, trying to push down the flash of desire uncurling in her belly. What was it about him that got her hot so fast? “I’ll bet you dinner that Gram’s not paying you,” she said, crossing her arms.

His mouth quirked with humor as he shrugged. “It’s good therapy. I’ve been laid up for a while.”

Libby nodded with understanding. “I understand you were injured in a forest fire. What happened?”

Something in his eyes changed, as fast as a lightning streak in a stormy sky. “That subject’s off limits.” His words were clipped and sounded final. In a heartbeat his mood has changed from casual, almost carefree, to a man on the edge.

Libby schooled her expression to remain cool, her curiosity instantly piqued by the hostility in Logan’s tone. She sensed it wasn’t directed at her, but she had definitely opened up a wound that hadn’t healed yet. He didn’t take his eyes off her as he finished his drink then set the glass down on the counter. The look that came over his face almost frightened Libby, because it was the look of a man who’d lost his soul, or at the very least someone who’d been to hell and back. Everything about him was tense. Yet there was a sheen of pain in his eyes he couldn’t disguise.

Her heart twisted with compassion, and the only thing Libby knew at that moment was that she wanted to reach out to him and comfort him in some way. With tears building in her eyes she said, “Logan, I’m sorry.” She made the mistake of lifting her hand to him.

“No!” In a lightning fast move he caught her wrist in midair, halting her from reaching her target, which had been the side of his face. “The last thing I want from you is sympathy.” He jerked Libby close.

She caught her breath, her head falling back so she could meet his eyes. Their gazes clung. His were stormy, churning with a mixture of anger and desire. Libby knew when a man wanted her. Just when she thought he might kiss her he released her and pivoted to leave.
“Thanks for the water. Let me know when Margaret wakes…”

“Logan,” Libby didn’t know what she was going to do, only knowing it was important she do something. She headed him off at the door, causing him to halt or slam into her. He had no choice but to meet her eyes. “I’m sorry. I don’t know what happened but talking about it might help.”

His eyes flared with warning. “I don’t need any help.” The wild look that came over his face made her think of a cornered animal with no way out.

“Your reaction to my harmless question proves that you do,” she said softly. “I don’t mean to pry but—”

“Then don’t.” A muscle twitched in his lean jaw.

It was obvious he expected Libby to move out of his way, but she held her ground, determined to say her mind. “You talk about therapy for your body, Logan. What about therapy for your mind and heart?”

“Don’t try and analyze me, lady,” he exploded, his eyes glittering shards of black glass. “I don’t need you or anyone telling me what I need. You have no idea…” He cut himself off, his hands clenching into fists at his sides. It was clear he was close to losing control. “For your own sake, Libby, I suggest you move out of my way.”

“Logan, I…”

“Damn it!” he finally swore, taking a step closer. “You ask too many damn questions!”

He yanked her to him and slammed his mouth down on hers, taking her brutally and carelessly. He bruised her lips, but she merely wrapped her arms around his neck and whimpered against his mouth.

His grip slowly loosened and his lips softened against hers, caressing now instead of punishing. Moaning, Libby opened her mouth beneath his and their tongues meshed and explored each other. Liquid fire exploded through her, her nipples taut with pleasure. For a second she forgot where they were, savoring the explosive moment between them.

Without warning Logan pulled away, his breathing ragged as he stared down at her. His dark expression revealed his hunger, yet Libby could see in his eyes that he was struggling with another emotion, too. Whatever it was he was in control enough not to let it rule his actions. Gradually he released her.

“Now is not a good time,” he said in a low tone. “It’s too soon.”

Too soon for what? Libby was afraid to ask. Whatever happened to Logan in that forest fire was tearing him up inside. For some unexpected reason she felt a burning behind her eyes. She moved away from the door to let him pass before exposing her tears. She heard the screen door slam behind him and turned to see him hurrying down the steps toward the lawn mower.

Vincent was sitting on his porch and Libby returned his wave before swinging back to the kitchen. Maybe in time Logan would tell her what happened to him, or, if she got the chance, she could question Vincent about it. Wiping her eyes, she grabbed the grocery list off the fridge and the keys to her car off a peg by the door. Right now she had grocery shopping to do before taking Gram down for her monthly hair appointment. Then off to dinner at her folk’s place.

* * *
Logan felt like a bastard for the way he’d treated Libby. He could still see the wounded look in her eyes. But he wasn’t ready to talk about the accident that had scared his body and claimed the lives of two of his best friends. He’d known Ron and Pete since childhood. They’d grown up together in the same neighborhood, had gone to the same schools. Through thick and thin they’d remained the best of friends, making a pact early on to become firefighters.

Only during their high school years had there been a brief lull in their activities. When spending time with girls had taken precedence over spending time with each other, and anything else. But eventually even that had taken a backseat to their strong friendship. Ron was the only one who had settled down and gotten married. Pete had been a player, finding a new girl every weekend, swearing she was the one, until the next one came along. And Logan had found Anne and fallen in love with her. Life, until the accident, had been going great for all of them.

Anne. He squashed the thought of her out of his head, pushing the mower faster and harder. Sweat ran rivers down his face, and he welcomed the tightening of his muscles. Proof he was well enough to return to work. Now all he had to do was convince the doctors of that. But they were more concerned about his mental health, convinced until he could talk about what happened he wasn’t ready to put it behind him and get on with his life. They wanted him to face it.

Hell, they didn’t have a clue. He thought about it all the time, dreamed about it. More times than he cared to remember he’d wakened in the middle of the night, his sweat-drenched body racked in unbearable pain over the memory of that day, and the guilt he felt surviving when Ron and Pete hadn’t. How many times was he going to relive every moment of the last few minutes of their lives? Seeing the look on their dirt-streaked faces when they recognized they were trapped, and the dawning knowledge of what the outcome would be? By the time they realized the wind had picked up, fanning the flames out of control, they were surrounded by toppling trees and smoke so thick they couldn’t see their hands in front of their faces.

A movement toward Margaret’s driveway drew his attention and he glanced up to see Libby walking toward her small Toyota. From a distance she could pass for a young girl, all long legs and wild hair. But when she flipped that heavy mane back, his attention zeroed in on her breasts, bouncing and perky beneath her knit top. Then she was sliding into the driver’s side and shutting the door. When she looked his way Logan quickly averted his gaze, pretending he hadn’t been watching her.

The truth was that everything about Libby bothered him. And he’d be less than honest if he didn’t admit when he was around her, all he could think about was kissing that tempting mouth until she was breathless. Until there was less sass and a lot more heat. Logan had a hunch that sooner or later she was going to say or do something that pushed him into doing exactly that. And a lot more.

When he’d walked up to the screen door to see her ex making a move on her, his first instinct had been to barge in and beat the man to a pulp. Jealousy like he’d never known surfaced so fast it had nearly choked him. Only he knew he didn’t have the right to feel that way. Moreover, it was none of his business. Although it had calmed him considerably when he’d heard Libby ask the other man to leave. Her comment had been the only thing that had kept him from following through with his earlier thought.

Wiping the sweat off his forehead with the back of his arm, he cut the last strip of Margaret’s lawn, thinking of the cool one waiting for him at the bar down the street. One thing
was certain; he wasn’t in the mood for penny poker, bingo or riding through the neighborhood for two hours in a golf cart. His blood was screaming for something a lot more stimulating. For some reason the sight of Libby, naked at the pool, flashed before his eyes.

Only this time, he was screwing the hell out of her.
Libby checked the clock on her dashboard as she pulled into the parking lot of Toni’s Bar and Grill, realizing she was very late. She parked her car anyway. She’d made plans to meet friends at seven but dinner with her folks had run into overtime. Then she had to drop Gram off, making sure that she was going to be okay by herself for a few hours. Her indignant reaction brought a smile to Libby’s mouth. She hadn’t wasted any time pointing out that she didn’t need a full-time babysitter.

She made her way to the bar; praying Leslie and Pat were still there. But it wouldn’t surprise her if they’d moved on to a livelier establishment. Tony’s was a good meeting place, or if you just wanted a drink, but it was too quiet and tame as far as bars went. Quiet, shy Pat would be okay, but Leslie liked the disco type bars where the music was loud and the dance floor was crowded. She was always on the lookout for her next Mr. Right.

A couple was exiting the establishment as she reached the door. She scooted in, finding herself in a gloomy atmosphere of quiet conversation, the clink of glasses, and a TV with some sports channel on in the corner. Although there were booths along the wall, there was also a square wood bar in the center of the room for patrons who didn’t want to order a meal. Most of the stools were occupied.

As Libby scanned the crowd for her friends someone put some coins in the corner jukebox, selecting a country song by a popular artist. She exchanged smiles with a couple as they left their booth and headed to the small dance floor at the back of the room. Someone laughed, catching her attention, and she turned to see another couple smooching at the bar. It was obvious they’d had a little too much to drink; they were all over each other. She watched them for a moment before shifting her eyes to the man sitting next to them. Her smile quickly disappeared.

It was Logan.

What is he doing there? Well, that’s a stupid question. He had just as much right being there as anyone else. He was nursing a beer, watching the game going on at the pool table. There was a woman sitting on the stool next to him, but Libby got the impression they weren’t together. She was doing her best to capture his attention though, only Logan seemed oblivious. For some reason that made Libby grin.

She sobered instantly when the floozy, dressed in a skintight leather skirt and off the shoulder blouse, put her hand on the high part of Logan’s thigh. She laughed at something. Her move was obvious and got the reaction she was looking for. Logan swung around, his gaze touching briefly on Libby, and then doing a double-take, narrowing when he recognized her. She felt a flutter in her belly. There was no way she could measure up to the well-stacked, blue-eyed platinum blonde, vying for his attention. She’d dressed for comfort in jeans and a short tee-shirt that bared her midriff. No makeup except a little lip gloss. Libby had taken the time to pull her
hair up with a clip, and most of that had managed to escape. She figured she must look like a used dishrag to Logan.

As though sensing his distraction the blonde leaned in close and said something into his ear. Not taking his eyes off Libby, he mouthed something back. Then, before her startled gaze, he slid off the stool and walked directly toward her. To make matters worse, Libby felt her body respond in a very natural yet noticeable way. It was too late to continue searching for her friends. Her only thought now was on Logan as he continued to close the distance between them with intent in his eyes.

Her gaze fell, quickly taking in his jeans and the way they hung low on his lean hips, molding his thick sculptured thighs. He was wearing a black tee-shirt that looked like it was poured over him. His lion-colored hair was ruffled as if blondie had been running her fingers through it. The predatory gleam in his dark eyes was dangerous, holding her a willing captive. Libby wondered if his lazy expression was the result of too much beer. But Logan didn’t move like he was drunk; his actions were sure-footed and definitely held purpose.

“What are you doing here?”

Libby’s brows rose with surprise. “Well, hello to you too,” she countered, a smile spreading across her face. “I’m meeting friends.”

“Come on.” Logan took her by the hand and dragged her onto the dance floor. She didn’t have time to utter a protest when he pulled her sharply against him and began to move.

“What’s going on?” she inquired, pulling back far enough to meet his eyes. His gaze shot to blondie and at that moment it dawned on her that Logan was using her to send a not-so-subtle message to the woman. A soft chuckle escaped her. “What’s the matter, Logan? Can’t stand the heat?” she said recklessly. The woman was glaring at them so hard that it was a miracle lightning bolts weren’t shooting from the center of her eyes.

“I’ve been trying to get rid of her for an hour,” he admitted, holding Libby close but not tight. “But she’s too dense and hasn’t gotten the message.”

“I don’t think she’s relying on her brain to get what she wants,” Libby teased back, relaxing against him. “Obviously you’re not hungry enough.”

Logan’s head jerked back, the intensity in his eyes causing Libby to catch her breath. “Then maybe I need to show her what I’m hungry for,” he grated, slipping his knee between Libby’s thighs, at the same time letting his hands drop to her bare waist. As their bodies swayed intimately against each other, he guided their movements.

“Logan…” she gasped, her eyes growing round at his unexpected and very sexual move. Her first thought was to pull away but her body responded to his so rapidly that it left her feeling confused and slightly brain dead.

“Relax, it’s all for show.”

“Oh, then, that’s okay,” Libby muttered beneath her breath, mildly irritated. Didn’t he realize she was attracted to him? That her body was reacting to his closeness at that very second? Couldn’t he sense her response or feel how fast her heart rate had suddenly picked up speed? Of course he couldn’t, because she was the only one melting inside. For him it was all for show.

“What’s that?” he asked, pulling back enough to meet her eyes. “Did you say something?”

“Nothing,” Libby grumbled, closing her eyes and leaning her head lightly upon his chest. She barely breathed as Logan moved them slowly around the dance floor. She chewed on the inside of her cheek because no matter how hard she tried she couldn’t ignore the
way he made her feel. Every movement of his solid thigh against the most private part of her made her aware of the pleasurable friction building there. Making her tingle and achy. She could only thank God he couldn’t feel her breasts swell against his chest, or know that her nipples were so hard they ached. Scott had never got a reaction out of her this easy, or so fast.

She tried to drown out everything but the music sounding throughout the room, and prayed that it would end soon. But when she felt Logan’s hard-on pushing against her, a flush of arousal wet her panties. Damn! She closed her eyes, mentally replacing his hard thigh with another part of his body. And before she knew it Logan shifted his lower body until her wish came true. An audible sound of pleasure escaped her. Libby’s eyes flew open to see if he heard it. What she saw was a stamp of raw desire on Logan’s chiseled features, proof that his actions affected him just as strongly.

Libby couldn’t take anymore. “Do you think this is wise?”

“Probably not, although I had a legitimate purpose at the time. Damned if I can remember what it was.”

Libby sighed. All else was forgotten but the man moving sensuously against her, making her aware of his every essence. Drawing a response from her body that hadn’t been very far from the surface to begin with. His hands tightened against her naked waist. She could feel the heat of his touch. Her panties became wetter where the denim covering his bone-hard arousal teased her without mercy. Libby was aware that she should move away, but she did the opposite instead, parting her thighs more and seeking out the fire between his legs.

As the song began to wind down she breathed a sigh of relief. But that was a mistake too, when all it did was fill her lungs with the musky, animal scent of Logan. It was arousing. She pressed her lips, fighting the urge to bury her nose against him and inhale deeply a second time. She trembled wildly as his hands glided up, until they were at the edge of where her shirt ended, just beneath her breasts.

She gasped sharply. He drew back to make eye contact with her. “Ticklish?” he inquired. She nodded, confirming it. A grin spread rapidly across his features. “Really?”

“I get very wild when I’m tickled. I can’t help it. It’s a reflective reaction. You might get hurt.”

Her comment caused Logan to rear back his head and laugh out loud. “Then I’ll have to be careful where I put my hands.”

Right now Libby wanted them to continue up her body, until he was cupping her breasts and running his thumbs over her nipples. His erection jumped wildly as if knowing what her thoughts were. Libby shivered. A glance toward the bar revealed the blonde bimbo had moved on to someone else. Good, because Libby knew if Logan continued to hold her much longer she wouldn’t be able to let go of him. He felt good against her.

“Looks like it’s safe for you to return to the bar.”

“Looks like.” They’d stopped swaying when the music ended, but he didn’t remove his hands. “You saved me from a fate worse than death. How does it feel being the rescuer for a change?”

A soft laugh escaped Libby as she met his eyes. “I believe I still owe you one,” she teased. The desire darkening Logan’s eyes made her glance away with shyness.

“You said something about meeting a friend?”
“A couple of girlfriends,” Libby corrected. “But I’m late so I think they gave up on me and took off.” As she spoke her gaze moved about the room. “I don’t see them,” she said after a while. Her eyes everywhere but on him.

“Libby,” he said in a low tone, drawing her attention. She prayed the gloom of the room hid the heat of desire she felt filling her cheeks. His hands clenched at her waist, and the urge to arch her hips into the cradle of his arousal was so strong that she pulled away before giving into it.

“Libby! Over here!”

They turned simultaneously toward the over cheerful voice. Two women emerged from the ladies’ room, dressed more like blondie back at the bar. Libby’s friends. She knew as soon as she saw them what their plans were. She waved them over.

“We thought you weren’t coming,” said her friend Leslie, the bottle blonde. “So we changed to go to Roxy’s.” She tossed a smile at Logan, her eyes making a quick sweep over him. “Hi, I’m Leslie.”

Logan took her extended hand, and Libby noticed he made the contact as brief as possible. Leslie couldn’t have been any more obvious about her interest in him, a fact that should have annoyed Libby because friends didn’t do that to each other. She had no way of knowing there was nothing between her and Logan, and she didn’t seem to care if there was. But Leslie was man crazy and for as long as Libby had known her she’d always gone out of her way to be the center of attention. Especially with the opposite sex.

“I’m Pat.” Her other friend also offered her hand, but she didn’t look at Logan with the same wolfish intentions. Libby knew Pat was shy, in spite of her party girl attire.

“Logan,” he responded simply, including both women.

“I guess I’m destined to being the underdog tonight,” Libby joked, referring to her attire. “You look damn good to me,” he surprised everyone by saying.

“You’re just being loyal because I saved your butt from a fate worse than death,” she said with humor. “Some day I’ll treat you to how good I clean up.”

The sound of his laugh echoed throughout the bar, causing several heads to turn. “I look forward to that day.”

“Maybe you’d like to join us, Logan?” Leslie asked, determined to draw his attention back to her. “Have you ever been to Roxy’s?”

“No, but I’ve heard it’s a swinging establishment.”

Where people went to get a little action, Libby finished silently. It was obvious her friends were on the prowl.

“But I think I’ll pass, ladies,” Logan continued. “I prefer the quieter atmosphere of this place, where I can hear myself think while enjoying a cold beer.”

“Oh, you don’t enjoy dancing?” Leslie whined.

“That all depends on who I’m dancing with.” Logan’s gaze met Libby’s making her wonder what he was thinking. “And I’m definitely not the disco type.”

“Like things slow and easy, huh?” Leslie said suggestively.

Libby just looked at her friend and shook her head with silent disapproval. “I think I’ll pass tonight, too. I hadn’t planned on leaving Gram alone for so long anyway.”

“I’d forgotten you’re staying with your grandmother,” Pat said. “How’s that work—”
“Only on the weekends,” Libby hastily explained, giving her friends a quick, hard look. “Are you sure you don’t want to go with us?” Pat asked, pulling Leslie away by the arm. “Very. We’ll try this again next weekend,” Libby promised, watching them until they were out the door. Sighing, she turned back to Logan. “I’m sorry about Leslie. She comes on to every man within a foot of her.”

“Don’t apologize for your friend, she was right.” Logan reached out and fingered a curl lying against Libby’s temple. “I do like it slow and easy,” he said in a husky tone. Someone had put another coin in the jukebox. “How about another dance before you head back to grandma’s house?”

Libby automatically glanced back to the bar. “No,” Logan began, guessing her thoughts and reaching for her hand. “This one’s for us.”

“Oh.”

Logan turned her into his embrace, this time bringing Libby’s arms up so they wrapped around his neck and they were flush against each other. Her small sound of satisfaction could barely be heard above the music filtering through the room. Only she didn’t care who heard her.

Before she knew it his hands smoothed down her back until they came to rest upon the curve of her hips. Her nipples became taut against him, aching with tingling pleasure. They moved against each other as one. Logan’s breath stirred her hair at her temple; her nose was against his neck. She closed her eyes, savoring the moment between them, wishing for more. “You smell nice.” Libby nuzzled her nose into the warmth of his flesh, just beneath the curve of his ear. Something wild surged through her, prompting her into sinking her teeth into his flesh in a tender love bite. “Don’t taste bad either.”

A shudder racked Logan’s body, followed by a growl. His hands smoothed over Libby’s bottom, bringing her up against him roughly. He put his mouth on the side of her neck. Shivering uncontrollably, Libby tried to control the racing of her heart, but the moment she came up against Logan’s hard body she was lost. Her senses exploded into a kaleidoscope of tingling sensation when she felt his mouth on her, then his teeth, and finally his lips and tongue as he focused on a spot just beneath her ear. She tried to speak but the words wouldn’t come. “This feels damn good,” he surprised her by saying in a slightly gruff voice. “It’s been a long time since I’ve been able to feel anything other than pain.”

Libby pulled back slightly, meeting his eyes. “I’ve been accused of that before.”

“I’ve been accused of that before.”

Libby could tell by his tone that he didn’t like her observation. “Sooner or later your past is going to catch up with you, and then what? You can’t continue dodging—”

“It’s not healthy. A therapist might help you. I had to see one once, after witnessing a horrible car accident. I was ten and my parents thought I was traumatized. I probably was but
you…Oh!” Without warning Logan took her by the hand, pulling her off the dance floor. “Where are we going?”

“Someplace private,” was his brisk reply. He fairly dragged her toward the exit. Seconds later he pushed the door open and they stepped out into the warm darkness. “Where’s your car?” They paused briefly just outside the door. Her car? The parking lot had been full when she arrived, forcing her to park at the back beneath a flickering light. Libby’s eyes automatically glanced in that direction and suddenly Logan was pulling her behind him after obviously spotting it too.

“What are you doing?” she asked in a breathless tone, trying to keep up with his long strides.

“Nothing, yet,” he responded, not breaking stride until they reached her car. Before Libby could catch her breath Logan halted and turned until he was leaning against it. He pulled her sharply into him. Her head snapped back and her mouth opened with surprise. “What…” She couldn’t think of anything else to say at the moment, totally enthralled with the wolfish gleam reflected in his eyes beneath the lamp post.

“Finally speechless?” Logan grinned, the white of his teeth evident in the darkness. “I was beginning to think I was going to have to take drastic measures to shut you up.”

“Shut me up!” Libby laughed in spite of herself. “Is that why you dragged me out here?” She made a halfhearted effort to step back, disappointment shooting through her that it hadn’t been for something else.

Logan jerked her closer. “This is why I dragged you out here,” he growled, lowering his head and slamming his mouth down over hers. Libby’s mouth opened with surprise, allowing him the opportunity to slip his tongue inside to mingle playfully with hers. Only there was nothing playful about the rush of white hot heat coursing through her veins. The surge was instantaneous, hunger and satisfaction rolled into one giant ball of need. Her body flamed to life, melding against his like honey on a hot bun. She’d been anticipating another kiss, yearning for it, but nothing had prepared her for this!

Libby’s hands curled into the tee-shirt covering his chest, uncaring of the sound that indicated the seams were giving. Tiny moans rumbled up her arched throat, getting a heated response from Logan. His arms tightened. He leaned further into her car, shifting his hips and parting his legs. Suddenly Libby was nestled between his thighs, feeling the hunger of his arousal behind his zipper. His strength and size sent another rush of desire through her, causing her to instinctively arch her hips. Damn! He was big and hungry, fueling Libby’s needs to match his own.

She felt a shudder escape Logan and then he was pulling back, his eyes brimming with burning emotion. He sucked in several deep breaths, his hands dropping to her hips. “Why did you stop?” she gasped, wondering if he could feel the racing of her heart against his chest.

He released a short laugh. “Too hot too fast,” he explained hoarsely. “And we might as well be under a spotlight for the entire world to see,” he pointed out.

“As a fireman you should be used to hot by now,” Libby teased, hardly recognizing the seductive quality of her own smoky voice. Suddenly the flickering light above them made a popping sound and they were left in total darkness. They both laughed softly. The timing couldn’t have been better. “Well, something seems to be working in our favor.”

There was dead silence. She moved gently against Logan’s erection, praying he didn’t notice her boldness. Libby recalled how the floozy in the bar hadn’t swayed him with her obvious charms. The last thing she wanted was for him to think she was just as loose. But her
fears were soon put to rest when Logan’s hands slid around her waist and over her bottom, cupping her tightly against him.

“Oh!” she cried out, clamping her teeth down on her bottom lip to keep from repeating it.

“What?” The raspy sound of his amused voice asked in the darkness. “That smart mouth of yours finally runs out of things to say?” He breathed the words against Libby’s throat, gradually making his way back to her mouth. “Damn, I want you, Libby.

Here…and now.”

That was certainly crystal-clear. She parted her lips as a wave of pleasure washed over all her senses, leaving her stimulated and yearning for the promise of unspoken words. This time he kissed her with unchecked passion, a growl of hunger locked in his throat as his tongue explored every corner of her mouth. He seemed to lose control for a moment, his hands rough against her bottom as he ground his hard on into her like he was intent on making himself come. Her panties were dripping, her knees buckled, but his hands held her against him.

Libby felt like she was about to go up in smoke. The friction of Logan’s cock rubbing against the highly sensitive spot between her legs had her nearing her own climax in no time. She felt the flame uncurl in her belly, arching her hips and straining toward release. She was so close! The night air around them was filled with their heavy breathing, but suddenly Logan’s hands were pushing her away and Libby was left gasping for more.

“Nooooooooo!” she groaned low, sharp disappointment making the exclamation come out like the sound of a wounded animal. Why had he stopped?

“We have company.” His voice was low and shaky.

Company? Libby was too dazed to understand what company was, until she heard the sound of muffled voices. Turning, she noticed a small group walking in their direction, their dark silhouettes barely evident. Just when it seemed they were walking right up to them they turned toward a large truck and disappeared into the shadows. Libby relaxed, unaware she’d been holding her breath until then, but very aware that Logan’s hands were burning her where they gripped her hips. It was the only place they were touching.

Her eyes sought his, sensing he was looking down at her. For a moment the silence surrounding them was broken by their heavy breathing and the drunken laughter of others. Then Logan caught her off-guard by saying in a savage tone, “Do you know how badly I want to be inside you right now?”

His words sent a sharp thrill through her. Libby would like nothing better than making love with Logan, sensing it would be one of the most gratifying experiences of her life. Judging by the foreplay, he would be a thorough, skilled lover. Even if her only comparison was Scott, he already exceeded any experiences she’d had on all counts. Logan made her come alive.

“What’s stopping you?” Her whispered challenge hung in the air between them. She was literally throbbing with arousal. “You warned me, Logan. Sex. That’s all you want. A woman can want the same things.” Libby knew under normal circumstances she’d never make such an outrageous comment, but right now, she was so turned on she wasn’t thinking straight.

Finally Logan’s deep voice cut the air between them like a knife. “If I thought for a minute you were serious, I’d…” He stopped, his fingers flexing against her. “I think for both our sakes you’d better go home now.” It was clear by his husky timbre he was still deeply aroused.

Go home, just like that? Libby opened her mouth to protest when it dawned on her there was nothing she could say that wouldn’t make her sound desperate. She couldn’t help
but wonder how far they would have gone had they not been interrupted. His hands fell away from her.

“If that’s what you want.” She purposely stepped away, trying for nonchalance. A heavy sigh escaped him. “I want you, Libby, in the most raw and basic way. Here against your car, on the ground, I don’t care where. Just be glad I’m not that much of a bastard.”

Libby wanted to beg him to do all of those things. Before she could comment Logan turned and walked away. Her eyes followed him until he disappeared into the shadows. She took a deep breath, willing her body under control. One thing was certain; it was just a matter of time before they made love, if she had anything to say about it.
“Oh dear Lord, it’s heading right for us!”
Having just entered the room, Libby’s gaze swung to her grandmother, startled by her sudden outburst. “What is, Gram?”
Her eyes went to the TV, which seemed to hold Margaret’s intense interest. She was watching the national weather channel, which was nothing new. What was it about the weather that held the elderly so enthralled?
“Dexter,” Margaret answered without taking her eyes off the set. “Dexter is coming our way.”
Dexter? The last Libby heard was there was a tropical storm out there but that had been a couple days ago. However, after listening to the weatherman for a few moments she quickly realized it had turned into a category four hurricane. They were already calling for evacuations in some areas. She glanced outside the window, seeing nothing but blue skies and bright sunshine. Nothing to indicate they were in the path of a dangerous storm.
“How long…”
“They say it will come on shore sometime tomorrow morning and be right over us by early evening. We have to start preparing for the worst. We need to stock up on canned goods and plenty of water. And buy some tape for the windows.” She jumped to her feet. “Maybe you should run out and buy a generator.”
“Wait a minute, Gram. There’s no way we’re staying here for a category four hurricane.” Libby didn’t want to hurt her feelings by pointing out the inadequacies of her manufactured home. “It will be safer at—”
“I’m not leaving my home. I’ve lived here ten years and never had to evacuate.”
Libby held onto her temper, which was rising as fast as her frustration. “This is the first time you’ve had a hurricane of this magnitude come directly over your house, too,” she reminded the older woman. “Where are you going?” she questioned, getting to her feet to follow her to the kitchen.
“Out to the shed. I know I have a couple lanterns out there somewhere and a box of candles. Hopefully they haven’t melted.
You might want to busy yourself with bringing in anything around the house that can be considered a flying missile.”
“You’re not being reasonable…” The phone rang and Libby picked it up, watching her grandmother push the screen door open. “Hello?”
“Are you two listening to the weather channel?” Libby rolled her eyes. “Mom, I can’t talk now, I’ll call you back.” She hung up and quickly sprinted after her stubborn grandmother with one thought on her mind—making her understand they couldn’t stay there.
“Gram, wait!” she called, seeing the metal shed door slam behind her widening backside. Libby dashed down the porch steps, before remembering she was in her old lady garb, adjusting her speed appropriately. “Margaret!” she hollered, casting a glance around to see if anyone was about.

Logan’s motorcycle was parked next to Vincent’s vehicle so she knew he was there, yet she hadn’t seen him since the night at the bar. A loud crash from inside the shed prompted her to pick up speed, uncaring at that point who might be watching. She yanked the door open and halted in the threshold.

“Gram,” she began, “What…” Surrounded by various size candles and a now empty tin was a broken mayonnaise jar and hundreds of rusty crooked nails. “What?”

Margaret waved her hand in a gesture of dismissal. “Those belonged to your granddaddy. He kept everything in mayonnaise jars. I knocked it over reaching for the tin. Can you get those lanterns for me?”

Libby glanced in the direction she was pointing, frowning when she saw the two ancient lanterns on the very top shelf. Her eyes scanned the small dingy room for a ladder or stepstool, landing on an old wood chair without a back. She supposed that would have to do. “I don’t know why I’m bothering; we’re not staying here,” she said under her breath, positioning the chair beneath the shelf.

“I’m not leaving,” Margaret said stubbornly, catching her comment. “The last time we had a tropical storm come through they opened the community center for anyone who wanted to stay there until the worst was over. I’m sure they’ll do the same thing this time.”

Libby climbed on top of the wobbly chair. “According to the weather man this isn’t a tropical storm, Gram.” The chair was more than just wobbly, swaying like a rocking chair beneath her. She gasped and grabbed the shelf to steady her, just when the phone her grandfather had installed years before over the washer began to ring.

“Be careful, child!” Margaret cautioned, reaching for it.

Libby stretched until she was able to grasp the lanterns, placing them on the work bench beneath her, hearing enough of Margaret’s responses to realize whoever she was talking to was discussing the hurricane with her. She jumped off the chair as though she was a child of ten.

“You see? That was the safety committee and they’re already making plans to set the center up as a shelter.”

Great! The last thing Libby wanted was to hole up inside a large building with a couple hundred elderly for an indefinite time. She didn’t know if her disguise would hold up beneath the stress of keeping up pretenses, or the heat in the barely air-conditioned structure.

“Gram…”

Margaret shook her head as though to say she didn’t want to hear it, snatched up the lanterns and turned for the door. “Save your breath, dear, and pick up those candles for me. You’re a lot younger than I am,” she chuckled.

Sighing heavily Libby glanced down at the floor, trying to think of a way to make her grandmother listen to reason.

* * *
“I’m not going to any shelter,” Vincent repeated stubbornly for the third time, crossing his arms and settling himself in his easy chair as though daring someone to try and remove him from it. “If you’re scared then you can go.”

Logan pressed his lips in frustration, determined not to let his grandfather push him into anger. “Now is not the time to be stubborn, Gramps. This is going to be bad. And these homes weren’t designed to withstand seventy-mile-per-hour winds.”

“Bah! By the time Dexter makes landfall he’ll be nothing more than a tropical storm. I’ve survived lots of those in this home. We have canned goods and water to get us through a few days but you might want to run down to the store for some flashlights.”

If he thought three gallons of water and a few paltry canned goods were going to get them through the aftereffects of a hurricane, he was crazy. “You know, if we get a direct hit we could go for days without water and electricity,” Logan warned, hoping to see some sensibility in his grandfather’s eyes.

“Then maybe you’d better stock up on some extra supplies, too.” He flipped off the weather station in favor of the history channel. “Oh and while you’re there, might as well pick up some candles, and not those smelly girlie ones either.”

Logan released a deep sigh, running his hands through his hair. He walked to the front door and peered outside. He’d never know a storm was heading their way. The sky was bright and sunny and there wasn’t a breeze of any kind. Movement out of the corner of his eye drew his attention to the house next door. He watched Reba exit the shed carrying a box, her movements spry for a woman her age. Margaret met her at the front door. He just couldn’t put his finger on it but something about Reba nagged at him whenever he saw her.

He turned back to Vincent. “Gramps…”

“Might as well save your breath, boy.”

Logan opened his mouth but clamped it shut again when the phone began to ring. Shaking his head with disgust he headed out the door, leaving his grandfather to answer it. He’d never met a more stubborn man! The screen door slammed behind him, emphasizing his growing anger.

Noise from next door drew his attention. He saw Reba’s backside as she bent to pick something up. In the next instant she was jumping back with a squeal, following it with a little dance that clearly revealed she was repulsed by something. A smile spread across Logan’s mouth, wondering what had frightened her.

“I hate lizards!” he heard her cry out. When she bent toward the potted plant she’d been about to pick up earlier, his eyes shifted to Libby’s car, wondering where she was. It was parked in the driveway but he hadn’t seen her in days. Not since that night when he’d practically made love to her in the parking lot. He’d returned home aching with wanting her.

Spending most of the night dreaming about her he’d wakened several times with a hard on that demanded attention. Only Logan had ignored it. He wanted Libby, not his hand. It was probably for the best that he hadn’t run into her again. He didn’t trust himself around her. She was too damn cute and that sassy mouth of hers tempted him on every occasion, even when she angered him. Libby was a complication he didn’t need right now.

His number one priority was getting cleared to return to work. After that it meant going anywhere in the world where his team of specialists was needed. The Timber Wolves was an elite crew of forest firefighters, trained to take over when fires grew out of control and threatened lives. He’d been with them for six years and couldn’t fathom doing anything else.
“Well…” All at once the screen door was pushed open and his grandfather stepped out onto the porch. “That was Elmer on the phone; used to be a weatherman up north somewhere. He said we have nothing to worry about.”

Logan just managed to keep from rolling his eyes at the news. “And that makes him an expert on hurricanes?” He watched Reba stumble with a heavy planter.

“No, smarty-pants, he saw on the weather channel that the storm is turning away from us. If we’re lucky we’ll just get a tropical rain.”

Logan grinned at his grandfather’s use of his childhood nickname. He hadn’t called him that in years. “A tropical storm still isn’t something to scoff at.” He opened the outside door. “I’ll run down to the store and pick up a few supplies just in case. When I get back I’ll take a walk around the place to make sure nothing’s left out that can become a flying object.”

“Good idea. I’ll help you when you return.” Logan heard the creaking of the old rocking chair that indicated Vincent had settled down into it. Chances were when he returned home his grandfather would be sound asleep. He headed to his bike, noticing Reba disappearing inside the house.

* * * *

“What’s wrong, dear?”

Libby yanked off her wig and glasses with disgust. “I can’t get anything done in this getup, Gram. It’s too darn hot, even with the wind picking up. My eyes are stinging from the sweat running down into them, and I’m spending more time trying to keep my skirt down around my legs than anything else. I swear I heard a neighbor whistle at me!”

Margaret chuckled. “That was probably that old lecher next door. I know he has the hoots for you.”

“Gram!” Libby scolded, laughing in spite of herself. “I’m going to get out of these things and take a quick dip at the pool to cool off. When I come back I’ll finish bringing things in.”

“You’re going swimming with a hurricane coming our way?” Margaret said in astonishment, following Libby through the house.

“Dexter is hours away, and look outside, it’s bright and sunny out. I won’t be gone long.” She shut her bedroom door and began stripping out of her disguise, thoughts of diving into the pool keeping her from worrying about anything else. She tried not to but failed from thinking about Logan as she slipped into her bikini, recalling the last time she’d been at the pool. The memory of her naked breasts crushed against his hard chest and his fingers teasing her didn’t do anything to cool her down.

Within minutes Libby was opening the gate and slipping off her cover up, diving into the beckoning water without a second thought. It didn’t surprise her to find the place deserted. Everyone was either out shopping for supplies or home making preparations for the storm. She’d seen some neighbors out taping up their windows. Her grandmother had been filling every pot and container she could find with water, when she’d left her. Others were out gathering up anything that could become a flying missile and bringing it inside.

Libby didn’t worry about the aftereffects, knowing her parents would never let her grandmother remain in her home without power or water. However, nothing she said had convinced her grandmother of that. She’d been quick to point out that if she wasn’t
leaving before the storm, she certainly wasn’t leaving after. That reminded Libby; she needed to call her parents when she returned.

She swam several laps before making for the steps and climbing out. One more dive and she was going home. She stepped onto the diving board and prepared to lunge, when a distant noise penetrated the quiet surrounding her. She hesitated. At first she thought someone was mowing their lawn, and glanced around with disbelief, until a motorcycle gradually came into view. A big black Harley with a lion-haired Adonis riding it.

She froze like a model posing for a shot, knowing it was Logan behind the dark visor of the helmet. No one else in the park rode a motorcycle. No one else wore a pair of faded jeans and sleeveless tee-shirt like they’d been invented just for him. His biceps were prominent as he controlled his powerful bike, even though he wasn’t going all that fast. Libby wondered if he noticed her, receiving her answer when he slowed and swerved in the direction of the pool.

Her body tingled with instant excitement. She watched him park his bike next to the gate and slowly remove his helmet. His gaze shot to her as he ran his hands through his hair. Then he dismounted and headed her way. Even from her distance Libby could see the way his eyes moved over her, making a lazy sweep from the top of her head, down to her feet, and back again. She felt a shiver go over her that had nothing to do with the breeze touching her wet body.

The urge to dive into the pool like a coward was overwhelming, yet Libby refused to give into it. She liked Logan’s eyes on her, liked how they made her feel. She was quaking inside but stood her ground, letting him look as long as he liked. Reaching up, she swept her long hair back, feeling her nipples peak from the heat of his gaze. She felt a pleasant warmth pool between her thighs, surprised at how fast her body responded to him. She tried to swallow but couldn’t, wondering what his intentions were as he silently made his way to her. She decided to break the silence first. “Hello, Logan.”

“Don’t you know there’s a storm heading this way?” he inquired, not making any effort to disguise the mild reproach in his tone.

Libby could hardly point out it was sunny and clear, as she had with her grandmother, when she was noticing for the first time that the sky had gotten cloudy and the wind had definitely picked up. The sun was all but gone now. She’d been so absorbed in her swim that she hadn’t noticed the subtle changes.

None of that excused his insufficient greeting. “Why, I’m fine, Logan. And how are you?” she said cheerfully. “Don’t you know it’s polite to say hello first before yelling at someone?”

“Libby…” he began in annoyance.

“I was hot,” she said in her defense, deciding not to let his disapproving mood get to her. She gave him a sweet smile, remembering their last encounter. “Haven’t you ever been hot, Logan?” Libby didn’t know why she was baiting him, maybe because he seemed to take life too seriously. Maybe because she was still smarting slightly over his rejection, though done in good taste and uttered with all the right words a week ago. She guessed she should thank him for not being a bastard.

The loaded question hung in the air between them. Logan’s eyes widened a fraction. “Once or twice,” he replied carefully, obviously weighing his words. “I’m a fireman, remember?”

That wasn’t the hot Libby was talking about and what’s more, she sensed he knew exactly what she was referring to. Without warning a gust of wind whipped around them from nowhere and she was caught unaware. As she lost her balance Logan reached up and
quickly pulled her off the diving board and into his strong arms. Suddenly Libby found herself plastered against his hard body.

Her musical laughter was carried away on the wind as she splayed her hands over his chest, tilting her head back. With nerve she looked up at Logan and batted her eyelashes at him, like some demure southern bell. After a second he burst out laughing, shaking his head with resignation.

“I shouldn’t have stopped.”

His arms remained around her and Libby was very conscious of her near nakedness. “Why?” She didn’t make any effort to step away.

“Because all I want to do when I’m around you is kiss you,” he replied without hesitation, catching them both by surprise.

“Is that all?” Libby retorted with sass, a little thrill shooting through her from his comment. “Would you like me to put you out of your misery?” she teased in a low and sultry voice. At that moment she wanted a kiss more than anything else in the world.

Logan’s gaze dropped to her mouth, and guessing his thoughts Libby’s tongue came out, wetting her lips, and apparently whetting his appetite too. He groaned low in his throat, his gaze falling to her breasts. She knew the little triangle of cloth concealing them left nothing to the imagination. She felt his hands smooth down the curve of her back, and further, halting where her bikini bottom began. She itched for him to go further, knowing he couldn’t.

“What did you have in mind?”

“What would you like?” She was a fool for asking. But the truth was, she’d been thinking about Logan ever since the steamy episode they’d shared in the parking lot that night. She tried to will her body not to respond, but that was like willing the approaching storm to just disappear. Logan stimulated all her senses, but she could only handle one thing at a time. She raised her head with every intention of kissing him. Perhaps it was a godsend when the first hard drops of rain fell, reminding Libby they were standing there locked in what could only be described as an embrace, in the open where anyone could see them.

Pulling back before their lips touched, they both glanced up at the dark clouds above them. “Looks like the first band has made its way to us,” Libby quipped, cringing at the deep disappointment in her voice.

Logan took her by the hand. “Come on, maybe we’ll get lucky and find the pool house open.” No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the sky opened up.

On the way by the lounge chair where she’d dropped her towel he snatched it up. They found the door to the pool house open. Inside they found a small room decorated with some wicker furniture and a table with a floral arrangement on top. A vanity lined one mirrored wall and there were five stalls for changing. The air was a little stale and Libby was thankful Logan left the door open.

“Home sweet home!” she shouted over the sound of falling rain. She took the towel dangling from Logan’s hand, drawing his attention from where he was observing the rain at the threshold.

He turned to look at her, watching quietly as she brought it around her naked shoulders. The roof on the building was metal, making the rain sound like they were being pelted by machine gun fire. Someone had left the little windows near the ceiling open, and with the door open it created a cross breeze of fresh misty air to blow through.

“How long do you think it will last?” Libby smiled up at him, wondering what kept him so quiet.
Logan shrugged, shaking the beads of water out of his hair. “No way of telling,” he said loudly, leaning against the doorjamb and crossing his arms. “Why, you scared?”

His question caused a peal of laughter to escape Libby. “Of course not! I love storms!” She moved closer and peered around him to look out. “They’re wild and beautiful. Mother Nature in all her glory! Don’t you think?”

Their gazes met and clung. Logan’s expression was hard to read, the look in his eyes secretive as his wolfish grin slowly faded away. It was hard to pull her gaze from him, and the more they stared at each other the more the atmosphere became charged between them, as palpable as the pounding storm. Libby couldn’t deny there was an element of excitement that was only amplified by the fierce wind and rain outside.

“Do you know what I think?” he asked after a while.

Libby just shook her head and waited.

“I think you’re wild and beautiful.” He reached out, brushing the back of his knuckles against her cheek before sliding his hand behind her head beneath her hair. He cupped the back of her neck, gently pulling her to him. “And if I don’t taste your lips this very minute, you might as well call Thayer Hospital and have them lock me up.”

A soft chuckle escaped Libby, her eyes widening on his approaching mouth. “Really?”

“Yes…”

Libby quickly closed the distance between them, her mouth cutting him off. Logan didn’t seem to mind when she leaned into him, opening her mouth so their tongues could mesh. That seemed to be all Logan needed to send him into high gear. He crushed her to him with a low groan that echoed off the tiled walls surrounding them. A heated rush blasted through Libby, and she felt like a volcano on the verge of erupting.

Her willingness spurred Logan on, and he began his sensual attack in earnest. His hand tensed at her neck, but he was careful not to exert undue pressure. The towel slipped from Libby’s shoulders when she raised her arms to link them around his neck but she didn’t care. He in turn let his hands glide up the curve of her waist to just below her breasts. Libby yearned for him to cup her aching flesh. But for a moment they were content to kiss, explore and nip passionately at each other’s mouths. Taste the passion rapidly building.

When Logan’s hands smoothed back down to her waist, over the curve of her hips and down her thighs, Libby decided she needed more. And this time she wasn’t going to let him walk away without appeasing the hunger trapped inside her. Not when he was the one who’d awakened it. She was conscious that he was carefully keeping his hands in the safe zones but she was about to change that.

She pulled away from their kiss, getting raised brows as she stepped back and reached behind her. With little to no effort she untied her bikini top and let it fall from her body. Logan’s gaze landed on her breasts, his pupils dilating and turning dark. His face flushed with desire. Libby knew it was a brazen act on her part but she wanted him and wasn’t afraid to show it.

“Libby…”

She could hear the hesitation in his tone; even though it was clear he wanted her in turn. Well, she had one more ace up her sleeve. Granted, it was bold and something she’d never done before, but it didn’t stop her from wanting to see what Logan’s reaction would be. To see how far she’d have to go to make him lose control.

“I know, Logan, you said all you wanted from me was sex. Well, I’m accepting your terms.” She put her hands on the strings at her hips, easily pulling them free until her
bikini bottoms fell to the floor around her ankles. She was completely naked in front of him, standing, maybe not so tall but surely proud, beneath his burning gaze.

She swallowed nervously. If he rejected her now she’d leave the park and never return. However, what she saw on Logan’s expression wasn’t rejection. As he took his fill looking at her, she let her gaze roam down to the prominent bulge in his pants. It was a wonder it didn’t burst right through his zipper! Without realizing what she was doing she reached forward and touched him to see if it was as hard as it appeared, sliding a naughty fingertip down the pulsing length. He was made of steel. And she couldn’t wait to have him inside her.

He sucked in his breath, his cock jumping strongly beneath her finger. His heavy-lidded gaze slid down Libby’s exposed body in a slow, heated caress that made her heart pound and her pulse race. She felt her breasts swelling for attention, her nipples tingling almost painfully with excitement. Lord, it was a wonder she remained on her feet she was so turned on. And all they’d done was kiss so far.

What is Logan waiting for? Libby was all but asking him to make love to her. Doesn’t he recognize the signs? Surely he isn’t a virgin!

“Ah, Logan?” she questioned after a moment, curious as to why he hadn’t made his move yet when she expected him to sweep her into his arms and ravish her. His eyes swung lazily up to hers, the question in them apparent. “Ah, you’ve been with a woman before, haven’t you?” Her finger continued to toy with his erection. “Because if you haven’t, I can show you what to do with this.”

The crooked grin spreading slowly across his face was sexy as sin, and Libby felt the heat of embarrassment crawl up her neck and span across her cheeks when she realized her mistake. All at once the wolfish look in his eyes was backed up with a predatory gleam, and his intentions became very clear. He was about to make a meal of her.

“I thought I told you, Libby, I like it slow and easy.” His words reminded her of what he’d said that night at the bar. Without warning he wrapped an arm around her waist and hauled her up against him. She was the one catching her breath now, feeling the ridge of his desire against her. “And looking is the best part,” he finished in a voice of smooth velvet.
Chapter 9

Logan knew the force of his kiss could have snapped Libby’s neck if he hadn’t put a hand to the back of her head to hold her steady. He kissed her long and hard, thrusting his tongue between the barrier of her lips and teeth and ravishing the warmth and sweetness he found within. He knew her comment about accepting his terms was crap but she’d pushed him over the limit with her last remark. The thought of her showing him what to do with it nearly made him sink to his knees.

Forcing himself to switch gears, he began to run his hands over her in a caress that brought her pleasure and made him hotter than hot. Their mutual moans of pleasure filled the small room, heard even above the storm raging outside. Logan started with her shoulders, taking a leisurely path down the graceful arch of her back and buttocks, around her hips and up her sides until he captured her breasts.

For a moment he was content playing with the luscious mounds, weighing them in his palms and flicking her nipples with his thumbs. She cried out beneath his mouth, arching against him with a hungry moan. He let her pull back, and he lifted Libby off her feet to take a tempting bud into his mouth. She was sweeter than any berry. Her soft cries of passion urged him to continue making love to her sweet flesh. His tongue lapped at her, his teeth tugging gently. Her hands dropped to his hair, holding him against her. Still holding her off the ground, Logan walked until they reached the table. He lifted her until she was sitting on it, moving between her thighs as close as he could get.

It didn’t take much to sweep the flower arrangement onto the floor. During that small second her hands made quick work of slipping his shirt off over his head and tossing it aside. He waited for the desire in her eyes to dim as they moved over his scars, but they remained glazed with passion, running over him as if visualizing him as a tasty snack. Then her hands went to his belt buckle. Their eyes met and clung, her fingers halting. The glaze in her eyes showed a woman deep in desire. “Don’t stop now,” he said hoarsely.

As she busied herself with undoing his pants, Logan’s hands glided up her smooth legs and silky thighs. Only he didn’t stop there. He flicked the tip of his index finger across the opening between her legs, slicing through the soft folds of her pussy lips and going deeper still. Libby’s hips nearly shot off the table.

“Oh!” She shivered wildly.

“Easy, baby.” Logan continued to finger her, amazed at how wet and hot she was. Responsive. His balls were full and heavy and his cock was about to break right through his boxers he was so excited. He didn’t know how much longer he could refrain from taking her. Another delicate shudder racked her slender body. “You like that?” Logan whispered against her lips, repeating the action before she could respond. He slipped another finger inside her, groaning at how receptive her body was, how welcoming.
She trembled wildly. “Maybe just a little,” she lied blatantly, biting his bottom lip passionately. “I wouldn’t protest much if you decided to keep doing it.”

“Oh yeah? What else can I do for you?” he teased, then growled when her soft hands brushed his jeans and boxers down his hips before encircling his hard flesh. Her tender caress nearly pushed him over.

“Replace it with something else.”

Her words did the trick, inflaming him. Logan lost control, grabbing Libby behind the knees and pulling her to the very edge of the table. “I don’t have a condom but I’m clean,” he stated, hesitating.

“I’m on the pill,” Libby gasped. “And I’m clean, too.”

With a growl, he thrust forward, impaling her in one quick move. Oh God! He couldn’t remember a time anything had ever felt so good, or so right. She was small, and tight.

Pleasure exploded through his body and he took a moment to enjoy the snug, wet heat surrounding his cock. All he wanted to do was ram his hungry flesh into her time and time again; only he halted, closing his eyes, willing himself not to ruin it for both of them. Except Libby made it a thousand times worse when she tightened her muscles around him and squeezed.

“God…don’t,” he groaned deeply, feeling control slipping. “Give me a minute.” One more squeeze like that and it would be all over. He was a breath away from coming so hard and deep that he would most likely blow Libby right off the table.

“Logan?” Libby whispered after seconds passed. Her breath came out in little panting spurts. “Are you all right?”

Their eyes locked when he finally opened his. A ghost of a smile on her parted lips revealed she already knew the answer to that. Damn her, she knew what she was doing to him, backing up his suspicions by tightening the inner walls of her muscles around his shaft again. He sucked in his breath, willing the rolling blast of sensation at bay. Knowing he was going to lose.

“You want to end it now, this very second?” he whispered sharply, clenching his teeth. “I haven’t been with a woman in a long time, Libby, and I swear…”

She closed the distance between them with a triumphant little chuckle, kissing him wildly and sticking her little tongue inside and halfway down his throat. She ran her hands over him wherever she could, her caresses bringing sweet pain to his scarred body.

“You might like it slow and easy, Logan, but I like it fast and hard,” she whispered into his ear after breaking the kiss. “I like it hot.” Her teeth teased his earlobe. “Show me what you’ve got, fireman.” She reached between their bodies and caressed his lust-filled balls.

He met her demand without further coaxing, moving his hips in a rhythm as old as time. He started out slow and teasing, until the pleasure became too much for him and forced him to pick up speed. Libby matched his urgency with her own lusty needs. Her sounds of satisfaction and encouragement filled the room as her roaming hands found all the pleasure points that added to the thrill of the moment.

Reaching forward, Logan took her jutting breasts in his hands. Libby’s back arched and she dropped her palms on the tabletop behind her, offering him the gift of her sweet flesh without shyness. Her breathless sigh of pleasure echoed his satisfied growl. As he kneaded the twin mounds at his leisure, she wrapped her legs around his waist without warning, forcing him deeper. Keeping him where he wanted to be.

Where she wanted him.
Their eyes met, and there was no denying the inner fire burning in Libby’s meant she was climbing higher, nearing the pinnacle of ultimate fulfillment. Her lovely face was flushed with color, her mouth parted as little puffs of air escaped. All at once she reached for him. Logan didn’t know what her intentions were but he took matters into his own hands, kissing her with rough ardor.

He became lost in the kaleidoscope of sensations exploding through his body. He was aware of her soft breasts and hard nipples, crushed against his chest. Aware of his pounding heart and the blood running like a river of hot lava through his veins. Everywhere he touched Libby; everywhere she touched him, produced ecstasy of gigantic proportions. He’d never felt anything like it and he didn’t want it to end. She returned his hard kiss, meeting the thrust of his hips with a thrust of her own. Her hands kept busy, roaming over Logan wherever she could reach him.

“Velvet over steel,” she murmured against his lips. The muscles in Logan’s arms flexed when she ran her palms over them. Next she moved on to trace his back with her nails, before clenching her fingers into his buttocks. “Everywhere!”

Logan tore his mouth from hers and zeroed in on her collarbone. She gasped and twisted her neck to one side so his lips could smooth a trail up to the back of her ear. She trembled violently when he gave a gentle tug, and then repaid him by running her hands along the backs of his thighs and between his legs until her fingertips were teasing his balls. Heart pounding out of control, Logan jerked back, taking his cock in his hand.

With precise movement he guided the tip over the nub of her desire, rubbing it back and forth vigorously until Libby was twitching and gasping with pleasure. He watched her pupils dilate a second just as her climax hit her.

“Logan!”

Her cry of excitement released his own and he lost control, releasing the tidal wave of rapture that had been steadily building since that first kiss. Taking Libby by the hips, Logan pulled her over his shaft and held her tightly as a hard climax racked his body. He grunted low and claimed her lips, stealing her breath away as they succumbed to sweet ecstasy.

* * * *

Libby felt Logan’s withdrawal long before his body left hers, bracing herself for what she sensed was coming. She’d never felt such intense passion or pleasure in a man’s arms. Yet as much as the culmination had rocked her world, fear warred for first place. Logan didn’t want emotions. Her instincts warned her that he was already feeling contrite over making love to her. She had to question why, if all he’d wanted from her was sex? He should be happy she’d met him on his terms.

But who was she kidding? She knew it was more than just sex to her. She wasn’t into casual sex or the habit of just giving herself to a man. Something about Logan, besides the obvious reasons, pulled at her emotions. Maybe it was the fact he refused to talk about his accident, wouldn’t face the memory, whatever it was, and deal with it so he could move on. She was sure she could help him, if he let her.

Libby felt his shrinking flesh slowly slip away, and bit her bottom lip to keep from crying out from the emptiness it created. She waited, wondering if she’d be able to deal with
his rejection. Shrug it off as though it didn’t matter to her. She immediately felt the draft when he stepped far enough away to yank up his jeans, aware of his hands moving as he zipped the fly and buckled the belt. Still, she refused to pull her eyes away from the growing regret in his.

What is he thinking? Passion still darkened his expression, the glaze of desire in his eyes diminishing yet still evident. His hair was tousled where she’d run her hands through it; a faint blotch marred his neck where she’d lost control and nipped him a little too hard.

It appeared neither of them was willing to break the silence first. And she suddenly felt very vulnerable sitting there completely naked in front of him. Logan took the few steps where she’d dropped her towel and snatched it up. As he made his way back to her she couldn’t help but notice the muscle jumping in his lean jaw.

“Thank you.” Libby felt unaccustomed shyness when he draped the towel over her shoulders, pulling it closed in the front. His knuckles grazed her breasts, bringing new awareness of him throughout her system like a shot of strong caffeine.

“Libby…”
Here it comes. She reluctantly met his eyes.

“I…” He paused, clenching his hands in the towel and jerking her close. “Damn, Libby. How could I have let this happen?”

“It takes two…”
He brushed his lips across hers, tenderly at first. Then with a groan he applied more pressure. His sensuous mouth coaxed an instant response from Libby and she leaned into him with a soft moan. She opened her mouth to his thrusting tongue with an eagerness that caused butterflies in her belly.

She was hooked, damn, the last thing she’d expected. Only Logan just wanted sex from her. That he could have gotten from the blonde bimbo at the bar the other night. So why had he waited for her? He ignited a slow fire inside her. One that should have been fully extinguished five minutes ago, successfully.

Though it hadn’t been, not by a long shot.
He pulled away, taking a deep breath. “This was a mistake.”

“Why? Because it’s something we both wanted, Logan?” Her husky tone was lingering proof of the passion they’d shared. For the first time she noticed that the rain had stopped.

“For different reasons,” he practically snapped back.

“And those reasons are?”
He hesitated for a long moment, and Libby wondered if he’d be able to put the truth into words. “I haven’t been with a woman since the fire. I was looking for a good lay to release some of the sexual tension that’s been building from months of celibacy.”

Libby laughed softly, but her heart was twisting with the pain his words caused. “And my reasons?” Logan shrugged. “So, what makes you think I didn’t make love with you for the same reasons?” He was forced to back up when she slipped off the table. “I’d say we both got what we wanted.”

For some reason her response fueled his anger. “Who are you trying to convince, lady? You’re not the kind of woman who makes love with a man just for the sheer hell of it.”

Libby shrugged much in the same way he had, stepping around him. “Relax; I don’t want anything from you. We don’t all have to be in love or want a wedding ring on our fingers, and men don’t hold a monopoly on enjoying sex for the sheer hell of it.”

He stared after her for a moment. She could tell by his expression that he didn’t believe her. And why should he? She was talking crap because it allowed her to hide behind the truth.
She scooped up her bathing suit and slipped into the bottoms without removing the towel. She left the ties hanging free at her hips, and then let the towel glide to the floor. For a second his eyes flickered down to her naked breasts.

“It’s stopped raining,” Libby commented, turning around while slipping into her bikini top.

“I’ll give you a ride home,” he offered, walking up to where she was standing in the threshold.

Libby’s eyes took in the dark sky. It had stopped raining but it was obvious it wouldn’t be for long. Nearby palms swayed violently with the wind, and there was no signs of the sun returning any time soon. About that time two men from the common grounds landscaping crew began gathering up the chairs and tables around the pool and taking them into a shed. One of them glanced up, waving when he finally noticed them. She and Logan were damn lucky they hadn’t been caught.

Libby drew the towel back around her. “That won’t be necessary. I can walk.” She made a move to leave but Logan reached out and drew her to a halt. “I’ll take you home,” he insisted firmly. “We have about two minutes to make it before the next rain hits.” A few large drops hit them.

“I’ve never been on a motorcycle,” Libby commented as they walked to his bike. He removed his helmet from the seat and draped the chinstrap over the backrest.

“Hop on. Normally you’d sit behind me, but since we have such a short way to go you can sit in front.” Once Libby was situated he mounted behind her, putting his arms on either side of her as he reached for the handlebars.

“What do I hold onto?”

“Just lean back into me; we aren’t going to be traveling that fast,” he said against her ear.

Libby did as he asked, shivering from the warmth of his voice in her ear. Thankfully it was a short trip because she didn’t know how long she could take sitting snug between Logan’s muscular thighs. He wasn’t kidding when he said they wouldn’t be going fast, however, every bump and hole in the road caused her bottom to jolt against him, keeping her pleasantly stimulated with the memory of their recent lovemaking.

As soon as they turned the corner to their street her eyes fell on the car in her grandmother’s driveway, and her heart sank. She wasn’t in any mood to face her parents right now, suspecting what their reasons for being there were.

“Looks like Margaret has company.” Logan brushed his lips against her ear.

Libby nodded with a slight shiver, caused by his warm breath and the knowledge that the hardness against her backside was Logan’s renewed erection. “My parents.”

Before long he pulled into his drive and flipped the engine off. He swung his leg around, dismounting first. Libby glanced up at him, pushing the hair out of her face, laughing against the strong breeze that blew it right back again.

“Are you staying through the storm?”

She nodded. “Unless my parents have somehow talked some sense into Gram. I’d never let her stay here alone,” she replied. “Or Reba,” she quickly added, hoping Logan didn’t notice. The rain began to come down a little harder. “I guess I better get over there.”

He stood back so she could dismount. For a moment they stood there, looking at each other in awkward silence. Then something wicked prompted Libby into saying, “If you ever need another good lay, you know where to find me.”
His brows drew together in a frown, and ignoring his somewhat annoyed expression, Libby turned and dashed away before he could make a response.
As Libby dashed up the porch steps and reached for the screen door, she could hear the voices coming from inside. It sounded like both her parents were ganging up on her grandmother, hardly letting her get a word in edgewise as they voiced a list of dos and don’ts.

“These homes aren’t built to withstand hurricane force winds,” Libby heard her father say.

“They’ve already recommended evacuation in some parks,” her mother added.

“They’re held together with screws, for God’s sake.” Even if he meant well Libby wondered if her father realized how hurtful that comment was. Her grandmother loved her home.

“You and Libby should come home with us until the worst is over.” Libby fully agreed with her mother on that count, but she disagreed with their tactics.

“I’m perfectly fine here,” Margaret finally spoke up, in a feisty tone of voice that brought a smile to Libby’s mouth.

Libby walked into the room to see her mother and grandmother sitting on the sofa, her father pacing the room like a caged lion who hadn’t been fed any red meat in a long time. For as long as she could remember he used that particular method to intimidate people, forcing the issue in order to get what he wanted, which was probably what made him a good trial lawyer.

When she entered the room all eyes swung her way. Her mother looked pleased to see her, but her father’s expression didn’t change.

“Don’t tell me you’ve been swimming in the rain,” he grumbled, taking in the towel draped across her shoulders.

“Hi, Dad.” She smiled brightly turning to her mom. “Mom.” She went over to give her a quick hug. “It wasn’t raining when I first got there. I waited the storm out in the pool house.”

“Was that Logan’s bike I heard earlier?”

Libby shot her grandmother a surprised glance. Her ears couldn’t be that good! Then she noticed her position on the couch gave her the perfect view of Vincent’s house outside the bay window. She must have seen them arrive.

“Logan?” Doris asked. “Is that the man Scott told us about?”

Libby was interested in knowing just what Scott had told them, only she wasn’t going to respond to her mother’s comment. Mainly because it irritated her they insisted on remaining close to Scott, when they knew how she felt about him. And knowing Scott, he’d probably painted a bad picture of Logan.
“Logan is Vincent’s grandson,” said Margaret, who rose to her feet. She walked to the window ledge where Rufus was sitting, glaring at John. Her slightly shaking hand smoothed over his head as though to comfort him.

Libby grinned because her father had the same glare on his stern features.

“The young fireman who rescued you?” John questioned.

“You didn’t say he was living here. What’s he doing living in a retirement community?”

“Did I say he was living here?” Margaret all but snapped. Rufus jumped down and skittered from the room. She turned from the window, framed by a sheet of falling rain behind her.

“Logan’s only staying with Vincent while he recuperates from a terrible accident.”

All at once a rumble of thunder shook the house, reminding everyone why her parents were there. “We’re wasting time. You and Libby pack some things.”

“If Libby wants to go with you, that’s fine. I’m not going anywhere,” Margaret said stubbornly, folding her arms. “The last report on the weather channel said Dexter will probably come ashore further north.”

The operative word being probably, only Libby wasn’t about to point that out to anyone.

“But, Mom,” Doris began. “It will only be for a day or two. Until the danger is past.”

Margaret shook her head. “I’m not leaving Rufus and I’m not leaving my home.”

“You know we can’t take Rufus,” John stated gruffly.

Everyone knew why. When Rufus was out of his comfort zone he was like a wild cat from the hills. Destructive and mean, and he absolutely hated Libby’s father. The feeling was mutual. No one in the room was brave enough to comment on his remark. However, Libby and Margaret exchanged amused glances.

“Well, I guess we can’t make you go, but you know we’ll worry about you. I’d think you’d take that into consideration and come with us.” Doris rose to her feet, brushing the cat hairs off her linen slacks.

“You should have called before coming, dear,” Margaret chastised lightly, “and saved yourself a trip. I’ll be okay.”

John released a heavy sigh, realizing defeat. “Libby…”

“Save your breath, Dad, I’m staying with Gram.”

“Now why doesn’t that surprise me?” The frustration was evident in his tone. His eyes were focused on Libby intently as if he could think her into doing his will.

Smiling, Libby went to him and kissed him on the cheek. “Maybe because I’m a little too much like you?” she joked, cracking his rough exterior and getting a reluctant grin. “We’ll be fine, Dad.” She hoped.

She walked them to the door. Rufus slipped out when it was open and Libby glanced back at her grandmother to see if she’d noticed. Thankfully she hadn’t entered the kitchen in time to witness it. She supposed in time she’d have to go find him but right now, a little rain wasn’t going to hurt him.

* * *
It was five o’clock in the morning when the sound of something banging against the house woke Logan. Not that he’d been sleeping all that soundly, listening to the wrath of Mother Nature on and off during most of the night. They were lucky. The hurricane had indeed turned, leaving them with tropical force winds and rain in its wake. The Carolinas was going to get the brunt of the storm, which had thankfully shrunk down to a category one.

He pulled back the covers and jumped from the bed when he heard something crashing around in the backyard. The wind was strong enough to shake the house, and he could only pray the hurricane shutters held up. He was worried about the trees around the place, too. If one of them came down, it would pierce the aluminum roof like a toothpick.

He pulled the curtain back to peer out his bedroom window before remembering the shutters, and then reached for his jeans. He slipped them on, not bothering to turn on the light. He knew the power was still on though, thanks to the digital clock on the dresser. As he made his way through the darkened house, he passed his snoring grandfather where he’d fallen asleep on the sofa. Shaking his head with disbelief, Logan grinned when he noticed the weather channel was still on.

Remembering there was a flashlight in the junk drawer next to the stove, Logan retrieved it. He turned it on before leaving the kitchen to make sure it worked, then opened the door just enough to squeeze through. As soon as he stepped out onto the porch he was blasted with a sheet of wind and rain. Other noises began to penetrate Logan’s consciousness. The dim lights at the end of everyone’s driveways allowed him enough light to see the dark shadows of flying debris. Someone’s trashcan was rolling down the street. A couple planters blew by, minus the plants. God knows where those were. Pieces of rain gutters were scattered here and there as the fragile aluminum was ripped off the houses. Someone’s wind turbine, possibly their own, was on the front lawn.

As far as Logan could tell it wasn’t anything major. No one’s porches or carports were flying around. The street was flooded though. He couldn’t see if there were any trees down but daylight would provide more answers. When he opened the screen door the wind almost tore it from his grasp. He made sure it was secured, and then dashed down the steps. As he headed for the backyard, a light coming from Margaret’s house drew his immediate attention. He could clearly make out that she was standing in front of what he knew was the kitchen window. However, he couldn’t tell if she was doing something at the sink, or looking outside.

Then a loud bang snagged Logan’s attention and his gaze shot to the large piece of metal the wind was holding hostage against the tool shed. He wondered whose house it had broken loose from. The shed door had somehow blown open too and was banging noisily against the side. As he turned to head there a beam of light hit the large oak tree to the right of him, and he came to a halt. Then he saw something move out of the corner of his eye.

At first Logan thought his eyes were playing tricks on him. He couldn’t possibly be seeing Libby, walking around in the rain with a flashlight in her hands. She was obviously searching for something. Is she crazy? What does she think she is doing? A good gust of wind would pick her up without much trouble. As it was she was having trouble staying on her feet. She halted when her light went out. She hadn’t noticed him yet, and began slapping the flashlight against her palm to get the light to come back on. He shook his head with disbelief and made his way to her.

“What the hell are you doing out here?” he growled loud enough for her to hear him over the howling wind. He pointed his flashlight at her face. “Trying to get killed?”
She glanced up, blinking against the wind and rain, brushing wet strands of hair out of her face. She was as soaked as he was, and wearing just as little. In fact, closer inspection revealed it was a nightgown of some kind. The cloth made transparent by the rain.

She faced his anger with an unconcerned laugh. “Not really!” she yelled above the storm, blinking at the light he was shining in her eyes. “Looking for Rufus! Gram’s about to give herself a heart attack because she can’t find him! She’s frantic!”

“You’re risking your neck for a cat?” Now he knew she was crazy. “Come on!” Logan took her by the arm with every intention of dragging her back inside.

Libby pulled back. “I have to find him!” She turned toward the shed.

Groaning with frustration, Logan wrapped his arm around her waist and picked her up off the ground. He whipped her back in the direction of the house. “I’ll look for Rufus; you get your little butt back inside!”

“Logan,” Libby struggled against his arm but he had no trouble keeping hold of her. “He’ll never come to you! Let me at least check out the shed and then I’ll go back inside, I promise!”

He hesitated reluctantly, realizing she was making sense. What would it hurt to let her check out the shed? It wouldn’t take that long, and he’d be with her if anything happened. He lowered her until her feet were on the ground again. “Okay, but make it quick.”

He was right behind Libby when they entered the dark shed, drawing the door closed behind them to keep the inside from getting any wetter than it already was. A large crack remained because the door was old and bent. He felt for the light switch and flipped it on. The room was instantly bathed with the dim glow of a twenty-watt bulb. Not much light, just enough to take in the lawn mower, various tools and gardening supplies kept on hand. And the wet temptress poised directly beneath the light.

Logan’s gaze dropped, moving over Libby. She might as well be naked. Whatever she had on was plastered to her like a thin layer of tissue. It stopped at the top of her thighs, the transparency revealing she wasn’t wearing any panties. Logan tried to put the brakes on where his mind was heading as his eyes rested on the fascinating curve of her buttocks. He recalled what she looked like naked, but for some unexplained reason this was far more sensual and tempting. Heightening his senses with a teasing display of what his hands had only discovered the day before. His palms tingled, he tried to swallow.

Then she whipped around to face him, an innocent smile on her face as she brushed the wet hair away. He watched her movements, letting his gaze slowly take in the clear outline of her breasts with their darker nipples, proudly pointing in his direction. When his eyes landed on the darker patch between her thighs lust swept through his body in crippling waves. Someone caught their breath, and their eyes met.

If Logan didn’t know better he’d swear the look on Libby’s face revealed she was feeling uncharacteristically shy and nervous. So unlike the self-assured, sassy little witch they both knew she was. All at once she glanced away, and he couldn’t help wondering what she was up to. Yesterday she’d stood before him proud and naked, practically demanding he make love to her. Now she resembled more a delicate damsel in distress facing her conqueror.

“When Rufus is frightened he’ll hide almost anywhere,” she said, looking everywhere but at Logan. Is her voice trembling? “He likes people to believe he’s big and bad but inside he’s really just a big baby.” She moved to an old desk that Vincent used for a worktable. “Rufus?” her soft voice coaxed.
She bent over the desk to peer behind it, and seeing how her wet nightgown outlined her shapely bottom, Logan lost it, achieving a hard-on in record time. He sucked in his breath, his body twitching with awareness recalling how good it felt sinking inside her welcoming body. Logan moved behind Libby, pinning her against the desk, not quite sure what his intentions were. Only knowing he needed to feel her against him like he needed air to breathe.

Catching her unaware, he felt her slight jump. “Do you know what you’re doing to me?” he asked gruffly against her ear. Logan brought his arms around her and covered her breasts with his hands. He thrust his hips, letting her feel the power of his erection against her bottom.

“Oh!” she cried again, this time with soft acceptance.

Logan closed his eyes and groaned low. If he had any doubts Libby was receptive to his boldness the thought went right out the window the moment she pressed her bottom against his cock.

“There’s a damn storm out there, Libby, and all I can think about is a repeat of what we did in the pool house.”

Her soft laugh filled the small room, heard above the pounding rain on the tin roof. “I haven’t stopped thinking about it,” she admitted. “I’m embarrassed at how, ah, slutty I acted with you.”

“Do you know what I think?” he whispered, caressing her breasts and nipples and noticing how perfect they felt in his palms. Like they belonged there. “I think you’re a witch and you put a hex on me.” He sucked in his breath when she arched her back, forcing her bottom more fully against him. His knees actually buckled in weakness.

She laughed again, trembling wildly. “My great-grandmother was said to be a witch,” she confessed.

Growling low, Logan leaned forward and put his mouth against her collarbone. His kisses traveled a slow path to the graceful arch of her neck, where she tilted her head so he could have better access. He closed his teeth over her in a gentle love bite, and then sucked the brief pain away. Libby shivered wildly, turning her face toward him with a sigh of longing on her lips.

Logan didn’t think twice about accepting her silent invitation. His mouth swooped down on hers, parting her sweet lips and thrusting his tongue inside to mate with hers. Mutual moans of pleasure echoed around them. It would be so easy to lose control with Libby. But did he want to use her in that way? The truth was Logan didn’t have the strength to pull away.

His arousal pounded full and heavy behind his zipper, demanding he do something about it. His heart was beating rapidly to keep up with the rush spiraling through his blood. And the hungry movements of Libby’s body as she writhed against him, her audible whimpers, seemed to indicate she was working toward that same goal.

Logan forced himself to break their heated kiss. “Libby…God, I don’t want to hurt you,” he whispered, out of breath.

“You would never hurt me, Logan,” she gasped right back.

“I’ve never felt like this with anyone.” Not what he wanted to hear right then. “Besides, how can something that feels this good hurt me?”

He knew of several reasons why. His mind was clouded with desire, and his body ached with the need to make love to her. Yet it didn’t keep him from having a conscience. Libby knew the score; he’d made sure of that from the beginning. He should release her and step back; she deserved better than this.

“Logan?” Libby whispered. “Did you fall asleep on me?”
He burst out laughing, he couldn’t help it. “Hell no, honey.” He turned her around so that she was facing him, keeping her close. “Just let me hold you for a moment,” he breathed raggedly, encircling her in his arms. Libby placed her head against his chest.

Her arms glided around him, her hands brushing the moisture off his naked shoulders and down his back. Logan tried to calm his body down, ignore the soft woman in his arms who smelled of rain and something sweetly wild. But every breath she took made him aware of her in every way. And there was the obvious problem of his hard-on, which was nestled against her demanding attention and straining toward the pleasure it would find in her body.

“What are you afraid of, Logan?” she asked against his chest, her warm breath singeing his bare flesh. “I thought we had an understanding; sex for sex, nothing more, nothing less.”

In spite of what he was feeling, Logan stiffened at her question. What was he afraid of? Falling for a little witch with flaming hair and sparkling eyes? Afraid he wouldn’t be able to walk away? Whatever the answers were he wanted Libby more than he’d ever wanted another woman.

“What if I said I want you too?” she asked huskily, her eyes half closed with desire. “Right here…right now.”

Logan half expected her to remove her clothes as she had in the pool house. Instead, she did something just as shocking. She gave him a shove, at the same time bringing her hands up to cup and caresses her breasts through her wet nightgown. Her nipples were brown little crowns, clearly visible, taunting him to put his mouth on them. He swallowed with difficulty.

“Libby…” He struggled to ignore the lust boiling through his blood, knowing the thin thread holding his control in check was going to snap at any moment. “Don’t…”

“You did this, Logan,” she began, throwing her head back and arching her spine, purring with pleasure as her hands caressed her breasts. “You’ve turned me on so much that I’m throbbing, too, like you,” she whispered. “If you won’t put out the fire, I’ll have to find another way.”

Her hands moved to the hem of her short gown. He watched in speechless fascination as her fingers inched the material up her thighs until there was no doubt what her intentions were. Coupled with the forbidden visual her words conjured, it was the final straw for Logan.

As her fingers reached the glistening curls between her thighs, he sucked in a sharp breath and reached for her.
“What are you trying to do?” Logan slammed Libby up against his chest, practically snarling the words down at her. “Give me heart failure?”

She tried for indifference, but her tone was too husky with emotion to make it work. She laughed softly instead. “Whatever it takes…” She purposely let the sentence trail off.

“I’ve never met another woman like you,” he continued, dragging her closer, until they were nearly kissing. Then they were. Libby immediately opened her mouth beneath Logan’s.

Her hunger knew no bounds and she yearned for so much more than his kiss. Once again she’d acted shamelessly out of character with him, but the pleasure she found in just his kiss alone was worth it. All at once she found herself lifted off her feet, a strong arm wrapped around her thighs, beneath her buttocks.

“What, where?” she gasped, relishing in the raw desire stamped on his handsome face.

Logan didn’t answer, but the look in his eyes spoke volumes. As he turned he reached up and unscrewed the light bulb until the light went out, leaving them cloaked in darkness. The next thing Libby knew he lowered himself onto something. She instinctively spread her legs so she was straddling him.

They didn’t need to see to find each other. Their lips came together in a kiss of rough passion, their tongues clashing. Their hands moved over each other with growing abandon. Logan’s hands were at Libby’s waist, half caressing her while yanking her nightgown up out of the way. Breaking the kiss, he leaned forward and took a breast in his mouth, suckling it through the material covering it.

She cried out with pleasure. Her hands moved to the front of Logan’s jeans, surprised to find they were already unsnapped. All Libby had to do was slide the zipper down; his seeking arousal did the rest. She wanted him inside her, wanted to feel his possession.

“Logan!” she whispered impatiently. Did he hear the fierce pounding of her heart? He lifted his hips long enough for her to roll his jeans down, freeing his member for her inquisitive fingers. Libby’s hand encircled his hot flesh eagerly, gaining a groan from Logan that rivaled the ever-present thunder booming outside.

“Damn!” he gasped with obvious surprise. “Baby, you’re going to make me come…”

She covered his mouth with hers, rolling her tongue behind his bottom lip and whispering, “Isn’t that the objective?” Then laughing, she began to rock her hips so she grazed his flesh with the damp hunger between her thighs. For a moment she played with Logan, guiding the velvet tip of him back and forth over the aching nub of her own arousal, before pulling back and doing it again.

“Libby!” He shuddered several times, his fingers flexing almost painfully against her waist. He was strong enough to take matters into his own hands but he clearly enjoyed what she
was doing, letting her have control of the moment. As she teased and tormented him with the promise of heaven he put his mouth against her neck, attacking her soft flesh with tender yet savage nips.

“You like that?” she asked, recalling his words to her from another time. She could feel his unmistakable smile against her throat.

“Maybe just a little.”

“What about this?” She guided him deeper into her welcoming body, and then pulled back.

Logan shuddered. “You keep doing that and I’ll finish without you.”

Her husky laughter boomeranged around them as she continued to manipulate the situation. “Is that a threat, Fireman?” Libby figured he was good for one more tease.

Before he had a chance to realize what her intentions were she scooted back, bent down and took him in her mouth. As his cock glided past her lips she took note of the velvet strength against her tongue. The taste of lust on the tip of his shaft exploded on her taste buds, causing little sounds of pleasure to escape her. She got caught up in the moment, the musky scent of his sex driving her on.

His low groan sounded like a man on the verge of dying. But if it was pain he was feeling, it didn’t prevent Logan from stretching his legs out and arching his hips so that Libby was able to take more of him into her mouth. His hands clutched at her shoulders in a response he clearly couldn’t control.

“Oh, God!” Logan groaned, sucking in his breath. “Baby…”

Libby’s tongue began to explore the hardened length of him from the tip to the base back to the tip again. Her teeth gently raked the steel power of his flesh. When she thought he’d had enough she sat up, raised her bottom off his lap and proceeded to guide his stone-hard cock into her body. Once there the game came to an abrupt end. She moaned with pleasure; he growled something low. And his control was gone. Libby felt his hands at her hips and he began to move her so that she was riding him.

Hard and fast, he took charge of their movements, the alpha male asserting dominance over his mate. Their eyes met and clung in the darkness. Libby felt like she was about to go up in flames. Logan knew right where to touch her, making sure his shaft brushed against the sensitive swelling of her desire every time he thrust forward. When he entered her body little mewling sounds escaped her. As the spiral of utter completion raced through her body she slapped her mouth over his, leaving him with no choice but to ride out the journey until they were shuddering and breathless with fulfillment.

“Why are we here?” Libby asked some time later, grinning weakly against Logan’s chest. She’d collapsed against him in blissful exhaustion. Breathing in his scent, breathing in their scent. She could feel her heart pounding wildly in her chest. A pleasant tingling warmth bathed her well sated body.

His light chuckle revealed he was still exhausted. “You have a way of making me forget everything too,” he admitted with something that sounded like unhappiness in his voice. “I think it had something to do with your cat.”

Libby made an effort to lean away from him, too aware that she’d like nothing better than to stay nestled against him forever. Or at least a very long time. She liked hearing the strong thump of his heartbeat in her ear. Listening to his heavy breathing as it gradually returned to normal. She wondered if he was aware that he was caressing her back with the tenderness of a lover whose feelings were involved. He made her feel safe and protected; he made her feel loved.
She hated making comparisons, but making love with Scott had been very empty and unfulfilling. Sure, she’d had an orgasm once or twice, but he’d always been more concerned with his own pleasures than noticing just how many times he’d left her aching and frustrated. Logan was too considerate a lover to be that selfish.

“I guess we should look for him,” she finally breathed with reluctance. “Before Gram comes looking for me.” Leaning back, she was able to meet Logan’s eyes, for the first time realizing morning had come and there was just enough light filtering in from outside to see.

“Libby, I’ll be leaving soon. Once I’m cleared to return to work I’ll be heading for California.”

Talk about changing the subject! Where had that come from and more importantly, why was he telling her? “Are you feeling guilty, Logan?”

A heavy sigh escaped him. “As usual, you hit the nail right on the head.”

“Why? You made it clear from the beginning what you wanted from me.” Was that her voice sounding so little, and sad, and so very unconvincing? Libby tried to squirm off his lap, only his hands shot out, taking hold of her upper arms. She was miserably aware of the betraying moisture filling her eyes, meeting his gaze only because the power he held over her seemed to force her to. “What?” She bit her quivering bottom lip, cursing her weakness.

“Damn it, Libby. Don’t do this!” His tone bordered on panic.

Rufus chose that moment to make his presence known, jumping from behind a cooler on the top shelf to the floor. In his usual klutzy style he caused several things to come crashing down with him. Libby jumped to her feet, but the blasted cat scampered out of the shed and into the rain before she had a chance to make a grab for him. She halted in the threshold, watching him nearly fly across the yard toward the porch and through the open door where her grandmother was standing, a huge smile of relief on her withered face. Noticing Libby, she tossed her a wave before closing the screen door and stepping back inside the porch.

Realizing the moisture on her cheeks wasn’t from the rain; she reached up and wiped it away. The last thing she wanted was for Logan to think she’d read more into their lovemaking than there was. Yet at that moment, it dawned on her that she was half in love with him. Okay, if she were honest, more than half. And she knew if he suspected anything like that he’d run and keep on running.

“The rain doesn’t look like it’s going to let up.” She turned back to Logan reluctantly, and forced a smile on her face when she saw the concern on his. “I guess I should go.” The last thing she wanted was for him to set the rules straight.

His gaze moved over her as she stood in the threshold, making Libby wonder what he was looking for. His expression gradually changed into a mild frown. “Just a minute.” He stood, zipping up his pants as he walked to where something was hanging on the wall. Removing it from the hook, he turned back to her.

As far as she could tell it was a shirt of some kind. He draped it around her shoulders, leaning in close. “You might as well be naked.”

She shivered when his breath stirred the hair behind her ear. He pulled back. “You don’t like what I’m wearing?” She couldn’t help teasing.

“Oh, I like it, maybe a little too much. It’s what got us into trouble.” He smiled, his knuckles beneath her chin where he was holding the shirt together. “No need giving one of our neighbors a heart attack.”

“It was dark when I first came out,” Libby explained unnecessarily.

“I know.”
“I didn’t think I’d be running into anyone.”
His eyes held hers, a mixture of gladness and regret in his gaze. “But you did,” he said after a while. Then, as if he couldn’t help himself, he lowered his head.
Libby lifted her face in anticipation of his kiss. However, just before their lips connected he pulled away and stepped back, a dark flush spreading over his face. Something behind her had caught his attention and she turned, seeing her grandmother watching them with curiosity from the porch. She’d never gone back inside the house!
She turned back to Logan with a light chuckle. “Why, Logan, are you blushing?”
“Probably,” he replied without hesitation.
“Going to make an honest woman of me?” Libby inquired, before she could rein in her tongue. “I mean, ah…”
“Relax, honey; I know what you didn’t mean.” He touched the end of her nose, and glanced at Margaret again. “You’d better run home to your grandma, little girl.”
The sensual rasp of his tone caused a ripple of awareness to travel over Libby, renewing her desire. “Where I’ll be safe?” she whispered.
“No.” There was a brief hesitation on Logan’s part before he admitted in a low voice, “Where I’ll be safe.” He turned Libby around, giving her a brief push out of the shed and into the rain.
Without glancing back she darted across the yard, her head bent against the weather, holding tightly to the shirt as the wind threatened to tear it from her fingers. Margaret opened the door for her as she approached.
“Goodness, child, get in here. I was getting worried when you didn’t return with Rufus, until I saw you with Logan.”
“I’m sorry if you were worried, Gram.” The screen door slammed behind her. As Margaret turned to head into the living room Libby glanced back at the shed, surprised to see Logan standing in the threshold, watching her.
Lord, he looked so sexy! No shirt, his jeans hanging low on his lean hips and the snap undone. A rush of heat enveloped her as a tiny explosion of awareness caught her by surprise. It hadn’t been that long since they’d made love. Maybe she was becoming a sex maniac! But who wouldn’t with a hunk like Logan living next door? A chuckle escaped her at the silly thought and she shot him a wave, and then turned to follow Margaret.

* * *

“Where the heck have you been, boy? I was worried when I woke to find you gone. Especially once I glanced out the door to see your bike in the drive.”
Logan grabbed a dishtowel from the kitchen drawer and began wiping the raindrops from his hair. Vincent was standing next to the coffeepot, a steaming cup of what looked like tar in his hand. “I heard a noise and went to investigate.”
“Find anything interesting?”
Logan’s eyes narrowed on him as he moved the towel over his shoulders and down his chest. Did he know something? It suddenly occurred to him that he could have probably glanced out the only window in the house without a hurricane shutter, the bathroom, and seen him and Libby in the shed. Deciding to play it cool, he headed for the coffeepot.
“A large chunk of metal flying around in the back hit the shed.” He reached for a cup hanging on the mug tree.

Vincent walked to the front door to peer out. “I see a lot of things flying around out there,” he agreed. He took a sip of his coffee. “Saw Rufus fly out of the shed heading for home like the devil was after him.” He took another drink. “Then I saw Libby…”

Why did he feel like he was about to get his ears boxed?

“Gramps, you’re beating around the bush. Why don’t you just get to the point,” Logan breathed deeply, taking a cautious sip of coffee. He made a face at the strong, bitter flavor but swallowed it anyway.

Vincent glanced his way, a twinkle dancing in his eyes. “You got something to say?”

Logan shook his head; he wasn’t about to tell his grandfather that it was none of his business. And he sure as hell wasn’t about to tell him he’d just gone done making love to Libby on the old sofa.

“I just don’t want to see the girl hurt. I like her. And what’s more, I like that cantankerous old grandmother of hers.”

“I thought it was Reba you were after,” Logan admitted with some surprise.

Vincent chuckled. “Naw, I just show Reba a little attention to make Margaret jealous. She’s not my type. And don’t change the subject.”

Logan forced himself to take another swallow of coffee to stall for time, trying to think of a half decent answer. How could he tell his grandfather that he wouldn’t hurt Libby, when his gut told him he’d be lying? That he’d already hurt her. Yes, he’d told her all she’d get from him was sex, but hell, he couldn’t fool himself into believing that’s all it was between them.

“Well?” Vincent said impatiently, a frown between his brows. “Have you come up with a good story yet?”

Logan almost spit out a mouthful of coffee, a chuckle of amusement escaping him before he could stop it. Damn, was he that easy to read? First Libby, now his grandfather. No wonder he’d never been very good a poker. “What happens between Libby and me is our business, Gramps. I wouldn’t hurt her intentionally.”

“Then I’ll come right out and ask, what are your intentions toward her?” he demanded, a spark in his eyes that warned Logan he was getting fired up. “I’ve seen the way you look at her.”

Like a hungry wolf that couldn’t get enough, Logan imagined. “Meaning?”

He shrugged, his thin shoulders barely moving beneath his lightweight shirt. “If you want her, go after her. But don’t play with her emotions. Do I have to remind you about Anne? Did it feel good when she left you?”

Logan felt the heat of anger crawl up his neck, knowing exactly what his grandfather was talking about. He was probably the only one who could get away with even mentioning Anne’s name. Her pretty face flashed before his eyes, like a bad dream that wouldn’t go away. Only, when was the last time he’d dreamed of her?

There’d been a time when he’d thought Anne was the only one for him. He’d barely gotten out of the hospital when she’d decided to break off their two-year engagement. And nothing would ever convince Logan it didn’t have anything to do with his accident. The look of revulsion in her blue eyes whenever they’d touched upon his scars was testament to that. She could barely bring herself to touch him. However, he didn’t blame her.

Libby, on the other hand, didn’t have any aversions to his imperfect body. In fact, her eyes had eaten him up like a kid eyeing an ice cream cone on a hot day. And when she
caressed him with those skillful hands of hers, it was with a tender knowledge that soothed the pain from his body, and his heart.

Damn...his heart? Where the heck had that thought come from? He gave his head a brisk shake, reluctantly meeting his grandfather’s eyes, knowing he wouldn’t get by without a response of some kind. “Don’t worry about Libby, Gramps, she’s a big girl. Besides, I doubt we’ll be bumping into each other that much before I head back to California.”

Vincent’s brows rose with surprise, as he looked at Logan over the rim of his cup while taking a sip. “Sounds like you think that’s going to be soon,” he commented, sounding a little sad.

Logan drained his coffee and placed the cup in the sink. “It will be if I have anything to say about it. Looks like the rain has stopped. Let me get a shirt on and we’ll go out and assess the damage.”

Without waiting for his grandfather’s reply he left the room for his bedroom. Hoping that when he returned the subject of Libby was behind him. He was uncomfortable talking about her. Maybe because he knew that making love with her had been a mistake. One Logan knew he’d repeat as often as the situation presented itself.
“Goodness child, why are you wearing that garb today of all days? There’s a lot of clean up to be done around the house and it’s gonna get hot and muggy.”

Libby couldn’t agree with her grandmother more, dreading the thought of spending hours out in the wet heat to clean up the damage the storm had caused. “I know, Gram, but it’s occurred to me that I’ve been seen a lot more than Reba has, and we don’t want to make anyone suspicious.”

“Bah…no one pays any attention to anything around here.”

“Are you willing to take that chance? Mom and Dad are just waiting for an excuse to pack you off to an assisted living home. If I can’t stay here with you they won’t hesitate.”

“Well, you can’t live with me forever, dear. It’s not fair for you to give up your life.” The optimism in her voice revealed she thought she was going to live forever and Libby wasn’t going to refute her. For a woman on the verge of turning eighty she was incredibly healthy and spry, but one little accident and her parents forgot all that.

“Don’t fret about it, Gram; let me worry about my life.”

Thinking about Logan, Libby couldn’t help the little smile that crossed her face. She couldn’t complain about her life. Who would have thought she’d find someone like him in a place like this? And that he’d make all her fantasies come to life when she was in his arms?

“Come on then, old lady.” Margaret gave Libby a wink. “I see them moving about out there like zombies in an old sci-fi movie. Let’s go see the damage.”

Libby’s grin grew when they walked through the doorway into the wet morning. Her grandmother was right, they were moving about! She counted a dozen or so neighbors circling their homes slowly. Some were picking up bits and pieces of debris that was littering their lawns and driveways. Several people were in the street.

“This belongs to you, Eloise?” Libby heard someone call out. All eyes turned toward the voice to see Mr. Johnson holding someone’s wind turbine that had blown off a roof.

“Hey, I think this is yours, Hank,” another neighbor stated, picking up a plastic garbage can that had been rolling in the street.

Libby bent to pick up a trash can lid that was the same color as Hank’s trash can. A wolf whistle split the air and she straightened quickly with embarrassment, looking over at Vincent’s house to see him coming out the door. Smiling, she responded to his wave, trying not to notice Logan was right behind him.

She lost the battle. His presence commanded attention; he was too virile a man to ignore. She grinned, noticing that other eyes strayed his way too. The Lemon sisters, who lived directly across the street, were standing in their driveway acting like silly teenagers, giggling and mumbling to each other as they followed Logan with their old eyes.
“Dirty old man!” Margaret hollered out. “Why don’t you pick on someone your own age?”

“Gram!” Libby whispered fiercely. She looked around them to see who might be paying attention. “Watch what you’re saying!”

“I was whistling at you, sugar,” Vincent called out.

Margaret gave a huff and waved him off. Libby breathed a sigh of relief until she noticed Vincent and Logan start in their direction. Oh Lord, she wasn’t in the mood to face Logan again so soon after their hot episode in the shed. Even disguised as Reba she wasn’t that good an actress. One look into those sexy eyes and she knew she would give herself away. She was about to turn and walk away when a silver Corvette rounded the corner and Logan stopped dead in his tracks. Vincent continued toward them, but Logan seemed frozen in place.

Curiosity, and Logan’s reaction, kept Libby where she was. The Corvette slowed and turned into Vincent’s drive, parking next to Logan’s bike. The door opened and the most beautiful woman Libby had ever seen emerged. In a glance she took in her short, platinum hair, sleeveless white blouse and purple flowing skirt. She was tall, just a couple inches shorter than Logan. Libby knew that because he’d finally made his way to her.

Her heart twisted with pain when she saw the woman greet Logan with loud enthusiasm, throwing her arms around him and kissing him full on the lips. The fact he wasn’t hugging her back didn’t matter; he wasn’t pushing her away either. She fought the urge to rush over there and tear them apart, jealousy and the pain of seeing another woman kissing him overwhelming her senses.

“That’s Anne, Logan’s ex-fiancée,” Vincent offered without anyone asking. “Only met her one other time, had more hair then.”

“What’s she doing here?” Bless Margaret for asking because Libby couldn’t seem to find her tongue.

She felt a small measure of relief when Logan finally put his hands around Anne’s arms and pushed her away. He stepped back and leaned against her car, crossing his arms and ankles at the same time. He looked nonchalant, but from where she stood, Libby could see every tense muscle as he listened to what Anne was saying.

“Don’t know. They broke up months ago. Maybe she’s come to her senses.”

“She broke up with him?” Libby realized she hadn’t disguised her voice but it was too late to undo it. Her gaze met Vincent’s.

“Right after his accident. Tore him up too, but not near as much as losing his two best friends in that fire. Blames himself for that.”

Libby saw her chance and grabbed it. “What happened?”

Vincent took a deep breath, his eyes shooting back to Logan. “Don’t really know, he won’t talk about it. And I don’t pry. He just called and asked if he could recoup here for a few months and I told him stay as long as he wants. Had to get permission from the association and…”

Libby stopped listening, her eyes returning to Logan and Anne. She wondered what they were saying. Anne appeared to be doing most of the talking, her hands moving in a way that suggested she was pleading her case. It looked like Logan had turned to granite until Anne moved too close. He straightened and put his hands out as though to stop her from touching him. Is she there to get him back? Emotion nearly choked Libby as she thought of that possibility. Does Logan still love Anne? No…his actions weren’t those of a man happy to see the woman he loved. At least that’s what Libby wanted to believe.
Finally Logan said something. Libby’s heart fell to her feet when they turned and headed inside the house. When her gaze returned to Margaret’s she was surprised to see that her grandmother was watching her with a keen look in her eyes. Libby took a breath. She didn’t want to think about the question she saw in those wise eyes.

“I think I’ll take a look around the house.” As soon as she turned the corner and knew she was out of sight she leaned against the house. Her gaze went to Vincent’s home, wondering what Logan and Anne were doing. He’d obviously taken her inside so they would have privacy from nosy neighbors, but was there reason for more than just talking?

The thought of Logan kissing or touching Anne… Libby didn’t want to think about it and forced the unwelcome thoughts from her mind. She couldn’t spend the day sulking. And keeping busy would keep her from agonizing over a situation she couldn’t control.

* * * *

Logan stood for a moment at the end of the drive, watching Anne’s car disappear around the corner. He shook his head in amazement. She’d met someone and was getting married. On her way to visit her grandparents in Largo for a few days, she’d stopped by to tell him because she didn’t want him to hear it from anyone else. A month ago that news would have sent him off the deep end, only now he was happy for her.

Seeing her again had reinforced his thoughts that he was over her and had been for a long time. Probably long before their actual breakup. Thinking back on it they’d been more like good friends for years, not two people in love who wanted to spend the rest of their lives together. It had been a comfortable, non demanding relationship for both of them. He’d been away most of the time fighting fires. She’d been busy jet-setting around the world on buying sprees for her exclusive Beverly Hills boutique.

Anne had been replaced with a red-haired, green-eyed vixen who made Logan realize what he’d truly been missing all these years. Everything about Libby captivated him. She fired his blood quicker than any woman ever had, but it was more than that. Her quick wit and sparkling eyes, the seductive woman in her, had him dreaming about her day and night. He was half in love with her, and admitting that scared the hell out of him.

Because what was he going to do about her?

The thought of Libby drew his gaze toward Margaret’s house. First his eyes lit on her parked car, then on his grandfather and Margaret further down the street talking to some neighbors. The sound of someone releasing a loud huff of air drew his eyes to Reba. She was struggling with a heavy planter, dragging it out of the shed and making an attempt to pick it up. When he saw her stumble his sense of duty kicked in and he sprinted over there.

“Here, let me get that for you, Reba.”

“Oh!” She hadn’t heard his approach and nearly dropped the plant, but Logan caught it just as it was about to hit the ground.

“Sorry if I startled you,” he said, holding it with one hand.

She straightened a little too quickly. “You shouldn’t sneak up on old ladies!” Logan watched her push up the glasses, his brow furrowing with a thought that just wouldn’t take shape. “It’s not good for the old ticker.”
Since Reba turned and walked away Logan had no choice but to follow her. “I’m sorry,” he offered, holding back a smile. “Is Libby around?”

“Libby?” She stopped and gave him a hard look. “She’s not here.” Logan frowned and shot a significant look at Libby’s car in the driveway, before pinning his gaze back on Reba. She glanced away immediately. Was it his imagination or did she suddenly seem nervous? What was it about her…his gaze ran over her.

She looked just like she always did, but…

“What I mean is, ah, she’s not there in the shed.” She bent and scooped up the bird feeder that was on the step leading into the house without missing a step. In her haste to escape she slipped on the wet grass but quickly righted herself before going down. “Come along now and I’ll show you where that plant goes,” she ordered, taking it for granted he’d do her bidding.

However, that’s not why Logan stood there quietly for a moment. Taken aback by her familiar fragrance he watched her walk away, his eyes narrowing suspiciously. It took a moment before he realized her spine was straight as an arrow, her shoulders back. Her hips swayed gracefully beneath the flowered skirt as she hurriedly made her way toward the end of the house, with just a little more pep in her step than a woman her age should have.

Just as she reached the corner she was caught up in the sunlight for a second, giving him a clear view of surprisingly shapely legs through the thin fabric of her dress. He squinted for a moment as his brain tried to make sense out of what he was seeing. As dawning registered shock quickly followed, his eyes shot up to her head just as he lost sight of her turning the corner.

Was that a tuft of red sticking out from beneath her silver wig? He’d known from the beginning that she was wearing a wig, a lot of elderly women with thinning hair did, or so several had informed him. Then it hit him like a freight train. It was Libby, and she was masquerading as Reba! Why hadn’t he seen it before? It was obvious to him now. He stood there for a moment in numbed awe, shaking his head as though to clear it.

This explained why something always nagged at him where she was concerned. Other pieces of the puzzle fell neatly into place too, certain incidences he’d found strange at the time but hadn’t taken the time to thoroughly analyze. He didn’t have to question her reasons behind the deception. It was clear her disguise was done in order to allow her to live with her grandmother without breaking the established rules of the fifty-five plus community. The fact that she’d gone to such levels to pass herself off as a senior citizen told him it wasn’t going to be a temporary arrangement.

“Come along, young man!” he heard her screech from the other side of the house. Grinning, Logan followed her, still shaking his head with disbelief and wondering if he should let on that he was on to her. He had his answer when he turned the corner of the house and saw her standing there with her hands on her hips and a look of impatience on her face. Only her eyes, behind the thick bifocals, were proof of who he was really looking at. It suddenly occurred to him that he could have a little fun with that knowledge.

His gaze encompassed the various potted plants, the chairs beneath the huge oak trees, a rusty grill and bird bath that was overflowing with dirty water. “I hope you didn’t lug all this stuff back out on your own, Reba.” Logan quickly averted his face when she shot him a suspicious look. “Where do you want this?”

“On the back porch,” she ordered. He turned in time to see her hook the bird feeder on a low hanging branch beneath the oak tree. “Libby’s, ah, not feeling well this morning so we made her stay in bed.” She swung around and headed for the back porch steps.
He had to give her credit for being quick. “I hope it’s nothing serious.” Logan noticed she did everything she could to avoid making eye contact with him. He followed her, his gaze running over her slim backside again. It dawned on him she must have worn some kind of padding the other times. But today, her skirt showed off a shapely figure.

“I’m sure she’ll be okay. Staying in bed just seemed the smart thing to do.” Opening the door, Reba held it for him while wiping at the sweat gathering on her brow. “At least she listens to reason when she’s sick. You can’t tell some of these old folks anything.” Logan set the pot down in a corner, turning to look back at Reba with a grin on his face. He could tell she was blushing, even through the heavy makeup. “Well, what I mean is, some of us have more sense than others.”

“Yes, ma’am. Would you like me to look at her? I’ve been trained in—”

“No! No! I’m sure she’ll be fine.” She quickly turned to exit the porch. “Goodness, it looks like we’re going to get some more rain.”

She was right. Logan took in the moving clouds and darkening sky. Palm trees were swaying wildly as the wind picked up. And he was certain he’d felt the first drops of rain when he stepped back outside.

“I can’t believe how fast the weather changes,” she said, rushing for the front of the house.

“We’ll probably continue to get rain on and off for a day or two,” Logan explained, right behind her.

“I know that!” she snapped, trying to keep her skirt down around her legs. She turned to Logan with a spark in her eyes. “I was just making conversation.”

“Yes, ma’am.” He grinned. In spite of her outrageous getup the sight of her shapely legs caused something to stir in his gut. Perhaps it was remembering what they felt like wrapped around his waist.

All of a sudden she slipped and Logan reached out to stop her from falling. Only the grass was still wet and slippery and his leg shot out from under him. He felt himself going down and landed on his rump, with Libby on his lap. He barely swallowed a groan when her bottom ended up squarely on his groin.

“Oh!” she cried out breathlessly, forgetting to use her Miss Reba voice.

“Are you okay, ma’am?” Logan’s nose was in her hair and he lowered his face until he was able to breathe the light fragrance against the back of her neck. It stirred more senses than he thought he had.

“What are you doing?” Libby asked sharply, leaning away from him.

She must have felt his nose against her skin. “Nothing, ma’am.” He smiled, flexing his hands at her waist and feeling the soft padding there. “I was just noticing you wear the same fragrance that Libby does.”

“Stop that! Let me up!” She began to wiggle. “Goodness, if the neighbors see us…”

Logan squeezed his eyes shut and savored the friction of Libby’s bottom as it rocked against his zipper, realizing his body was responding. Letting Libby know he wanted her was one thing, but there was no way he was going to let her think a seventy-year-old woman was turning him on. She’d think he was a pervert or something. He effortlessly pushed her off his lap and to her feet, before getting to his own.

“Oh!” She swung around to glare at him, her eyes snapping at him from behind her thick glasses. Logan put on his best I don’t know what happened look.

“Libby! The weatherman said there’s a tornado warning!” Margaret yelled from inside.
With a huff Libby turned and continued the way they’d been going. They came to a stop at the bottom of the steps that led up to the door. Logan was sure he could see Libby’s face turning red beneath the layers of makeup, as they stood there looking at each other without saying a word. He couldn’t wait to see how she handled this situation.

“Libby! Did you hear me?” Margaret’s voice moved closer as she came to the front door. “Oh!” she gasped upon seeing Logan. “I didn’t know you were here, Logan.” Her eyes darted to Libby.

“Just helping Reba out,” he explained. “I thought Libby was sick in bed.”
Margaret’s expression showed her surprise. “Bed, why …”
“Libby’s not out here,” Libby said between her teeth, stating the obvious.
“Well, I can see that now,” Margaret began, wringing her hands, the screen door not doing anything to disguise the color spreading across her cheeks. “When I heard the noise out here I just naturally assumed it was her.”

“Thank you for helping me, Logan, but you’d best head back home and tell Vincent about the tornado.” Libby opened the door to head back inside. Her actions forced Margaret to jump out of the way or be mowed over. “I think I see him waving you home.”

“Any time,” he offered, realizing he was being dismissed.
“She doesn’t mean to come off sounding so harsh,” Margaret began in an apologetic tone. “I think she’s just nervous over the weather.”

Margaret’s voice pulled his eyes back to her. “Reba doesn’t bother me, Margaret.” However, Libby did. He shook his head to get thoughts of her out of it. He was going to the doctor in the morning. Hopefully he’d be given a clean bill of health so he could return to work, something he loved doing. So why then did the thought of returning to California suddenly depress him? He knew the answer to that.

Because Libby wasn’t there.
“Wow, don’t you look spiffy.” Libby had just finished up the supper dishes when she turned to see Margaret enter the kitchen. She’d disappeared earlier for a shower and Libby had expected her to return in her nightgown and robe. It was obvious by her attire that she wasn’t going to bed. “Where are you off to?” She took note of the dab of lipstick on her lips and the light fragrance of the body lotion she favored. And was that a blush on her cheeks? “I, ah, I’ve been invited to go to a movie.” Was it her imagination or did her grandmother seem like she was nervous? “A date?” The exclamation rushed from Libby before she could stop it.

“Did I say it was a date? If you must know, Vincent asked me. There’s several of us going. So it’s not a date.” Libby went to Margaret and gave her a hug, careful to keep her wet hands from touching her. “Well, I think it’s wonderful that you’re going out for a change, Gram. Someplace other than bingo and Monday morning coffee.” She finished her show of affection with a kiss upon Margaret’s cheek.

“Just as long as you know it’s not a date,” Margaret said stubbornly. “What will you do all evening?” She draped a light blue sweater over her arm.

Libby shrugged and went back to the sink to finish wiping it down. She thought about Logan. She hadn’t seen him in two days. But earlier she’d seen him leaving Vincent’s on his motorcycle. He’d seen her on the porch as Reba and had waved at her as he took off.

What was she going to do about him? She couldn’t keep him out of her head, day or night. How many times had she woken during the night, wanting him and wishing he were there beside her? Even now, just thinking about him caused pleasant warmth to flow throughout her body, a tingling in her nipples with remembrance of his mouth on them.

“Libby?” “I’ll find something to do.” Maybe she’d call Leslie and Pat and meet them somewhere. She didn’t really feel like bar hopping though…

“Why don’t you invite Logan over and watch a movie?” What? Where had that come from? Libby spun around from the sink to face the amusement on her grandmother’s face. “I doubt Logan wants to spend the night watching TV with Reba,” she joked.

“Well, I didn’t mean for you to stay in that awful garb. He’s probably lonely for some company his own age.” “I doubt he’s lonely.” Libby thought about the bar down the street, wondering if that’s where he was. “Besides, he’s not home.” “How do you know?”
“I saw him leave.” She saw Vincent’s face appear through the screen door, thankful he’d arrived to pick up her grandmother before they got too deep into a conversation about Logan. “Come on in, Vincent.” She smiled.

“Evening, Reba!” His tone held more animation than usual.
And what was up with his hair? He’d taken what was left of it and glued it down with something that gave it a shiny gleam. She bit her bottom lip to keep it from curving upwards.

“You’re early,” Margaret snapped.
“I’m right on time.” He shot Libby a wink. “Why can’t you be friendlier like Reba?”
Margaret huffed. “If you wanted someone friendlier like Reba you should have asked her to go with you.”

“Well, if that’s the way you feel…”
“Children!” Libby scolded, watching the exchange between them with amusement. It occurred to her that the only time her grandmother acted the way she was acting now was when Vincent was around. Or if someone mentioned his name. The tone of her voice caused their eyes to swing her way. “You haven’t even left yet and you’re fighting. Maybe you need a chaperone.”

“We’ll be good, Reba.” Vincent gave her another wink.
“Margaret’s just nervous. First time she’s been on a date in years.”
“It’s not a date!” She practically glared at Vincent, who only smiled back at her like he always did.

“Whatever you say.” He opened the door. “We best be going or we’ll be late for the start of the movie.” He waited expectedly for Margaret to go out. “We still have to pick up Sue and Don.”

“What time can I expect you lovebirds back?” Libby’s joke was met with a fierce glare from her grandmother.

With a huff Margaret glanced up at Vincent as she walked past him to go outside. “Don’t expect us back until late. Probably nine or so.”

Libby just managed to stifle a laugh. Since when was nine o’clock late? “Okay. Have a good time then.” She stepped up to the screen door and watched them walk over to Vincent’s house for the car. “Enjoy your date!”

“It’s not a date!”

Laughing softly, Libby turned and reached for the phone to call Pat. After the sixth ring and there was no answer she dialed Leslie’s number. Chances were they were together anyway. She hung up when she heard a car in the drive, expecting Vincent and her grandmother had returned for something. But when she stepped back to the screen door her eyes widened with alarm when she saw it was Scott. Forgetting all about her disguise she quickly opened the door, determined to meet him before he had a chance to even get out of his car. The last thing she wanted was to be alone with him in the house again.

As she walked up to his sporty Firebird he opened the window, took one look at her and burst out laughing. “I see it but I don’t believe it! When your parents told me…”

Libby glanced around to see if anyone was close enough to hear his over loud comments. “What are you doing here?” She cut him off with a harsh whisper, angry with her parents for their interference. When would they get it through their heads that it was over between her and Scott? For that matter, when would he? “Don’t even think about getting out of the car.”
He totally ignored her and opened the door, forcing Libby to take a step back. “Oh, I plan on doing a lot more than just getting out, baby.” His tone was beyond arrogant, it was filled with a smug confidence that backed up the I have the upper hand look in his laughing eyes.

Libby wondered what he was up to. “What do you want?” She returned a wave from the Nelsons as they walked down their driveway for their evening stroll, careful to keep her voice down. When she returned her eyes to Scott it was to catch him giving her the once-over with a leering grin on his face. He was looking straight through her disguise.

“You! he whispered sharply. “And you know what, my beautiful Libby? Thanks to your folks I’ve found a way to get you back.” He paused for effect, the look in his eyes worrying her. “On my terms.”

“What? You’re crazy, Scott. I meant what I said the other day.” Libby began to get an uneasy feeling in the pit of her stomach. Scott was too sure of himself. The look on his face reminded her of all the times he’d won, whether it was by his skill in the courtroom or in their private lives, when she’d given in to his practiced charm. “It’s over between us.”

“Is it?”

He surprised Libby by reaching forward; only she reared back, remaining just out of reach. “I want you to leave.” She glanced at the couple riding by on their bikes making sure they weren’t within earshot then added, “Now, Scott. And I don’t want to see you again.”

“Really?” Scott leaned back against his car and crossed his arms, getting a little too comfortable as far as Libby was concerned. He didn’t look like he was about to leave anytime soon. “You’re not in any position to tell me what to do. As long as you want to keep your little secret you’ll be doing what I want from here on out,” he continued arrogantly.

“My little secret?” With a sinking heart Libby knew what Scott was getting at, she just couldn’t believe he would stoop so low just to get her back. She’d underestimated him.

“Come on, baby. The only reason you’re masquerading around in this old lady disguise is to stay here with your grandmother, so they won’t put her in some old folks’ home. Your being here breaks the rules.”

“So what are you saying? You’re going to give me away if I don’t go back to you? You’d do that to my grandmother?” He shrugged. “Mom and Dad think a lot of you, Scott. If they knew you were blackmailing me like this…”

“I prefer to think of it as a means to make you see reason, baby. We belong together.”

Libby realized her mistake in not letting Scott inside the house because it kept her from slapping his arrogant face. She couldn’t take the chance that someone might see them. Tears of frustration filled her eyes. What made it worse was the look of triumph in his. She was so mad that she couldn’t speak. She swung around to pull herself together. How could she ever have thought she loved this man?

Movement from Vincent’s porch drew her gaze in that direction. It was Logan. He was just standing there, looking tall and powerful, and watching them. He raised his arm and took a drink of something. Libby wondered how long he’d been there, and if he’d heard anything. He must think it strange to see Reba and Scott so engrossed in a conversation.

“Don’t think lover boy is going to save you this time either.”

Libby rolled her eyes and reached up to wipe at her eyes beneath the glasses. Before she could face Scott again Logan opened the door and began walking their way. His expression was hard to read, and the closer he got the more she was able to make out the anger burning in his eyes. For a moment she let herself believe it was for her, that he somehow sensed she needed him and was coming to rescue her. But how could that be?
Their eyes met. For a heart stopping moment Libby had a strong feeling that Logan knew the truth about her. His mouth tightened as his gaze moved over her.

“Good evening, Logan.” She lowered her eyes, afraid she’d give herself away.

“What do you want?” Scott asked not giving Logan a chance to respond to her.

Libby’s gaze shot up to Logan, watching for his reaction. His gaze moved over her head to where Scott was. “I want to talk to you.”

What in the world did Logan want to talk to Scott about? She turned, having the satisfaction of seeing Scott’s face pale slightly. Gone was the smug self assured man of a moment ago.

“Do you mind giving us a few minutes, Reba?” Logan asked.

Her gaze went to Scott. Would he give her away? She knew him well enough to know she couldn’t trust the slight narrowing of his eyes. It was his way of warning her, reminding Libby that he had the upper hand. She loved her grandmother, but there was no way she was going to let him blackmail her into going back to him. She couldn’t stand the thought of his hands on her again.

“Not at all.” Her voice cracked naturally. “And when you’re done talking you might as well go home, Scott. Libby isn’t here.”

There! That should tell him exactly what she thought about his underhanded techniques. It might cost her, but she at least had the satisfaction of seeing the disbelief fill his eyes. If he decided to ruin everything she’d deal with it when the time came. But something told her Scott would keep her secret as long as he thought it still gave him some leverage. He wasn’t one who gave in at the first sign of failure.

She turned and made a hasty retreat back into the house, closing the door behind her to peer at them for a moment through the small window. It looked like Logan was doing most of the talking. She wished she could hear what he was saying. Judging by the look on Scott’s face he didn’t like it one bit. He hadn’t moved from his position against his car. Then something Scott said caused Logan to make a sudden move. Libby caught her breath when he grabbed Scott by the front of the shirt, his biceps flexing as he yanked Scott close to utter something in his face, before tossing him back against his car.

Goodness, an angry Logan took Libby’s breath away. He looked like a dangerous animal, captivatingly irresistible, sexy. Her gaze ran down the length of him, pleased over the outline of his thick, strong thighs beneath the tight denim of his jeans, mesmerized by the noticeable protuberance in the zipper area that revealed even in its flaccid state his male member was impressive. Remembering what a thorough, powerful lover Logan was caused a flutter of intense desire inside her belly, and her pulse quickened. But the physical attraction paled in comparison to the emotional one gripping her heart.

Her gaze shifted to Scott, seeing nothing there to interest her as a woman. She breathed a sigh of relief when he turned and got into his car. Logan stood there for a second, watching him disappear down the road, before whipping back to look in her direction.

Startled, Libby quickly moved away from the door, leaning against the wall next to it. Her hand covered her suddenly racing heart. It was a good thing she wasn’t a seventy-year-old woman! Several seconds passed until she forced herself to close the kitchen door and head for the bathroom. A nice cool shower was in order. Maybe it would wash away more than just the makeup caking her face. With a little luck if would also cleanse the futile thoughts wishing for something she couldn’t have.
Logan didn’t know how long he stood there, staring at the door, knowing Libby was just on the other side. If he was smart he’d head home to finish the beer that was warming on the porch table. He thought about his confrontation with her pompous ex, knowing that he’d overstepped his bounds. He didn’t have any claim on Libby. Yet he remembered the first time he’d interrupted them in her kitchen, and the thought of the other man putting his hands on her again had enraged him.

He was glad he decided to follow his hunch when he first glanced over and saw them talking. Something had told Logan it wasn’t a friendly conversation. When he’d gotten close enough to see the hurt in Libby’s eyes it had been all he could do to wait until she was gone to set Scott straight.

Recalling her tears, he walked up to the door, telling himself all he wanted to do was make sure she was okay. He opened the screen door and rapped his knuckles against the door, listening for movement on the other side. It sounded like the TV was on. He waited, and then knocked again. And that’s when Logan heard Libby scream. Not once, but several ear piercing shrieks in rapid succession. He didn’t hesitate. Adrenaline kicked into overdrive and he pushed the door open, rushing into the kitchen and beyond. Her screams directed him toward the back of the house where he knew the bedrooms were located. He came to the end of the hallway where it split off, leading to two bedrooms.

He halted. “Libby! Where are you?”

“Logan!”

He could clearly hear the surprise in her tone. He followed her voice into one of the rooms, his eyes taking in his surroundings, not seeing Libby anywhere. Then his gaze landed on something on the floor that was straight out of a sci-fi movie. It appeared to be the melted form of a human body, and Logan knew immediately that it had to be Libby’s body suit.

“Shoo…don’t move!” He heard her say in a tone thick with alarm. “I’m in the bathroom!” she hollered. “Please hurry!”

Logan sprinted to the open door on the other side of the room, halting in the threshold. His eyes zeroed in on Libby immediately. She was standing on the commode, hiding behind a small pink towel that didn’t disguise the fact she was naked. Her hair was loose, resembling a wildfire out of control. Their eyes met briefly. He acknowledged the fear in hers before movement out of the corner of his eye caused him to lower his gaze to the floor.

Coiled in the corner next to the door was a black snake he gauged to be about three feet long. He knew at once it wasn’t poisonous.

“I was just about to take a shower when I saw it,” Libby gasped from her position. “Get it out but don’t hurt it.” She looked damn cute cowering there, terrified of the reptile yet concerned for its safety at the same time.

Grinning, Logan’s eyes met hers again. “Afraid of a little snake?”

“Afraid of any snake!”

He bent to grab it.

“Don’t hurt it!” she reminded him sharply.

He halted, glancing back at her, a thought coming to mind. “What’s it worth to you if I don’t hurt it?” He shouldn’t have, but he purposely let his eyes drop down her body and back up
again. It wasn’t the first time he’d seen Libby naked, only there was something very sexy about her trying to hide behind an inadequate towel. The curve of her breasts was visible at the sides, as was the indentation of her waist and curve of her hips.

His visual caress continued, taking in the length of her shapely thighs and legs beneath the edge of the pink cloth. He felt a stirring south of his belt but ignored it. He hadn’t come there to make love to Libby. His eyes darted back up to hers. She knew what she was doing to him. He’d started out teasing her, only the joke was on him the second she dropped her towel.

“Oops!”

There was nothing innocent about Libby, not her breathless exclamation or the brazen fire blazing in her eyes. A laugh burst from Logan, echoing sharply against the small tiled walls. All the while his eyes roamed over her perfect form like a starved man, gaining nourishment through his sense of sight. She gasped, blushing. It occurred to Logan that she might be embarrassed over her daring move.

His eyes returned to hers, not missing the impish gleam shining in them. There wasn’t a shy bone in Libby’s body. She stood there proudly, all but daring Logan to do something about it. She was a bewitching witch, turning the tables on him before he saw it coming.

Arousal exploded through him like fireworks on the Fourth of July. “You’re playing with fire,” he croaked.

“You started it.”

She was right. Only before he could do anything about it the snake began to uncoil from its position, drawing both their attention.

“Logan…”

He quickly scooped the reptile up from the floor, thankful for the interruption. Libby had too much power over him. It was bad enough he couldn’t be around her five minutes without wanting her, but she was also messing with his mind, and worse, his heart. Ignoring the hunger she’d unleashed, he left the room to get rid of the snake. It didn’t take him long to reach the side door that lead to the back of the house. Opening it, he set the snake down on the first step and closed the door again.

By the time he made it back to the bedroom he heard the water running, realizing Libby was in the shower. Logan hesitated, struggling between continuing into the bathroom and turning around to leave. His hard-on decided it for him. He kicked off his shoes while reaching for the hem to his shirt. He whipped it over his head, tossing it on her bed as he walked by. Without missing a move his hands moved to his belt, quickly unbuckling it and bringing the zipper down. He reached the bathroom doorway, taking a moment to roll his jeans down and kick them away.

He paused, enjoying the sight of Libby behind the frosted glass of the shower door. He could see enough to know she was rinsing her hair. Then she reached for the body wash, and with hungry eyes Logan watched her run the soapy puff over her neck and down her breasts. His cock jumped as though saying, what are you waiting for? What was he waiting for? When her hands glided down to the dark curls between her legs his knees grew weak with desire. He opened the door.

Libby’s hands halted. The invitation was in her eyes. Logan stepped into the stall and closed the door behind him. Words weren’t necessary. The look on her face told him Libby was already turned on. Her lips were parted, her eyes half closed. Her nipples were like rosy berries against her quivering breasts. Streams of soap trailed down her body as it was rinsed away with the spray of water falling on her. His gaze dropped, taking in her shapely form, the glistening
hair between her legs. He reached out, wrapping an arm around her tiny waist and jerked her against him.

Her head fell back, a sharp gasp escaping her. Logan swooped down and covered her mouth with his. That was all it took for the passion to erupt between them. And they were kissing like it was their first, their last. Sounds of mutual pleasure filled the room as their tongues battled in a dance as old as time. Logan thrust his hips, his full erection jabbing between Libby’s quivering thighs. His hands closed over her breasts, squeezing gently. But it was Libby’s gentle hands cupping his balls that pushed him over the edge.

A fire of need fueled his blood with a gut-wrenching need. His hands moved to Libby’s waist and he pushed her away. Their eyes met. They were both gasping for breath. Then Logan flipped her around and pushed her against the wall. Her gasp was a mixture of pleasure and surprise. He could only imagine how the cool tile felt against her hot, wet flesh, her stimulated nipples. His hands caressed down her arms. He took hold of her wrists and slowly pulled her arms up until her palms were flush against the tile over her head.

Logan leaned into her, his hard flesh eager to explore the soft folds of her buttocks. Libby cried out softly and tried to turn around, but he held her firmly in place. His heart was pounding like a jackhammer and he leaned in close, running his open mouth along the side of her throat up to her ear. His teeth nibbled at her lobe as he whispered, “Am I hurting you?”

“God, no!” Libby gasped, shuddering wildly. As though to prove her point she thrust her bottom back into his erection, rotating her hips. A soft moan escaped her, a groan escaped him.

Logan slowly released her wrists, confident now that she would remain where he wanted her. His hands trailed down her arms and shoulders, continuing down her sides and over her hips. Libby twitched, causing him to smile.

“Ticklish?”

She nodded.

His hands glided smoothly around to the front of her, his fingers splaying over her flesh as they moved along. Ever so slowly his hands smoothed downward, between Libby’s thighs, then back up to the most intimate part of her. She quivered beneath his touch, gasping sharply when his fingers slipped inside her, teasing her, testing her. Driving her wild.

“Logan!”

Her impassioned plea urged him to continue. Libby’s hips moved sensuously against his invading fingers, while his hips thrust against the satin softness of her bottom. A rhythm developed between them that escalated with every movement they made. Soon it wasn’t enough, Logan wanted more. His fingers slipped out of her. Words weren’t needed. They each had the same needs and right now they wanted to consume each other. Libby spread her legs, arched her back and thrust her buttocks out, giving Logan the leverage he needed to enter her body from behind. He was rock-hard; it wasn’t difficult guiding his aching flesh past the welcoming gates of her slick pussy. One deep thrust and he was buried to the hilt inside her.

“Oh my God!” she cried out. “Logan…” A shudder racked Libby’s body, but she kept her arms against the wall over her head.

“Hell!” he exploded. She was tight, wet, and hot. And he was about to lose control. His hands slapped the wall above Libby’s head; he kept his body close against hers and began to plunge deeply, building up speed.

Libby turned her face sideways and Logan swooped down, kissing her hungrily. Her mouth opened to the invasion of his tongue as easily as her body accepted the penetration
of his possession. He couldn’t stop the rolling blast of release spiraling through his body, but there were ways of slowing it down.

Logan forced himself to pull back and wait, until the urge to finish diminished. He owed it to Libby to see to her needs too. He brought one arm down, his hand moving between Libby’s body and the wall until he reached the swollen clit of her desire. It was hard and pulsing, and she nearly crumbled when his finger flicked over it. She trembled violently, gasping loudly as he played with her.

“Logan…I can’t take any more!” she cried, trying to move away from his hand.

“Let it go, baby…” He whispered the words against the back of her neck, his guttural tone revealing his state. His body held her captive against the tile, his cock throbbing inside her, the water beating down on them. He was about at the end of his limit too, the fire erupting in his gut a signal the inevitable was going to happen soon.

“Oh…”

Her tortured whisper revealed she was close. “Come for me, baby,” Logan encouraged, pulling back only once to thrust forward again. He stilled. “I’ll come with you.”

“Logan!”

The uncontrolled movement of Libby’s body signaled her release. Logan pulled back and slammed his hips against her a second time. She cried out. He did it again, groaning low when it tested his own strength to hold out. Being inside her felt too damn good. As though sensing it she thrust her buttocks back against him and rotated her hips, ending his control. He groaned as a rolling climax gripped his body. The feeling was so intense that Logan collapsed against her. It was as if Libby was draining his soul from his body. He shuddered uncontrollably, his heart pounding loud and fast.

Her soft whimpering were barely audible beneath the sound of the running water and the sound of his harsh breathing. He struggled to bring it under control. For a long moment it was all Logan could do to remain on his feet. He slowly lowered his arms away from the wall, letting his hands fall upon Libby’s shoulders.

They both released a little sound when he slipped out of her, but still Logan didn’t step away from her. He tried to tell himself it was because of his spent state, but he knew it was much more than that. He wanted to remain close to Libby. If they’d been in bed he would have wrapped her in his arms and cuddled with her. He couldn’t recall the last time he’d wanted to do that.

Somehow Libby managed to turn against the wall until she was facing him. He met the fading glimmer of desire in her eyes, bending to kiss the slight smile of satisfaction off her luscious mouth. Her slightly trembling lips tasted sweet but Logan was forced to keep it brief because he was still out of breath.

Pulling back, he grinned down at her. “Do you know what I want to do right now?”

The corners of her lips turned up into a knowing smile. “Smoke?”

A chuckle escaped Logan. Libby was good at catching him by surprise. “No, I want to curl up in bed with you and take a nap.”

“Really?” She laughed, her eyes sparkling. Logan wondered if she knew that her hands had smoothed down his sides to rest upon his hips. “You don’t exactly look like the napping kind of man.”

He wasn’t. And he sure as hell didn’t know where that thought had come from. Logan felt like he’d revealed too much. To keep from having to explain it away he kissed Libby again. This time when his mouth closed over hers he took his time, savoring the soft texture of
her full mouth, gliding over it with enough force that she had no alternative but to open hers to his searching tongue. Melding into him, her soft moan sparked renewed desire in Logan’s loins.

When he drew away they were both a little out of breath.

“When is Margaret due back?”

Libby’s eyes widened as he reached for the bar of fragrant soap in the dish beneath the showerhead. “By nine.” Her eyes followed his as he bent to retrieve the long ago discarded body puff. “Why?”

Logan wondered if she thought it odd that he hadn’t inquired about Reba. “Might as well make use of this shower.” He lathered the puff with the soap before bringing it down on Libby’s throat. He gently ran it over her shoulders and arms, then transferred it to her breasts, and down her belly. “Turn around and I’ll do your back.”

Libby did as she was told without question, though Logan heard her little sigh of pleasure when he moved her long hair aside and planted a kiss on the back of her neck. He ran the puff over her back and down to her waist, before dropping to his knees. Leaning forward, he kissed the cheeks of her buttocks before washing them too. “Turn around and I’ll do your front.”

Libby laughed softly and again did as she was commanded. Their eyes met as Logan brought the puff up her legs and thighs to the curls between her legs. He worked up lather, making sure the shower rinsed her clean. “So beautiful.” Libby’s hands fell upon his shoulders as he leaned forward to kiss her.

A little cry of surprise escaped her when his tongue darted out, slicing through her pussy lips and brushing against the button hidden there. He felt her trembling and couldn’t resist doing it several more times before rising to his feet. He found Libby leaning weakly against the wall, her eyes half closed and her mouth slightly opened. Their eyes met and held.

“If heaven has a flavor it would taste like you,” Logan said, a second before he took her mouth. He crushed Libby to him, welcoming the fire burning in his blood. Knowing too where it would take them. His body was rejuvenated and he wanted her again. The intensity took his breath away.

His hand took the place of the puff, which fell to the floor at their feet. He caressed Libby’s slick body, touching her all over, getting a rapid response as she twisted against him, moaning deeply. When Logan felt her small hand encircle his cock, it almost had the power to bring him to his knees. He thrust into her caress as a moment of madness took control, and then Libby surprised him by pulling away.

“No!” Her soft whisper echoed throughout the tiny bathroom.

Logan could only look into the haze of her desire filled eyes and wonder what was going on. She’d seemed into it as much as he was. In fact, her hand was still caressing his pulsing flesh.

“You pick a fine time to say no.” He wasn’t angry, but he was curious at the light of amusement dancing in her eyes. What was she up to?

Her smile grew. “It’s your turn.” Logan watched as she scooped the puff off the floor.

“Then we’ll see what, ah, develops.”

He relaxed in spite of the pleasure her hand was giving him. If Libby could wait, so could he. They both knew how it was going to end. She was forced to let go of his cock when she lathered the puff up with the same bar of soap he’d used. Like him she began with his throat. Because she was so small she had to reach up on her tiptoes, which brought her breast into
delicious contact against his chest. As she moved the puff over his flesh her breasts ground against him. He growled, his cock jumping wildly.

“Feel good?” she inquired, smiling.

She obviously misinterpreted why he’d groaned. “You have no idea.”

She continued over his shoulders and down his arms, moving the puff over his chest and belly. Logan held his breath, waiting to see if she’d bathe his private parts, a little disappointed when she indicated he should turn around. Next he felt the puff against his back, moving down to his waist and hips. He didn’t realize Libby fell to her knees until he felt her kiss against the cheek of his buttocks.

“Turn around and I’ll do your front.”

Grinning, Logan complied without comment. He glanced down at Libby, meeting the amusement in her eyes. They didn’t break eye contact as she ran the puff along his legs and thighs, stopping within inches of his jutting erection. Logan tried to swallow but his tongue had swollen to twice its size. The look in her eyes said more than words, reflecting her desire, her wants. Then her gaze fell and he didn’t know what was worse, having her eyes eat him up or the little puffs of air that rushed from her mouth against his aching flesh. Spellbound, he waited to see what she was going to do next, nearly having heart failure when she leaned forward and licked at his erection with all the enthusiasm of someone eating that long awaited ice cream cone.

Realizing their shower was over; Logan reached blindly for the taps and turned off the water. When Libby took him in her mouth he leaned back against the wall in a moment of weakness, groaning low in his throat. He closed his eyes for a second, welcoming the explosion of pleasure flooding his body. In no time a river of fire flowed through his veins, and he was nearing the end of his control. Reaching down, he grabbed Libby by the arms and hauled her to her feet.

“The next time we make love it’s going to be in a bed.”
Libby didn’t complain as Logan led her out of the bathroom and into the bedroom. She didn’t care where they made love. All she knew was that she couldn’t seem to get enough of him. And the more they made love the more she craved him. Her gaze fell down his backside to his taut buttocks and muscled thighs as he pulled her toward the bed. He was in superb condition. The scars from his recent accident were healing nicely and didn’t take away from his virile attractiveness. In fact, they emphasized his masculinity. Battle scars revealing that what he did for a living wasn’t time spent behind a desk somewhere.

They reached her bed and Logan’s arm encircled her waist. He fell backwards on the bed, pulling her with him, the unexpected action causing Libby to catch her breath. His hands smoothed down her backside, cupping her buttocks before continuing down the backs of her thighs. She strained into his caress, grinding the lower half of her body into his. “Damn, you feel good,” he growled, arching his hips. Libby’s palms flattened against his chest.

A soft laugh escaped her. Her breasts were smashed against his chest, her nipples tingling. In fact, her whole body was tingling everywhere it touched Logan’s hard flesh. “You don’t feel too bad yourself.” She kissed him on the neck. “But I’m afraid we have a little dilemma.” Instinct guided her eyes to the clock on the dresser.

“What’s that, honey?”

His unexpected endearment caused her heart to swell with joy. “It’s later than we thought.” She kissed his chin when he turned to look at the clock. “Gram said nine but she’s habitually early in everything she does. Nine o’clock to her will be closer to eight thirty.” It was eight fifteen.

“You think I can’t perform in fifteen minutes?” Logan thrust against Libby, letting her know that he was hard as steel and ready for action.

“Not fair,” she groaned, shivering.

His expression suddenly turned serious. “Fair? What’s fair about a little red-headed witch that has a man’s insides so twisted in knots that he can’t think straight?”

“I do that?” Libby started showering kisses down his scarred chest, relishing in the shudder that racked his body. “What else do I do?”

Logan moved and in the blink of an eye Libby found herself beneath him. “Let me show you.” She barely caught her breath when he thrust forward, entering her in one smooth plunge.

“Oh!”

“Oh,” he mimicked then covered her lips with his. Libby wasn’t sure if the sound that erupted around them was from her or Logan. She reacted wildly, arching hungrily to his thrusts, the pleasure so intense she rapidly climbed toward the pinnacle of release. Logan reacted like a male in his prime, claiming his mate. Leaving no doubt that he could accomplish whatever he wanted in fifteen minutes, or less if he had to. He knew just how to control his thrusts to give
Libby the ultimate pleasure. His fast and steady movements were designed to make her peak quickly.

She opened her mouth, welcoming his tongue as eagerly as she welcomed him into her body. Her hands roamed over Logan wherever she could reach him. Exploring a body she was fast beginning to know as well as her own. Her caresses lingered in spots she instinctively knew would pleasure him and test his control, as it tested her own.

His tongue began to mimic the movements of his body. She felt his hands at her hips, pulling her to him each time he plunged forward. His technique intensified the pleasure of being satisfied by him. She cried out, overwhelmed by a kaleidoscope of sensations exploding through her senses. The telltale feeling flowing through her body told her she was about to come. Caught up in the moment she ran her nails down Logan’s back, igniting his own passions to uncontrollable proportions.

He pulled back, his eyes blazing down at Libby as he continued to pound into her again and again.

“God help me, Libby. This isn’t how I meant it to be!” he panted. “But you’ve bewitched me!”

In spite of not being able to catch her breath, in spite of the exquisite feeling gripping her body and holding it captive, Libby managed a little smile. “Your fifteen minutes are almost up.” The next time he entered her she purposely clenched her muscles around his shaft and squeezed, at the same time leaning forward to tongue his nipple.

“Oh, hell!” Logan groaned, slamming into Libby one last time before erupting strongly inside her. “Damn…”

In spite of her own tremors Libby held him to her, absorbing the aftershocks of his forceful release, relishing in her ability to push him over the edge. For a time their heartbeats pounded as one. She felt Logan’s warm breath against her neck as he panted heavily. Their slick sweaty bodies were flush, leaving no secrets between them. Gradually his hands relaxed against her hips. Her heart swelled with emotions she could no longer hold back.

“I love you.” Oh God, had she said that out loud? Libby froze, immediately aware of her mistake. How could she have been so careless as to utter something like that…at a time like now? The last thing a man wanted to hear a woman say while still in the throes of a climax was that she loved him. Especially when it’s not what he wanted from her. Maybe Logan hadn’t heard her.

But who was she fooling? He stilled, the subtle movement alerting her that he’d heard every little word. The silence that followed was crushing, and painfully telling. Well, what did she expect that he’d reciprocate? Libby bit down on her bottom lip to keep it from trembling. But nothing stopped the burning sting from gathering behind her eyes.

“Logan, I…forget I said that. It just slipped out. I…” She could barely look him in the eyes when he pulled back to glance down at her. “You know, the heat of the moment and all that.” She prayed he believed her. Only how could she expect that when she didn’t believe it herself? “Surely you’ve ah, uttered a few things you didn’t ah, exactly mean….” God, her explanation sounded weak.

Slowly, Libby raised her eyes until they met his. His expression was unreadable, the look in his liquid silver eyes just as undecipherable. Why didn’t he say something? Anything would be better than the god-awful quiet surrounding them.

“What’s wrong?” Could it be any more awkward? The part of Logan still joined to her slowly slipped out, causing her to catch her breath. “It was a slip of the tongue…”
“Don’t worry. I think you’ve made that abundantly clear.” His tone was flat. An emotion flickered in his eyes that she couldn’t identify. Concern, relief? Was he worried she’d get all weepy or clingy, now?

“I meant to say lust.” She was painfully aware that she was trying to turn the whole incident into something insignificant.

“I think my fifteen minutes is up.”

Under normal circumstances Libby would have taken his comment as a joke. Only the look on his face hadn’t changed. The next thing she knew he was pushing off her and getting to his feet. Libby felt vulnerable, exposed, as he stood staring down at her. Pride kept her from reaching for the spread beneath her and bringing it over her. Besides, his eyes never left hers. After a few seconds he turned and reached for something on the floor.

“Don’t make a mountain out of a molehill.” Libby watched him slip into his jeans. Please, she added to herself. “It was a slip of the tongue…”

“Was it?” His hands made quick work out of zipping and snapping his jeans.

“It meant nothing.” She forced a laugh. “I mean, love? We’re just having a good time, Logan. Great sex…” Libby halted. His expression turned hard, his eyes crystallized.

The hands at his belt buckle hesitated. Her effort to make things better seemed to be having the opposite effect on him. He actually looked mad. “Maybe I should just shut up.” Just the tiniest glimmer in his eyes revealed her comment amused him. “Good idea.”

After finishing with his belt he reached for his shirt. “I’ll meet you in the living room.”

Libby watched him leave the room, confused. It didn’t take long for the tears to fall and for a moment she just lay there, letting emotion rule her actions. She wondered why she just didn’t tell Logan the truth. She couldn’t help that she’d fallen in love with him. Maybe he didn’t return those feelings because he didn’t feel them, or he couldn’t. But if he was going to run then it might as well be over the facts, right? She sighed heavily, brushing at her cheeks. He was going to think she was crazy if she went into the living room with a different story now.

A glance at the clock showed her it was just after eight thirty. She jumped from the bed and headed to the closet, reaching for a pair of bright green boxers on the top shelf and an oversized tee-shirt she sometimes wore to bed. It didn’t take her long to slip into them as she made her way to the dresser.

She reached for a brush, running it through her damp hair and catching a glimpse of herself in the mirror. Her eyes seemed over bright, lingering proof she’d been crying. To make it worse her nose was a little red too. Damn!

Libby tossed the brush down with self-disgust, angry that she’d broken the rules and let her heart get involved. She had no one to blame but herself if Logan walked away and never came back. Hadn’t he warned her from the beginning what he wanted from her? Well, she’d certainly given him a lot of that.

As she turned to leave her eyes fell to the floor, landing on her discarded body suit. Oh no! Had Logan seen it? Maybe he had but didn’t recognize it for what it was. For the first time Libby realized he hadn’t once asked about Reba. Hadn’t he been curious as to where she’d disappeared to after coming inside? Maybe his thoughts had been preoccupied with something else, because surely he hadn’t discovered her secret! She refused to even think it.

Halfway down the hallway to the living room she heard the low sound of the TV. She found Logan sitting on the edge of a chair, his linked hands dangling between his spread knees, staring at the tube. But she could tell by his blank expression that he wasn’t really watching the
old rerun of Friends. He seemed deep in thought. After a while he acknowledged her presence
by turning his head and meeting her eyes. She wasn’t expecting to see the forlorn look in them.

“Are you okay?” she asked softly.
He ignored her comment. “You’ve been crying.”
“I have nothing to cry about. It must be the lighting.” Libby shrugged, trying for nonchalance. “Would you like something to drink?” She didn’t know what else to say.
A grin softened his mouth. “Yeah, only I doubt you have what I have in mind.”
“You might be surprised.” She turned toward the kitchen and opened the cupboard door
over the stove. “We have cooking sherry, white wine?” She glanced at Logan long enough to get
his response, which was a negative shake of his head. “We have ice tea, milk,” Grinning, she met his eyes. “Prune juice?”
 He was still shaking his head, a slight quirk on his hard mouth that didn’t quite
reach the seriousness of his eyes. “What about a beer?”
Libby’s eyes grew round. “I actually think we have some, buried in the back.” She stuck
her head in, shifting things around when she saw a couple cans behind the leftover chicken.
“Gram keeps it around, says it’s good for her hair.” Grabbing a can, she straightened and closed
the door. “Oh!” She was surprised to find Logan standing there. “I didn’t hear you move.” She
held the can out to him.

He took it, almost reluctantly. “I think I should leave.”
Their eyes met and held. Libby inhaled deeply. It was on the tip of her tongue to tell
Logan the truth, no matter what the consequences. “You don’t think we should talk?”
He popped the top and took a swig, shrugging. “What about? You made it clear that
you don’t love me, so I have nothing to worry about, right?”

There was something in his tone that Libby couldn’t identify. She felt a twist of pain in
her heart that he didn’t love her back. Tell him! Tell him! Her heart demanded it, in spite of
knowing the pain it would cost her. “Logan…” Damn! She was going to cry again, she could
feel the sting behind her eyes. Was she strong enough to see him walk away? Or, was she going
to be unfair to both of them and continue the lie just to keep him coming back?

Libby realized Logan was watching her with interest, his eyes delving into her very soul.
If she didn’t know better, she’d swear he did feel something for her. “Logan… I’m sorry, but…”
A muscle twitched in his lean jaw. “Don’t!” he snapped, shocking Libby into silence. He
further surprised her by curling his hand around the back of her neck and pulling her to him for a
kiss that sent a sharp tingle down her spine and a flutter in her belly. Moaning, Libby gave
herself up to Logan’s heated kiss. Almost immediately he pulled away and released her, leaving
her hungry, and unsatisfied.

“Damn you!” he uttered with deep emotion, his eyes flashing like silver lightning.

“Goodnight, Libby.”

Just like that, after what they’d just shared? Before she could stop him Logan pivoted
toward the front door and pushed it open. A sob escaped her before she could prevent it.
Stepping up to the screen door, she watched him practically run down the steps. He didn’t glance
back as his rapid strides took him home. Sniffling, she wiped furiously at the tears building in
her eyes. What was she going to do?

Just as she was about to turn away Vincent’s car came around the corner and
pulled into the drive. She did turn away then and headed for her room. Her grandmother
couldn’t see her like this! She’d ask questions and Libby didn’t want to lie to her. She’d grab
another shower to wash away the heartbreak in her eyes and pray by the time she got out her grandmother would already be asleep in her chair in front of the TV.

* * * *

Logan finished his beer in one long swig and then crumbled the can in his hand, tossing it angrily toward the can he spied behind the counter. It hit the floor with a clang that was barely heard over the jukebox blaring in the corner. The bartender snorted, reached for something beneath the counter and set another can down in front of Logan.

“Looks like you can use something stronger than beer tonight, friend.”

Logan glared at him, but the man’s grin only widened. “I’ll stick with beer, thanks.”

He wondered how much he’d have to drink to forget the last time he saw Libby. How ironic, that he should be the one to forget the rules he’d laid down. She made falling in love with her easy. But she’d made it painfully clear she didn’t love him, which is what he wanted, wasn’t it? It would certainly make his life a lot easier. Especially when he returned to California. No ties. Only now he’d be taking home memories of a hot little redhead he couldn’t get enough of.

He thought about his doctor’s visit that afternoon. Finally he’d been cleared to return to work. And Logan decided he was going back to California as soon as possible. He was only torturing himself by remaining there. Wanting Libby day and night. The sooner he distanced himself from her the sooner he could get her out of his system.

Realizing he was sitting there daydreaming, with a can of beer warming in his hand, he popped the top and put it to his lips. Part of Logan knew he couldn’t drink away his troubles, but it didn’t stop him from downing the contents of that can, and another. When it dawned on him he was well on his way to getting a buzz he began to nibble on the pretzels in front of him.

His gaze shot to the TV above the bartender’s head, which was muted. The news was on but all he heard was the jukebox playing in the background. That and the noise of conversation and laughter around him. The door to the bar opened. Nothing unusual about that except that this time something drew Logan’s attention to it. He stopped breathing when Libby and her friends walked into the dimly lit room. They were laughing and dressed to kill. Three women on the prowl for a good time. He couldn’t explain the anger that surfaced, only knowing that it was fiercely blinding.

Just the thought of Libby in the arms of another man made his blood boil over. His eyes dropped down her scantily clad body, seeing her as he’d never seen her before. A white off the shoulder blouse clung to her breasts, so thin and airy he knew she wasn’t wearing a bra. The peaks of her breasts were pointed, telling Logan her nipples were hard against the silk. A short black miniskirt left her magnificent legs bare from the tops of her shapely thighs down to the sexy impossibly high stilettos on her dainty feet. She’d pulled that red hair of hers back into a haphazard style that left it wild and full of life about her shoulders and back.

His gut clenched, recalling what her soft hair felt like against his body. Like silky fire. Damn! He was responding to her allure. She was sexy as hell and the three days since he’d held and kissed her had only left him wanting more. If Pete and Ron were alive they’d tease him mercilessly and say he had it bad. And he wouldn’t have a leg to stand on.
He willed Libby to look his way, only she was too wrapped up with her friends and what they were saying. Then the door closed, shutting out what little light was behind them from the setting sun. His eyes followed them as they made their way to one of the tables. He couldn’t help but be aware of the heads turning their way as they sashayed by. They had enough hip action going on to test a saint. The temperature of Logan’s blood shot up another notch. He started to leave his stool when he saw three men approach their table.

“Hello, handsome!” A hand on his arm prevented Logan from taking more than a step. “I haven’t seen you around lately.”

It was the resident barfly, the blonde from a week ago. He would have thought she’d gotten the hint that he wasn’t interested. There wasn’t much difference between her attire and Libby’s, yet her hot pink skirt and matching blouse didn’t turn Logan on. Her perfume was so heavy he felt his eyes water and she had enough war paint on that it actually took away from what he thought would be a pretty face.

“I haven’t been here lately.” His eyes shot past her to Libby. Her friends had paired up and were heading toward the dance floor with two of the guys, but the third was scooting into the booth next to her.

“Dance with me.” The thick purr of the woman’s voice drew Logan’s gaze back to her. The fumes coming off her breath warned him she’d been drinking.

He tried to figure a way of getting rid of her, without insulting her, or causing a scene.

“I’m sorry but I’m not in the mood for dancing.” Praying she didn’t notice he slowly pulled his arm from her grasp.

“How about a drink instead?”

Her expression, which had started to darken with his first remark, quickly brightened with a smile. “I’d love a drink. Bartender, another dry martini please.” She hitched up her skirt until she was able to slither upon a stool. “Why don’t you sit down and join me? I’ll make it worth your while.” She reached out and ran her hand down the front of Logan’s shirt.

“No, thank you, ma’am.” He stepped back and made eye contact with the bartender as he set a martini down on the counter. “Add it to my tab.” Before the woman could protest Logan swung around and headed for the door, but not before he glanced back at Libby.

“He hesitated. She didn’t look like she was protesting, but she didn’t look all that at ease either. The man definitely looked like he’d set his sights on her and was working it for all it was worth. He couldn’t be more obvious about his intentions. When he reached up to brush a curl away from Libby’s cheek Logan saw red and made a beeline for their table. He picked up speed when he saw Libby slap the man’s hand away after he’d reached for her a second time.

“I’m not going to tell you again to stop.” As Logan neared the table she glanced up and saw him. They made eye contact. “Logan…”

Ignoring the man sitting next to her, Logan held out his hand, cutting off her exclamation of surprise. “Dance with me.”

“I…”

“Excuse me, but the lady’s with me.”

Logan made eye contact with the man, who sat there so assuredly claiming Libby as his own. He brushed aside the impulse to punch the guy in the mouth, thankful when Libby took matters into her own hands.
“Please let me out, John.” The smoky timbre of her voice was barely audible over the noise in the room.

Her eyes never left Logan. What he saw churning in those beguiling depths, besides the ever present mischief, was warmth brimming with very clear designs. What is she up to? He felt a moment of uncertainty, something clenching in his gut. Like, he was the one who suddenly needed rescuing. Had she set him up?

“John.” She gave him a nudge.

With a shrug of indifference, John slid out of the booth. Libby slipped her hand in Logan’s and he turned, pulling her with him onto the dance floor. When he stopped and turned she glided into his arms naturally, as though she’d done it a hundred times. She felt good against him. He closed his eyes and savored her seductive fragrance and the softness of her body moving against his. Everything about Libby attacked his senses at once.

Threatening to suck him under.

“You looked like you needed rescuing,” he murmured against her forehead.

She chuckled lightly. “So, this was payback for my rescuing you the other day. And here I thought you were just looking for an excuse to hold me in your arms.” She pulled back slightly. Their eyes met, hers filled with mild humor. “John’s harmless.”

“I know what I saw; he looked like he was harassing you.”

“You harass everyone.”

“You know him.”

Her soft laugh heightened his awareness of her. “We grew up together. The six of us have been friends since grade school. John—”

“I didn’t like him touching you.” Damn, it slipped out before he could prevent it.

Laughter escaped her. “If it makes you feel any better, I didn’t like Bambi touching you, either.”

So, she’d known he was there all along, interesting. She’d been watching him. That realization made Logan smile. He tightened his arms around her, linking his hands at the small of her back. She in turn snuggled against him with a sigh, running her nose along the skin beneath his ear. Then her lips were touching him and a sharp feeling of pleasure shot straight to his loins. He’d never met a woman who could turn him on so fast.

“Why?” Her lips caressed his skin as she spoke.

“Why what?” Why did he want her to dance with him? Why did he turn bone-hard against her the minute she was in his arms?

Why did he love her?

“Why didn’t you like John touching me?”

Oh, that. Logan released a deep breath. He wasn’t going to answer that, because he couldn’t and not reveal how he felt about her.

“You smell good.” She smelled good, looked good, felt well. And he was a damn fool! He clenched his jaw, wishing he could find the words to take back what he’d uttered in her kitchen so long ago, on that first day. But Logan recognized the reason he couldn’t do that was because he was afraid. For the first time in his life he was running, and from a little mite with laughing eyes. Afraid she didn’t love him.

“You didn’t answer my question, and you’re tense,” Libby observed, drawing back enough to meet his eyes. “Do I make you nervous?”
Damn her! In spite of her candidness Logan found the corners of his mouth lifting. He couldn’t resist the lure of mischief in her eyes. “Why would you make me nervous?” He didn’t know if he liked the secrets dancing in her eyes.

“You tell me.”

Her tone was challenging, yet Logan ignored the glove she tossed down, knowing he couldn’t answer her honestly. He pulled her closer, forcing her to lower her face until her head was resting against his shoulder. With her arms linked around his neck he was aware of every inch of her pressed against him. He closed his eyes, savoring the feeling, trying to pretend he wasn’t going to miss her like hell. And it wasn’t just the sex he was going to miss. It was everything about Libby.

It didn’t take much to get him in the mood when she was around. And Libby had to know it. Why else was she melting into him with a satisfied purr? He gritted his teeth, feeling her nipples harden into his chest. He recalled what the tight buds felt like when he rolled them on his tongue. His hands unlocked at her waist to glide over her rump, giving the luscious mounds a barely controlled squeeze. Then before he could help himself he forced her tighter against his swelling cock, groaning low in his throat.

“You’re hungry.” Her throaty laughter rumbled against Logan’s chest, teasing him mercilessly. She turned the heat up several degrees by wedging her thigh between his and teasing the hardness pounding persistently behind his zipper.

An overloud laugh brought Logan back to reality and with it the reminder that they were in a public place. It hit him like a ton of bricks that he wasn’t doing either of them any favors. He made himself take a step back. It was the only way to regain control of his senses. Only it wasn’t enough. He’d need to leave the state for that.

Perhaps it was that thought that caused him to blurt out, “I’ll be leaving for California soon.” He cringed inwardly at the sound of desperation in his tone.

Libby released a resigned sigh. “I know, Vincent told me at coffee this morning. When?” Logan smiled at her slip. She’d gone to coffee not as herself, but as Reba. “This weekend.”

“That soon?” she exclaimed, her eyes rounding up at Logan. Damn, she almost sounded disappointed. “There’s a big fire on the California, Nevada border. They need all the help they can get.”

“I see.” Logan got the impression the smile on her face was forced. She barely made eye contact with him. “Is this goodbye, then?”

Something twisted in his gut, then traveled up to his heart. “I’ll stop by Margaret’s before I leave this weekend.”

Her eyes slowly lifted to his. “I won’t be there.” What? He raised his brows and waited for her to continue. “My folks are going out of town for the weekend and want me to housesit.”

So, that’s why he’d overheard her, or Reba actually, asking his grandfather to look in on Margaret over the weekend. She’d looked cute, whispering in his grandfather’s ear so Margaret wouldn’t overhear. Then her admission hit him, making him realize that maybe this was goodbye. He stopped dancing, and for a moment they were just two people standing close to each other, staring into each other’s eyes.

Libby surprised him by reaching up and touching him tenderly on the cheek. There was something in her eyes he couldn’t quite identify. Then she took his breath away by smiling. And Logan knew at that moment that he’d never make it to California alive with the ache pounding in his loins. He had to have her, if not forever, then at least one more time.
“You feel like going for a ride?” He thought about her sitting behind him on his bike, with her arms wrapped around him. Her breasts crushed against his back and her hair flying in the wind.

“Where?” she asked without hesitation.
Logan knew exactly where. There was a park not far from there, closed to the public after seven. The chain kept cars from entering after hours but it wouldn’t stop his Harley. “Does it matter?”
“No.”
“What about your friends?” He wondered if her friend John would be receptive to her leaving with another man.
Her smile widened. “Let me tell them goodnight. I’ll be right back.”
Logan watched the provocative bounce of her fanny beneath the miniskirt as she walked away. He wondered how long it would take him to remove that bit of nothing, and what she was wearing beneath it. When she reached the table her friends occupied he sauntered back to the bar to pay his tab.
“I’ll settle my bill now.”
“Nice,” the bartender commented, his gaze directed at Libby. He slapped a receipt down on the bar in front of Logan. “She’ll cure what ails you.”
Logan glanced her way before meeting the man’s knowing eyes. He wasn’t about to respond to his slightly crude remark. But it did make him stop and think. What was he doing? She was the reason he was in the state he was in, both physical and mental. A second ago the only thing on his mind was taking Libby somewhere private and making love until they were too exhausted to move. Only he didn’t just want Libby’s body, Logan wanted all of her.

He wanted her heart, her soul.
He reached inside his pocket and pulled some money out, peeling off the amount he owed, plus a generous tip. “Keep the change.” He turned just as Libby walked up to him.
“Ready?” She smiled.
Like a rocket getting ready to launch. The look in her eyes revealed she was ready, too.
Logan knew her well enough to recognize the desire simmering in those pretty eyes. He reached for her hand and turned, pulling her behind him. The other day he’d convinced himself he was better off ignoring what he wanted and leaving Libby alone.
Tonight he was going to get her out of his system, once and for all.
Libby had never felt such freedom before, sitting snug behind Logan, her arms wrapped tight around his middle and her breasts crushed against his back. He’d insisted she wear his helmet, but it didn’t keep her from getting close to him. Every movement he made, every turn of the powerful bike, she felt his body tighten with reaction and control. When they made the turn off the main road onto County Road 545, he was able to pick up speed. And suddenly they were flying against the wind and into the darkness, with nothing to stop them. There weren’t any lights, and not much traffic. Libby had been on the country road and had a feeling she knew where Logan was taking them.

But wherever they ended up, she knew it would be someplace where they could be alone together, where they could make love. Anticipation licked at her senses, keeping her blood hot, and her panties wet. She couldn’t help it. Logan was a powerful lover, and having his tight buttocks flush against the apex of her spread thighs was a powerful turn-on. She was extremely sensitive down there, and the vibration of the bike beneath her only aided in keeping her highly stimulated.

Who was she kidding? Anytime Logan was near her senses went into overdrive. How was she ever going to say goodbye to him? Unwilling thoughts about him leaving for California weaved through her mind. How was she going to go on without him? The answer came to her almost immediately. She was going to put on a brave face and pretend it didn’t matter, that’s how. She was thankful she wasn’t going to be around that weekend. The hot sting of tears filled her eyes. Loving him came easy, he had so many of the traits she wanted in a man. Losing him was going to be the hardest thing she’d ever had to face.

She wasn’t going to cry. She wasn’t! She chomped down on her quivering bottom lip. Did he feel anything more than just lust for her? She wanted to believe that he did. The sign for Jansen Park came into view. It didn’t surprise Libby when Logan slowed his motorcycle down and turned into the entrance. It was closed, but he had no problem going around the chain across the road. He continued down the road, past the small guard’s shack that hadn’t been used for as long as she could remember, the public bathrooms, and a concession stand where hotdogs and hamburgers were sold during special events.

They didn’t go very far once they passed the groundskeeper’s small, dark house. Logan steered his bike off the trail and up a small hill, coming to a halt at the top. It was dark, but the sky was clear and the moon was big and bright, offering them just enough light to be able to see each other.

Libby saw the glistening of black water in the distance, realizing they were near a lake. Then she was aware of stark silence when Logan shut down his bike and pushed the kickstand down. For a moment they just sat there, taking in their surroundings. The sounds of nature gradually became audible. Libby relaxed her hands, letting her palms slide down Logan’s thighs.
toward his knees, smiling when she felt the steel muscles flex beneath her caress. Feeling naughty, she let her hands inch back up until her finger tips were able to brush against his zipper, which was straining beneath the full-blown hard-on he had. He sucked in his breath.

“Damn, that feels good,” he said hoarsely.

Libby released a little laugh. She leaned forward and tugged on his ear with her teeth, caressing him harder. “I’m so hot I’m burning up inside. I want you, Logan.”

She gasped with surprise when Logan made a sudden move, releasing a noise that revealed his hunger. His growl sounded like a night creature on the prowl for something to eat. Only she knew what he was hungry for. He turned around on the seat, and the next thing Libby knew he was removing her helmet and tossing it to the ground. Before she could catch her breath his fingers threaded through her hair and he pulled her to him, snapping her head back with a hard kiss. The pressure forced Libby into opening her mouth, and Logan took advantage by slipping his tongue inside.

They moaned simultaneously. Libby’s hands went to his shoulders; his left her hair and glided down her body to her bare thighs. The only way she’d been able to mount the bike wearing a miniskirt was by pulling it up, so she was completely exposed from the waist down. And the only thing keeping her from being indecent was the triangle covering her mound.

Logan’s hands tickled her with delicious pleasure, smoothing along her flesh until his fingers reached the silk between her legs.

Libby felt a light flick of his finger across her weeping mound and nearly lost it, arching hungrily and crying out with passion beneath his mouth. His kiss turned Savage at her response. Their tongues battled, hearts pounded as one. Then Logan’s mouth left hers to trail liquid fire along her jaw, up to her ear, and behind, then down the curve of her neck. The whole time his finger flicked over the sensitive bud pulsing between her thighs. A ripple of pleasure traveled down Libby’s spine, and she gasped. Her panties became soaked.

“Logan!” She was close to climaxing. She began to move her hips into his caresses with one thought on her mind, she wanted, needed to experience the sweet rush of release. “Oh, God!” She leaned forward, and raked her teeth along the thick muscles in his neck, encouraging him to continue. “Close…”

“Hold on, baby.” Logan removed his hand and dismounted. Libby wanted to scream. What is he doing? Before she could question him he pulled her off the bike. She watched as he moved to the saddlebags. He opened one and pulled something out. It was a blanket, which he promptly spread out on the ground. Then he knelt, taking Libby by the hips and turning her toward him. His hands moved up her thighs, pushing her skirt up as he went. When there was nothing between them but her soaked thong she felt his hot breath against her. Her knees buckled when his lips first kissed her there, and then his tongue snaked out and caressed her.

Her hands fell to his shoulders as she struggled to remain on her feet. The silence of the night around them was broken by Libby’s soft cry. She swayed, and would have fallen if Logan hadn’t pulled her down on the ground with him. The next thing Libby knew she was lying on her back and Logan had moved between her legs. His hands slid beneath her naked bottom and he pulled her up and forward until his open mouth was able to love her in the most intimate way. A soft scream escaped Libby when the wet heat of his mouth and tongue moved against her with purpose.

“Oh!” She arched her hips, her hands clenching in the blanket beneath her. Then Logan’s fingers moved the silk aside and before Libby could brace herself his tongue was
slipping deep inside her twisting body. Her hands moved to Logan’s hair, not sure what she
intended, the feelings he produced inside her too intense. Her heart raced out of control, and she
couldn’t catch her breath. She tried to push him away, only he easily held her as his tongue
continued to plunge in and out. “Logan!” she whispered sharply.

He didn’t answer her. How could he? His sensuous mouth was locked onto her flesh,
sucking and manipulating her desire. Libby sucked in her breath. Her hips rose to meet every
stabbing thrust of Logan’s tongue, just as if his cock was pounding into her. She felt the hot rush
of a climax spiraling through her body, a violent current racing out of control. Never before had
she known the pleasure of coming by a man’s mouth. But one thing Libby did know, it was like
nothing she’d experienced.

When she climaxed every nerve ending in her body exploded in a kaleidoscope of intense
ecstasy. She stiffened letting the pleasure consume her into letting go. Her body began to
convulse, her breath coming in fast pants. Logan’s mouth was right there to capture the flood of
release, licking at the warmth as if he were tasting honey. As Libby lay there suffering the
aftershocks, uncharacteristic shyness enveloped her. She was thankful for the darkness,
especially when Logan rose over her body and kissed her tenderly on the lips.

“That was your first time.” He said it as a fact, but Libby picked up on the awe in his
tone. He also sounded immensely pleased. “Are you okay?”

She took a deep breath, a trembling smile he couldn’t see spreading across her mouth. “I
almost bit my tongue off.”

A deep chuckled rumbled through Logan’s chest and he rolled on his back, bringing
Libby with him, until she was lying fully on top of him. He spread his thighs so that she was
between them. She became instantly aware of his arousal, right where his tongue had been a
moment ago.

“What about you? Don’t you, ah, want to get rid of…this?” She purposely arched into his
hard-on.

A bark of laughter escaped Logan, disturbing the natural sounds that surrounded them.

“You’re a brazen witch.”

“I know what I want.” Libby decided they’d been through too much to be coy now. She
wanted Logan, in every way. It was on the tip of her tongue to tell him the truth. Confess that
her exclamation of love the other day in her bedroom was fact, not just something uttered in the
heat of the moment. Only she was too afraid of rejection. “And, don’t you mean, wench?”

“No, you’re a witch, honey.” His hands smoothed over Libby’s bottom to the end of her
skirt. “You’ve cast your spell on me.” She felt the tips of his fingers teasing the backs of her
thighs. “I’ve never met another woman who gets me so hot, so fast.”

His admission pleased Libby. “Then we’re even, because what I feel in your arms I never
felt with Scott. And since he’s the only other man I’ve been with I…oh!” She squirmed when his
hands glided up the back of her thighs, tickling her. Only they didn’t stop there, and suddenly it
wasn’t so funny anymore.

“You were saying?” Libby could hear the smile in his voice. One hand covered her
naked bottom, while the other toyed with the string of her thong. “I, ah…” She couldn’t think,
not when he was sliding the string up and down on his finger. His erection was full and
strong against her and Libby couldn’t help wondering why he wasn’t ravishing her. Where
did he get his willpower? She wiggled again. “I can’t think when you’re doing that.”

“Then just feel,” Logan rasped. His hands cupped Libby’s bottom and he pulled her up
so he could reach her lips. His kiss was tender, yet Libby sensed the passion waiting to explode
forth. As their kiss deepened, Logan began to move her up and down against his shaft. "I want you, Libby."

"Then take me," she whispered against his lips.

"I have every intention of taking you."

She gasped with surprise when he flipped them so she was beneath him. Kissing her, his hands moved over her breasts, pushing her blouse out of the way. His caresses bordered on roughness, revealing the heightened state he was in. But all Libby felt was pleasure beneath his hands, arching eagerly in silent demand for more. Lord, couldn’t he tell how she felt about him? She buried her fingers in his hair, holding him against her as he attacked her breasts like a starved beast.

"Logan…" Rapture zinged through her as his lips, teeth and tongue loved her hard nipples. Her hands pulled at his hair, the pleasure more than she could stand. Logan moved with the speed of a striking snake, grabbing Libby around both wrists and pinning her arms to the ground on either side of her head. Panting heavily, their eyes met, and held.

His erection was throbbing strongly against Libby, as though trying to break free of the jeans holding it from its prize. Libby was aware of their hearts pounding as one, and the muscles of powerful thighs holding her down. His mouth returned to her quivering breasts and he loved them at his leisure. Her sharp gasps and low cries didn’t so much as slow him down. Helpless against his sensual attack, all Libby could do was lie there and twist with passion beneath his deliberate assault. She arched into him, melting inside as his arousal stimulated hers. She strained against his hold.

"Oh, God! Logan, I can’t take much more!" She couldn’t! She was going to go up in flames if he didn’t release her from the turmoil twisting through her body, and soon.

His only response was his mouth sliding away from her swollen breasts. His lips burned a liquid trail of fire along her throat to the line of her jaw, over to her ear and behind. In a move Libby barely took notice of he transferred her wrists to one hand, while his other smoothed down her body in a lingering caress that ended between her thighs. She caught her breath when he ripped the little lacy thong from her body with one tug.

Movements indicated he was freeing himself from his jeans. Before she could brace herself he slammed his hips forward, burying his thick shaft all the way to her womb. A cry escaped Libby before she could rein it in. Then nothing else mattered as Logan began to love her in a fast and steady rhythm that rapidly climbed toward an explosive climax. For the second time in half an hour Libby felt her body explode with a pleasure that equaled nothing else. His mouth swallowed her cry of release, his low, deep grunt indicating his own. At the crucial moment Logan released her hands, and she was able to hold him to her quivering body.

Libby didn’t realize she was crying until the tremors began to subside, and she gradually became aware of other things, too. They were in a precarious situation, saved only by the cover of darkness. She recalled the darkness of the groundskeeper’s little house, thankful he was gone. Certain one or two of her cries had carried well beyond where they lay. As hot tears fell from the corners of her eyes to the ground, she fought the urge to reach up and wipe them away. She didn’t want Logan to question the reason for them.

His weight was comforting. A last shudder rippled over his body, and Libby suspected it had more to do with his flesh shrinking away from her body than actual desire. She quivered a little too, just as sensitive down there as he was at the moment. Sultry night air caressed the wetness between her thighs, slowly cooling the fire Logan had created. And as the
small breeze off the lake surrounded them, with it came the strong, musky scent of their coupling.

“You’re quiet.” Logan leaned the top half of his body off Libby to look down at her. “I’m…” Her voice came out raspy and she cleared her throat and tried again. “I’m just enjoying the moment. I’ve never made love out in the open.”

“Another new experience for you tonight.” When he lowered his head she instinctively raised her face to his. They shared a tender kiss. Then Logan sighed. “As much as I, we enjoyed this…”

“Don’t you dare say it was a mistake.” Libby couldn’t bear to hear him say the words. “Mistake? The first time we made love was a mistake, but it’s a little late to say this was a mistake, too.” Logan rolled off Libby to lie on his back next to her. “I was going to say it’s getting late, and it looks like rain. I should take you home.”

“Oh.” She rolled until she was relaxing half on top of him and able to meet the glitter of his eyes. “Gram went out on another one of her dates with Vincent, tonight. They said they’d be home very late.” For the first time Libby realized her grandmother hadn’t exactly said when she’d be home. “I’m allowed to stay out until after nine tonight.”

Logan chuckled, encircling her waist with his arm to hold her close. “It’s a good thing I’m leaving this weekend.” He kissed Libby long and hard, gradually lessening it into something soft and overwhelmingly sensual. Libby moaned beneath his lips, slipping her tongue inside the cavern of his mouth and drinking the passion there. He tasted smooth and warm.

“Why?” she asked, when the kiss ended and she was able to draw breath again. She felt Logan’s shrug. “There’s a shortage of forest firefighters. It’s time I get back to work. The fire I told you about has been burning out of control since Labor Day.”

Yes, the day fire. Libby heard about on the news. But she sensed that wasn’t the real reason he was leaving. Maybe he was going back to Anne. She didn’t want to think about it. But she couldn’t wipe away the memory of how beautiful the woman was, how she’d carried herself with elegance and ease that day. Libby imagined she was the kind of woman who could walk into a room and command any man’s attention that she wanted.

It tore Libby up inside to even imagine Logan with another woman. A lot of things went through her mind but more than anything it saddened her, because she couldn’t make him love her. He seemed perfectly content to keep their relationship sexual. Maybe if she hadn’t been so, so available. Available…that single yet crucial word remained with Libby for a long moment. Opening her eyes to what she might have done wrong. Suddenly the old-fashioned phrase she’d heard her mother utter once, about buying the cow when you can get the milk for free, became painfully clear.

“You’ve been quiet for a long time. What are you thinking about?”

There was no way Libby was going to tell Logan the truth. “That what you do for a living must be very hard and dangerous work,” she lied. She felt a change come over Logan, subtle but immediate, and wondered the reason behind it.

“It can be.” Without warning he released Libby and got to his feet. Was he thinking about his accident? She recalled his reaction to her curiosity that day in the kitchen, and knew she’d have to be careful. “Have you been a firefighter long?”

“About fourteen years. We signed up right out of high school.” He held his hand down to her.

She took it and let him pull her to her feet. “We?”
“Friends of mine, Pete and Ron.” His hesitation and tone of voice warned Libby that he didn’t like where their conversation was going.

“Are they still firefighters, too?”

“No.” Logan released her and bent to grab up the blanket. Without another word he rolled it up and stuffed it into the saddle bag. Once it was closed and secured he swung back to her. Nothing could prepare her for what he said next. “They’re both dead, Libby, because I killed them. And that’s all I’m going to say on the matter.”

Shock held Libby still. She didn’t for one moment believe that Logan killed anyone, not with his bare hands anyway. Yet the anguish in his voice exposed how deep the wound was. She sensed his accident and the deaths of his friends were related. And that their deaths were far more painful than the scars marring his body. Her eyes sought his in the darkness. How can he think he can make a statement like that and then just drop it?

“Logan…” Her voice choked with emotion as she blinked back the tears rapidly filling her eyes. He was so close, standing in front of her, yet seemed a thousand miles away. Shaking with emotion, Libby raised her hand and gently cupped his face. The desire to tell him she loved him had never been so strong. She felt his jaw tense beneath her palm, half expecting him to pull away. “Your friends perished in the same accident you were involved in, didn’t they?”

“Yes.”

“What you’re feeling is survivor’s guilt…”

“I told you…”

She couldn’t bear for him to say the words that would shut her out. Desperation caused Libby to rise up on her tiptoes and kiss him. She felt his surprise, then resistance beneath her mouth, but continued to move her lips over his in a soft, sensual kiss that soon melted his reserve. She sensed a mild victory when he crushed her against him, groaning low in his throat, and began to kiss Libby back as though he had no other choice. The urge to smile was wiped away to be replaced with desire.

Would she ever get enough of him? She hadn’t kissed Logan with any thought on her mind other than to stop his words. But now, Libby was exploding with longing inside. Like an opening to the sun, she welcomed the rush of sensation uncurling in her belly. She chuckled inwardly, when it suddenly occurred to her that maybe Logan had chosen the same tactics too. Kissing her back with such relish to take her mind off what they’d been talking about.

All too soon he released her. He bent to pick up his helmet and slipped it over Libby’s head, turning toward his bike. “Let’s go home.” She watched him swing his leg over, before moving behind him to do the same thing. Her arms automatically went around his waist, and she waited.

And waited.

And waited some more.

Finally Logan took a deep breath. “Ron and Pete were my best friends, we grew up together, went to the same schools.” He paused, as if he didn’t want to go on, or couldn’t. “We were like brothers. My decision is what killed them, Libby. I was the one calling the shots that day. We’d been called to assist with a wildfire burning out of control in Montana. By the time I realized they were trapped by the flames it was too late.”

Libby could hear the pain in Logan’s voice, the deep sorrow he felt over the loss. And the guilt. That more than anything else. He blamed himself, not only for their demise, but for surviving it. Her heart constricted, her eyes filled with burning tears. She didn’t know what to
say. It didn’t matter anyway. There was a lump of emotion so tight in her throat that speaking was impossible. She hugged herself tighter against his back, willing him to feel how much she loved him.

“They knew they were going to die, Libby. It was in their eyes. I tried to make it to them, but that’s when the tree fell...the next thing I knew I woke up two days later in a hospital.” His voice had grown so low and hoarse that Libby had a difficult time hearing him. “When I opened my eyes, Ron’s wife, Penny, was sitting by my bed, holding my hand. I didn’t have to tell her what happened, she already knew. She was there for me.”

Because she didn’t blame him, couldn’t Logan see that? The love he’d felt for Pete and Ron was evident in his tone. Tears slipped down Libby’s cheeks. “Logan...” Her voice caught on a sob. “It wasn’t your fault.” She bit down on her bottom lip, but it was a pitiful attempt to hide her feelings. “Accidents happen.”

She felt Logan stiffen against her. “There’s no room for accidents when you’re in the middle of a forest fire out of control, Libby. No room for mistakes. I’ll never forget the look on their faces when they realized they weren’t going to make it out. When Ron yelled out for me to tell Penny he loved her...” His voice cracked and he couldn’t go on.

There was nothing Libby could say that would make it any better. His guilt had taken root. She knew what he needed was someone to listen to him, and time would dim the memory. The silence stretched between them, and with it came the first tiny drops of rain.

“Let’s get you home.” Without warning Logan kick-started his bike and they were on the move. Libby could only hold on, as she had earlier, and let the wind brush away the tears on her cheeks.

It was late. The roads were quieter now, and darker. Logan’s speed made it seem like they were racing, but they couldn’t outrun the rain. Libby kept her arms tightly around his middle, her cheek pressed against his solid back. Relishing in the tightness of his stomach muscles beneath her arms. He was strong and powerful and she felt totally safe with him.

As they neared the bar Logan slowed his bike, turned his head and hollered, “Where’s your car?”

Libby was glad she’d let Leslie and Pat pick her up, because it gave her more time to be with him. “At Gram’s!”

He acknowledged her with a sharp nod, and then gunned the engine and they were flying again. The sky was pouring buckets of warm rain on them, but it didn’t matter. Libby knew she would walk on hot coals if it meant being with Logan. Tears sprang in her eyes at just the thought of him not being in her life after that weekend.

Ten minutes later they pulled into her grandmother’s drive, soaked to the bone. Logan turned off his bike and Libby slid off, removing his helmet. Her eyes took in the dark house, surprised her grandmother wasn’t home yet, especially when the outline of Vincent’s car was clearly visible beneath his carport. She must have gone to bed and forgotten to leave a light on for her. She wordlessly handed Logan his helmet.

“You’d better go inside and dry off,” he said, taking it from her.

“I guess this is goodbye, then.” Libby forced down the lump building in her throat. Logan shook his head no, then surprised her by reaching up and running his thumb over her bottom lip “I’m not ready to say goodbye to you yet.”

Her belly fluttered at the husky timbre of Logan’s voice. She hesitated, wondering what that meant. Wondering if he was going to kiss her.

She could see his wolfish grin. He knows! “Goodnight, Libby.”
He started his bike and she turned and sprinted to the front door, resisting the impulse to glance back. She pulled the screen door open and stepped into the dark kitchen, not surprised at finding the door unlocked. More than once she’d scolded her grandmother for leaving the house open. These days living in a gated community didn’t ensure safety. She’d reminded her grandmother about the break-ins where prescriptions were taken, but she might as well have saved her breath. Her grandmother insisted the community, where she’d lived perfectly crime free for ten years, was perfectly safe. Besides, if they wanted her meds they were welcome to them!

Smiling at the memory, Libby’s hand patted its way up the wall toward the light switch, but she hesitated from flicking the light on when a noise from the other room reached her. Freezing, she waited to hear it again, trying to determine if it was the TV, radio, or her grandmother. She started to call out, and then thought better of it. She walked further into the room, leaving the kitchen and entering the living room. The next sound she heard caused her to stop dead in her tracks.

It was a girlish giggle, followed by a girlish, “Vincent! Stop that!”

Libby’s eyes nearly popped out of their sockets, her jaw dropped open in shock. What were her grandmother and Vincent doing in the bedroom, with the lights out? She couldn’t begin to fathom the reason why. Not at their ages! Vincent mumbled something, but it was too low to make out. The next thing she heard made her ears catch fire.

“Oh…it still works after all these years!”

Libby’s hand flew up to cover her mouth. What!? She didn’t even want to try and digest that comment, or the reason for it. Her only thought was getting out of there as fast as she could. She turned to flee, stumbling over Rufus and sending him hissing across the room. She held her breath, aware her heart was pounding heavily in her chest. The dead silence that followed was deafening.

“Libby?” The sound of uncertainty was evident in her grandmother’s tone. “Is that you, dear?”

A reluctant grin spread across her mouth. The gutsy, outspoken, woman she knew had been replaced with a soft-spoken, trembling voiced little old lady. Why, she actually sounds guilty!

“It’s me, Gram. I, ah, just got home.” Maybe she should just pretend she didn’t know that Vincent was in there too. “Did you, ah, have a nice evening out?”

“Ah, yes, it was nice. I’ll be right out. We have something to tell you.”

We? She guessed Vincent wasn’t going to crawl out the bedroom window and make his escape. Her smile widened as she reached for the floor lamp next to her grandmother’s recliner and turned it on.

Something told her this was going to be good!
It was early, not quite light outside, and Libby lay in bed staring up at the ceiling fan as it slowly spun around. Still trying to digest the news she’d received the night before. Her grandmother and Vincent were going to shack up! A smile spread across her face as she recalled her grandmother using the old-fashioned term, while explaining how it was for the best for everyone. It made sense. She and Vincent were two lonely old people, living on a fixed income, and they liked each other. Libby would never have guessed that, based on all the bickering back and forth between them. She guessed they’d been trying to fight the attraction. At least that had been apparent with her grandmother. And Vincent had enjoyed baiting her, as though knowing. Maybe he had known.

Libby had been sitting on the sofa when they finally emerged from the bedroom, looking red-faced and flustered and barely able to meet her eyes. Their roles had been reversed and suddenly Libby was the disapproving parent. Crossing her arms, she’d given their mussed hair and wrinkled clothes a thorough sweep, raising her brow over the knee highs gathered around her grandmother’s ankles. Her grandmother had quickly set her straight though, reminding Libby they were two consenting adults and could do whatever they wanted, whenever and wherever they wanted.

Their decision to move in together certainly solved a lot of problems. One home, two combined incomes, which meant they could have extra money to travel if they wanted. Not to mention it was safer. Plus, now there was no reason for Libby’s parents to put her grandmother into an assisted living facility. There was no need for a live-in companion either, even though Reba and what was going to happen to her hadn’t been mentioned.

Libby had to wonder why, but that was the least of her concerns. Sighing, she rolled to her side, hugging her pillow against her. All problems solved, but for one. It didn’t solve her problem about Logan, and the fact that she loved him so much she didn’t know what she was going to do without him. Her heart told her that she should tell him how she felt, before she took off for her folks. Only, did she want to see him one last time? Did she want to see him packing his saddle bags? Goodbyes were never easy. And their situation would make it a thousand times more awkward.

Tears sprang from nowhere, burning her sleep-deprived eyes. She brushed them away angrily. Crying was going to solve nothing. The tiniest noise indicated that someone was at her door.

“Libby, dear, are you awake?”

“I’m awake, Grams. Just lying here thinking.” She prayed her grandmother contributed her hoarse tone with just waking up. “Is something wrong?” Please don’t let it be Rufus stuck up in the tree again.

“Your mother’s on the phone.”
“This early? I didn’t even hear it ring.” Libby pulled back the covers and jumped from the bed. She probably wanted to know when to expect her.

“Well, actually I called her and she asked to speak to you before we hung up.”

“Oh. Can I walk around the house like this or is lover boy still around?” The only thing she had on was a thin tee-shirt that barely reached her thighs and a pair of bikini panties. She shot her grandmother an amused grin over her shoulder continuing to the kitchen.

“We told you last night, we’re not moving in together for a month. Besides, Reba needs time to find a place to live.” There was obvious amusement in her voice. “Don’t forget about the pancake breakfast this morning.”

Libby picked up the dangling phone and turned in time to see her grandmother give her a wink. How could she forget? They had one every Friday morning.

“Why not move in together now and really give the neighbors something to talk about,” Libby couldn’t help joking. “Two women and one man living under the same roof, now that will have tongues wagging.”

“We don’t need that kind of trouble,” Margaret grumbled beneath her breath.

“Well, don’t worry about Reba. She’s very flexible. A here today, gone tomorrow kind of gal.”

“We’re trying to protect her reputation.” Laughing, Libby put the phone to her ear. “Hi, Mom.”

“Can you believe it? Your grandmother and that man moving in together? And, they’re not even getting married!” Libby held the phone away from her ear, as her mother continued in a high-pitched tone. “She just told me what their plans are! I think it’s silly for two people their ages, acting so irresponsible! We don’t even know this Vincent!” As her voice rose steadily, Libby was willing to bet that her blood pressure was too. “What are we going to do about this?”

“Are you asking me, Mom? Because I think it’s great.” Libby refrained from mentioning that if they visited Grams more often they might meet more of her neighbors, and get to know them.

There was obvious disappointment in her tone that Libby didn’t automatically think the same way that she did. “What?

How can you…”

“Vincent is a very nice man. They’re lonely, Mom. Sure, I’ve been staying here with Grams, but I’m not her age and I’m a poor substitute for a real companion. And if you’ll stop your screaming long enough to think about it, you’ll realize this is the perfect solution.”

“To what?” she screamed.

“To Dad’s plan of placing Grams in some stuffy, assisted living home!” Libby shouted right back, forcing herself to calm down. Her grandmother had left the room and she didn’t want her voice carrying. It would hurt her terribly if she found out that her own daughter was against her happiness. “You know I can’t continue to live here indefinitely. It’s difficult bouncing back and forth between seventy-year-old Reba, and me.”

“But…”

“Mom, calm down and listen to me. They’re adults, and I don’t see how you can stop them anymore than you can force me to go back to Scott. Living together will allow them to share expenses, which you know is ridiculously high for seniors. It will allow Grams to remain living in her own home, be near her friends, and share her life with someone who can appreciate Monday morning coffee, bingo on Tuesday nights and neighborhood watch patrol.”
Libby’s comment was met with silence, before a snicker escaped from her mother.

“Goodness, did you really do all those things?”

Thank God her tone had gone down a couple degrees, and sounded as if she might be coming around to the situation. “Yes. All the while wearing a hot and heavy body suit, thick makeup and bifocals that made my eyes look like the size of baseballs.”

Libby heard another snicker. “Are you going to be okay with this?” Her mother released a heavy sigh. “I’m not totally sure about any of this, but it does make me feel better that you seem to be okay with it. Your dad, on the other hand…”

At the mention of her father Libby rolled her eyes. She opened the kitchen door to let in the cool morning air. She leaned against the wall, waiting for a chance to cut in. Her dad would only be a problem because he was suspicious of everyone.

He would wonder about Vincent’s motives, probably because he was an opportunist himself. Libby knew she could handle him when the time came. He didn’t have the same emotional attachment to Grams like her mom did. He would listen to the practicality of the whole situation and come around much quicker, and without screaming about it.

“Perhaps you should be around when I tell him. When will you get here this weekend? We want to leave as early as possible.”

Libby thought about Logan and wondered what time he was taking off on Saturday. She knew one thing; she didn’t want to be anywhere near there when he did. “Maybe I’ll come up later today and spend the night. Then you and Dad can leave as early as you want and I can sleep in.”

“Well, if you come up early enough than you can have dinner with us tonight. Call me later and let me know what you decide.”

“I will.”

As Libby turned to hang the phone up she automatically glanced out the door, toward Vincent’s house. He was sitting on the porch, alone. Seconds later Logan stepped through the threshold, carrying two cups in his hands. He handed one to Vincent and sat down in the chair next to him. She wondered how he felt about the news. She stared across the space with yearning in her heart, willing him to look her way. When he did her heart skipped a beat. She felt a tingling all over. They stared at each other for a long moment, until emotion overtook Libby and she forced herself to turn away.

She caught her breath, coming face to face with her grandmother. Her ageless eyes narrowed on Libby, missing nothing. In spite of that Libby averted her gaze. She recognized that look in her grandmother’s eyes.

“You love that boy.”

Libby glanced down to where Rufus was sleeping on the rug in front of the stove. She couldn’t meet her grandmother’s eyes, but answered honestly. “Yes.”

“Does he know?” Libby shook her head. She reached up and wiped at her eyes. “Are you going to tell him?”

“No.” Libby wished she could tell her it was none of her business, without being disrespectful. “Logan doesn’t want love from me, Gram.” She needed a cup of coffee. She went to the coffeepot to make them some. “He made that clear from the first day.”

An unladylike sound escaped Margaret. “Those Knight men!” Libby glanced up with surprise at the emotion behind her grandmother’s words. “And their rules,” she continued. Their eyes met. “Don’t look surprised, dear. I figured Vincent out a long time ago. He’s a big flirt but
I refused to be taken in by him. That challenged him. The more I resisted his charm, the more he was determined to win me over.”

Libby felt a sick feeling in the pit of her stomach. She’d given in to Logan way too easily. “Is that why you’re always so mouthy with him?” Her question was answered with a blushing grin and twinkling eyes. “Oh, Gram, I wish I was as smart as you.” She felt emotion well up in her throat, threatening to choke her. “Coffee will be ready soon. I think I’ll go change.”

“Libby?” She halted and glanced over her shoulder. “You should tell Logan before he leaves, dear.”

“I’ll think about it, Gram.” But Libby knew in her heart that she wouldn’t. She was going to run away. And it was that thought that prompted her into putting on her Reba disguise one more time. She could make her escape without worry of a confrontation with Logan, as herself anyway. She’d have breakfast with her grandmother and then leave for her parents.

* * *

“Libby! It’s time to leave!”
“I’m right behind you, Gram.”
“Oh!” Margaret chuckled and spun around. “I thought you were still in your room.” She took Libby by the hand and pulled her out the door and down the steps. “Why are you dressed like that?”

Libby shrugged and forced a smile on her face. “I thought Reba should make one last appearance before she disappears. At least say goodbye to everyone.”

“Good idea, dear. Now come on, Vincent’s saving us a seat.”

Before Libby knew it she was following on her grandmother’s heels, toward the community center. She cast a glance at Vincent’s house as they walked past, noticing Logan’s bike in the drive. Will he be at the breakfast? Her mind drifted back to the night before, when they were making love beneath the open sky. How could he make love to her like that and not feel something other than lust? And did he honestly believe that she was like that?

Her heart fell the moment they opened the door and entered the building, and her eyes landed on him. He was sitting with Vincent at one of the tables, casually sipping a cup of coffee. Libby watched the muscles tighten in his muscular arm as he brought the cup to his mouth, and how his sensual lips closed over the rim to take a drink. She thought about them on her breasts. Her nipples tingled from the memory of his tongue and teeth teasing and manipulating them. As he brought the cup down their eyes met for a moment. Libby held her breath before remembering how she was dressed.

“I see Vincent,” Margaret said, returning his wave.

“I see Logan. Libby made a half-hearted attempt to wave. “I think I’ll head straight for the food.” She grabbed up the nearest plate. The tables were already set, the empty places a sign that someone had taken the plate and was standing in line for breakfast. It was also a way of reserving their seats. However, Libby knew the place was never full and that there would be extra places. “I’m starved,” she explained, noticing the questioning look Margaret gave her.
Libby’s gaze followed her grandmother as she continued on to the table, before averting her gaze in case Logan should glance their way again. She went to the end of the line, feeling the sweat gather at her brow and the back of her neck. It was always too hot in there. And today she was in full costume, right down to the slip and pantyhose beneath her dress. Resisting the urge to wipe the moisture away and take the chance of ruining her makeup, she began to fan herself with her paper plate.

The man in front of Libby felt the breeze she was creating and turned to glance at her with a kind smile. “It’s a little stuffy in here this morning, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” Libby agreed, wishing she could also flap her skirt to get some air between her legs. As the line slowly moved, she looked around the people in front of her, pretending interest in what the cooks were serving up for breakfast.

Lord! Libby felt the sweat running between her breasts. She couldn’t take it, and didn’t care who might see her. She reached up and pulled the material away from her breasts. Maybe she was having a hot flash or something.

“Hot?”

“Very,” she smiled, turning to make eye contact with the speaker, who was directly behind her. She caught her breath when she met Logan’s amused eyes. She whipped back around. Suddenly her body was unbearably hot. And no matter what she did, she couldn’t get the thought of Logan standing behind her out of her mind. He was close…too close, radiating a sexuality that awakened all of her senses. She felt her glasses begin to slip down her nose.

“I was hoping to see Libby this morning.”

To say goodbye? Logan’s warm breath stirred the hair at the back of Libby’s neck.

“She’s, ah, gone,” was all Libby could think to say.

“Already?” There was slight surprise in his voice. “I was under the impression she was leaving for her folks in the morning.”

“Yes, well, she decided to go a day early.”

“Her car is still in the driveway,” he pointed out.

Damn! Libby had to think fast. “Oh, ah, she was picked up.” The devil in her prompted her to add, “By Scott.”

“Really? That’s interesting.”

Something in Logan’s tone urged Libby to turn around again. She pushed her glasses up her nose and met his eyes. “Yes. You see, they’ve ah, decided to get back together.”

The lie made her cheeks grow hot and Libby was certain Logan saw the guilt in her eyes. To make matters worse, she couldn’t look away to save her life. She delved deeply into his warm eyes, searching for anything that indicated the bomb she’d just dropped affected him in some way. Only his gunmetal eyes revealed nothing, like his expression, except a mild amusement that confused and disappointed her.

And then, as they stood there staring into each other’s eyes while the line of elderly in front of them inched away, Libby felt a betraying moisture fill her eyes as hopelessness closed in on her. Something stirred in Logan’s eyes too, only dressed in her outlandish disguise, Libby brushed it off as anything significant. Realizing she couldn’t continue to stand there and not give her feelings away, she slowly started to turn away from him. Only he surprised her by gently taking her arm.

“Reba.” Their eyes met and held. “I wonder if you’d do something for me,” Logan said in a low voice.
People began moving around them. Libby was very conscious of the curious eyes on them. “Yes?”

“Will you give Libby a message for me, next time you see her?”
“If I see her.”
“Will you?”

She hesitated, swallowing the lump of emotion closing her throat. “Yes.” Libby was painfully aware she’d spoken in her own voice, but Logan didn’t seem to notice.

“Tell her goodbye for me. I’m leaving for California in the morning.”
“I know,” Libby said without thinking. “I mean, Libby told me.”

“Tell her too,” he hesitated, taking a deep breath. “Tell her that I love her.”

The bottom fell out of Libby’s stomach at his unexpected admission, while her heart soared with joy. It was the last thing she expected. “You love her?” Her hand flew to her fluttering heart. “You should tell her this yourself.”

Logan shook his head. “I didn’t set out to fall in love with her. But I knew from the moment I rescued her from that tree that she was going to mean trouble. All redheads are.”

“Was she?” Libby whispered.

He moved closer to Libby. “In fact, I told her from day one that all I wanted from her or any woman was sex.”

“Really?” Libby was too hypnotized by the tender look in Logan’s eyes to remember that she was supposed to be Reba. “Did you get what you wanted?”

Logan shook his head no. “I thought I did. But I soon discovered that I wanted more.”

Libby swallowed hard. “More… sex?”

His laugh was low and seductive, giving Libby goose bumps. “More… from her. I wanted to steal her heart, like she stole mine.”

“How do you know that you didn’t?” Tears of happiness were falling unchecked down Libby’s face. Complete silence surrounded them.

He shrugged slightly. “She’s never said anything.”

“Maybe she was afraid to,” Libby whispered, reaching up to wipe her eyes beneath her glasses. “Maybe she was afraid that she would chase you away.”

“Maybe.” Logan hesitated. “Would you give her something for me?”

Libby could barely get the word out. “What?”

“This.”

She gasped when Logan’s hand came up and wrapped around the back of her neck, pulling her against him. When his face lowered to hers she reacted naturally, raising hers to meet him. Then their lips were touching and his arms came around her, crushing her to him. She opened her mouth beneath his. Her senses filling with the instant rush of awareness and love for him. His low groan followed, then her sigh of surrender. She kissed him with everything she had, willing him to realize the truth. And then, to make sure that he did, she told him in no uncertain terms.

“I love you, too, Logan. I have for a long time. Only, I was afraid to tell you.” She pushed her glasses up, and froze. Oh my God. She’d forgotten she was dressed as Reba.

Logan’s laughing eyes revealed more than words. Libby glanced around them to see they had an audience of fifty or so seniors, totally enthralled with her and Logan. Frozen in various stages of what they’d been doing. Some of their expressions were motionless with shock to see a seventy-year-old woman and thirty-year-old man kissing, except for her grandmother and Vincent. They had smiles on their faces from ear to ear.
Realizing that Logan’s arms were still around her, Libby slowly returned her eyes to his. She didn’t know what to say or do next, that would justify what just happened between them. One thing was obvious though. The proof was in his amused eyes. He knew who she was. And nothing else mattered but that she was in his arms and that he loved her.

A sob escaped her. “I’ve been so afraid of losing you. I wanted to tell you how I felt, but I kept remembering what you said. Then, the other day in the bedroom when I let it slip, all I could think of doing was brushing it off as something said in the heat of the moment.”

“You certainly did your best,” Logan agreed.

“When I said I love you and saw your expression…”

“I was elated…”

“I thought you were regretful…”

“Optimistic.” He kissed Libby on the nose. “Content.” He kissed her on the cheek.

“Complete.” Finally his mouth joined hers. She melded into him, uncaring where they were or who was watching. It didn’t matter how he found out she was Reba, or when. Her heart swelled with emotion. The man she loved beyond all reason loved her back. They kissed for an eternity, until Libby was melting inside. Logan’s arms were around her and she was lifted, floating on a cloud of euphoria.

When the kiss ended and she opened her eyes, she was startled to see they’d moved out of the main dining area and into the foyer, where they had more privacy.

“I love you.” They said it simultaneously and laughed softly.

“Do you feel like going for a ride?”

“Like this?” Libby chuckled, giving her wig a tug.

Logan’s eyes roamed over her face and hair with amusement. “You have time to change.”

“Where are we going?”

“California.”

“California?” Libby caught her breath, her pulse leaping with excitement. He wanted her to go with him! A wide smile spread across her face. She began to rain kisses all over his face, evading his lips when he tried to capture hers. She laughed and cried at the same time.

“Yes!” she breathed against his firm lips. “I’ll go with you!”

“There’s only one thing I want from you, sweetheart.”

His endearment caused her heart to swell. “A lot of sex?” she teased.

The warmth of his deep chuckle vibrated through her. His eyes darkened with understanding. It didn’t matter what Logan wanted from her. Libby knew she’d give him anything he wanted, go anywhere with him. Their love knew no boundaries. And no matter where it took them, Logan was her future.

The End
Detective Mike Denton turned down the road to 113 Madison Drive with a feeling in his gut that warned him his life was about to change. It wasn’t anything he could put his finger on; he just knew. And he hadn’t made up his mind yet if it was a good feeling or not. He drove down the quiet street slowly, pulling to the curb when he spotted the house. It was a newer home with a double car garage revealing a small, silver sports car inside, the name of which eluded him. A for sale sign with the bold letters SOLD written across it was standing on the immaculate front lawn.

He contemplated waiting in his squad car for the paramedics to arrive, knowing what was probably waiting for him inside. For the first time he was sorry he’d put in for the overtime; he was a homicide detective. But these days the department was running short of officers and until the new man hired the week before was up to speed, volunteers had been called on to take extra shifts. If he hadn’t just returned from a two-week vacation with Melissa he probably would have passed. But let no one in the department throw it in his face later that he wasn’t a team player when the need arose.

The feeling in his stomach intensified and Mike began to wonder that maybe it was the result of the high cholesterol breakfast he’d gobbled down an hour before. Somehow he doubted that was the case; he’d eaten the same breakfast many times without any complications.

Taking a deep breath, he decided he’d better go inside. From where he sat he could see the front door was already open. He slipped out from behind the wheel and strode unhurriedly to the screen door. Just as he was about to ring the doorbell a noise from inside made him hesitate. He listened, trying to determine what it could be. Was the TV on? Maybe it was the radio. He couldn’t tell. He punched the doorbell and called out at the same time, “Hello, anyone there?”

Someone should be home. The call had come from somebody inside the house less than half an hour ago. However, Mike’s vast experience over the years prepared him for anything. It wasn’t uncommon for someone to phone in a death and then leave the scene for whatever reason, especially if it involved a loved one. There were no set rules to what kind of reactions to expect.

There was no response. Next time he rapped his knuckles against the metal doorframe, which somehow seemed louder than the doorbell. “Hello!” he hollered, testing the doorknob and finding it unlocked. “Is anyone home?” Against his better judgment he opened the screen door. Walking cautiously inside, he let his eyes scan the area as he made his way through the front foyer. Self-preservation and too many times of walking in on a bad situation prompted him to keep his hand on the butt of his revolver.
As he stepped through the large archway that led to the living room, his eyes were automatically drawn to the woman standing quietly by the sliding glass door. Her arms were folded and it was obvious she was deep in thought and staring at something outside, which explained why she hadn’t heard him calling out. He moved further into the room, hoping he didn’t frighten her. She was small, not more than five feet five he determined, dressed in what he assumed were satin pajamas. His lips twitched with humor when he realized they were decorated with little yellow smiley faces.

Her russet hair was tumbling in disarray about her slender shoulders. From what Mike could see, her complexion was like a sun ripened peach, smooth and healthy looking, almost glowing in the early morning light shining through the glass. It was hard to tell from her profile but he gauged her age to be somewhere around thirty.

“Ma’am?” he called out softly, his gaze automatically searching the room for the body. He could finally hear the sirens in the distance, and he silently thanked God. The paramedics could take over once they arrived. Soothing distraught women wasn’t one of his strong points. It made him uncomfortable as hell, especially when they expected a strong shoulder to cry on while being comforted. He didn’t have that problem when he responded to a homicide. Usually no one stuck around to claim the body.

“She called the police?” The woman jumped slightly and finally swung his way, her eyes rounding with surprise and mild fear before taking in his uniform. He sensed her calm at once, watching her body relax back against the glass door as she reached up to wipe the glistening tear tracks lining her cheeks. She was attractive; Mike couldn’t help but notice, and looking at him with eyes that reminded him of a wounded doe. Again he scanned the area for the body. Pretty or not, he had a job to do.

“I’m Mike Denton with the Stratton Police Department, ma’am. Where’s the body?” His tone was all business.

She cleared her throat before responding in a velvet voice, husky with drained emotion, “Over there.” She pointed. “I’m surprised they sent a police officer though…”

Mike only half-listened, intent on locating it. He went in the direction she indicated, halting in stunned disbelief in the doorway. There was a body all right, on the floor of what appeared to be an office. The woman had attempted to cover it up with a throw of some kind. All he could do was stand there and stare at the long, brown legs sticking out from beneath it.

There were four of them.

“I don’t believe this…” he mumbled beneath his breath, finally bending to lift a corner of the blanket and frowning at what met his eyes. A Great Dane if he knew his dogs. Seeing no apparent wounds or trauma to the body, he had a gut feeling that the dog had probably died of old age.

This was why she’d called the police? He stood with growing irritation, trying to decipher how this could have happened. He had better things to do than waste time responding to calls about dead animals. When he rejoined her in the living room, what little anger that had surfaced quickly evaporated. There had to be a logical explanation and experience had taught him to get the story before jumping to conclusions. The look on her face told him she was devastated over the loss of her dog. She looked soft and vulnerable and in need of comfort. The sudden urge to take her into his arms came from nowhere, catching him by surprise.

“Ma’am, you don’t call 911 over the death of an animal,” he began, trying to keep his voice kind. The sirens were closer now and Mike guessed he had about five minutes before they would be at the front door.
“I didn’t,” she rushed out, then quickly corrected herself, “I mean, technically I did but only because I didn’t know who else to call. Cupid’s Arrow…”

Mike frowned, almost afraid to ask, “Cupid’s Arrow?”

“The dog,” she explained. “I was taking care of him for a neighbor. When I woke this morning I found him like this. He was very old. I don’t know how I’m going to tell the Rentschlers; this is going to destroy them. They’re very devoted to Cupid’s Arrow; you see it’s because of him they met in the first place. He’s part of the fam…”

Her pretty lips were moving a hundred miles a minute and Mike listened to her rambling for a moment before shaking his head and trying to make sense of why he was wasting his time. “You still dialed 911,” he reminded her, trying to ignore the way her pajamas fit against her shapely form, outlining her generous curves. Or how the early morning sun shining through the window brought out the highlights of red fire in her auburn hair.

“You explained I didn’t know whom to call,” she reminded him in return, smiling slightly. “I told the 911 operator what the situation was. I thought she understood me.”

Damn, she had dimples. In addition, those chocolate eyes of hers were moving over him in a way that made him think of melting ice cream on a hot summer day. Soft, smooth and creamy, making him uncomfortably warm. He doubted she was even aware of her appeal. He was silent for a moment, trying to get his temperature back under control, wondering who the dispatch operator was that morning. It would be easy enough to trace. If her story didn’t pan out he could always return later and give her a citation. That would certainly give him an excuse to see her again. He withdrew his pad and pen, reminding himself he wasn’t in the market for female companionship these days.

“You’re not going to give me a ticket, are you?” she gasped in a disbelieving tone. Mike’s eyes shot back up to hers, taking in the heightened color on her cheeks and the way she was gnawing on the inside of her lip. Damn, that bottom lip was about the sexiest thing he’d seen in a long time. “Not at this time, ma’am. I just want to jot down a few notes. But you can be sure I’ll be back if I find out you’re not telling me the truth.” Hearing the sudden commotion at the door, he realized the paramedics had arrived. “Excuse me for a moment.”

It didn’t take him long to explain the situation to them and by the time he returned to the living room the woman was gone. He swung around when a noise coming from the kitchen drew his attention. She was standing on the other side of the counter that separated the two rooms, offering him a shy smile.

“Would you like a cup of coffee, Mr. Denton?”

She might as well have asked him if he wanted to go to bed. The timbre of her smoky voice raked mercilessly over every one of Mike’s dormant senses, igniting a fire of need in his blood so fast that it shocked him. “It’s…” He hesitated from saying detective since he was in a police uniform, and he wasn’t in the mood for explanations. “No, thank you, ma’am.”

When she ran her slender fingers through her wild hair, he literally caught his breath, his stomach clenching into a tight ball. What the hell was the matter with him? He made a mental note not to order the sausage at Smoky Joe’s anymore, as he watched her move gracefully about the kitchen for a moment before getting back to the task at hand. After writing down a few more notes, he flipped the pad closed and slid it into his pocket.

“My name’s Emma Stuart,” she said unnecessarily, telling Mike what he already knew. “What about Cupid’s Arrow?” she continued when he glanced up again. “I can’t move him by myself.”
“I’ll call animal control and have them come out,” he offered, surprised to find he was reluctant to leave. It was on the tip of his tongue to accept her earlier offer of coffee. It smelled a heck of a lot better than the black tar Smoky Joe’s served up. Moreover, she was a hell of a lot more appealing than the missing front tooth; straggly hair waitress Joe had serving for him behind the counter.

“Thank you,” she said with obvious relief. “I’m sorry for all the confusion.” She sounded sincere.

“No problem,” he found himself saying. “I’ll be in touch if—”

“I know,” she interrupted with a radiant smile, catching Mike off guard again. “If I haven’t been telling you the truth.”

Her smile was like the warmth of the sun on a cold winter day. The first breath of fresh air after emerging from a smoke filled bar. The water that quenched a dying man’s thirst. For a long moment Mike was mesmerized; his eyes fastened on her soft mouth as if he’d never seen a smile before. He finally raised his gaze to hers once more, somersaulting headfirst into those dark mysterious pools. Swallowing with difficulty, he made up his mind then and there. He was going back to Smoky Joe’s and demanding his money back!

****

No sooner had Officer Handsome left than the phone began to ring, nearly drawing a cry of fright from Emma. She reached for it, watching him with interest from her kitchen window as he sauntered to his cruiser in a sexy gait that made her mouth water. She wasn’t in the market for a man, but she couldn’t help admire his physique. After all, she wasn’t dead. Plus a man in uniform had always held a certain appeal.

Her eyes measured the way his broad shoulders filled out his navy police uniform before running down the straight line of his backside, finally settling on the stretch of material over his taut buttocks. Goodness, he had a nice body. To her mortification he glanced back just as he was getting into his cruiser, catching her ogling him! She quickly stepped back, but not before she saw the white of his crooked grin.

“Hello?” she breathed into the receiver, closing the blinds and ignoring the sudden heat spreading over her body.

“Mom, it’s me. Did someone pick up Cupid’s Arrow yet?”

Emma smiled at the concern in Amanda’s tone. “They’re on their way,” she replied, deciding not to tell her about the mix up. They’d been talking on the phone earlier when Emma had switched to the portable so she could go in search of the too quiet dog.

“Do you want me to come over?”

“Of course not.” She smiled, wondering if Amanda knew how motherly she sounded all of a sudden. Emma could always tell when she had something on her mind. She’d been about to ask her a question earlier when finding Cupid’s Arrow had cut their conversation short.

There was a significant pause before Amanda finally said, “So, what about what we were talking about earlier?”

What were they talking about? Several thoughts came to mind: her upcoming move, shopping, working out. She vaguely remembered Amanda mentioning something right about the time she’d discovered Cupid’s Arrow. “You’ll have to refresh my memory.”
Amanda expelled a heavy sigh. “The policemen’s picnic this Saturday? I asked you if you wanted to go this year.”

Oh, that. Emma rolled her eyes because it wasn’t the first time Amanda had asked her. In fact it seemed the topic came up every time they talked. It occurred to her that Amanda was paying way too much attention to her lack of social life lately, causing her to wonder if she had ulterior motives behind her invitation. It wouldn’t be the first time she’d tried her matchmaking skills on her.

“So, Mom, you’ll have a good time. You need to get out more, you’re not an old maid,” she pleaded, using a tone especially designed for getting her own way as it had many times in the past. “It’s been two years,” she reminded Emma, not needing to say more.

Emma knew Amanda was trying to be kind so didn’t take offense at her aggressive tone or the wise crack about her age. They were sisters actually, yet with the thirteen year age difference and without their mother around while growing up, Amanda had started calling her “Mom” at an early age and it had just stuck.

“I don’t know,” Emma hedged, not completely convinced she wanted to be around a park full of men high on power and attitude. She’d had enough of that to last a lifetime.

“I don’t want to go alone.”

“Troy will be there,” she pointed out, thinking about Amanda’s boyfriend. These days they hardly went anywhere without each other.

Misunderstanding her reluctance, Amanda offered, a little too eagerly, “Well, what if I hook you up with…”

Emma eyes grew round; she wasn’t ready to be hooked up with anyone. Yet that didn’t stop the vision of a sexy policeman’s face from flashing before her eyes. Would he be there? Stratton was a small town yet they’d never run into each other before. However, in the next instant she shook her head with disgust. “Forget it,” she broke in, panic over the thought making her heart miss a beat. “If you’re planning on playing match maker then I’m definitely not going.”

Leaning her hip against the kitchen counter, she looked at the various size boxes running along the counter top while thinking about all the work she still had to do. “I’m not finished packing and the movers…"

“I was joking and you have plenty of time for that. I’ll come over and help you. Will you go or not?”

Emma smiled at the impatience and persistence in Amanda’s tone. These days she had to remind herself that her little sister was all grown up and living on her own. Well, when she wasn’t staying at Troy’s, which was more often than not lately. She didn’t understand why they just didn’t move in together and make it official.

“Give me the details.” It wasn’t as if Amanda was asking her to take a ride over Niagara Falls or something. Emma didn’t have the heart to turn her down, or the energy to think up an excuse that would justify her not going. Besides, it was time she started getting out and doing things again.

“Great! You won’t be sorry,” she made the mistake of replying enthusiastically.

Emma’s brows rose with mild concern. “Well I hope not; this is just a picnic, isn’t it?” she cut in. “Or did you miss my little comment about not setting me up?”

“That’s not what I meant,” Amanda rushed out. “You’re so suspicious,” she went on with an obvious smile in her tone. “The policemen’s picnic is always a lot of fun. The whole town turns out for it. There will be a ball game and tons of good food…”
Emma’s mouth turned down, thinking about her widening waistline. She wasn’t fat, but lately she’d put on a few extra pounds and the mention of tons of good food wasn’t exactly what she wanted to hear. Maybe if she worked doubly hard at the gym the next couple of days she could afford to indulge a little on the weekend.

In the end she found herself agreeing to meet Amanda on Saturday, at ten, at the park behind the police station. She thought about the last time she’d gone to a picnic, realizing at least twelve years had passed. That is if joining Amanda at school for lunch one day and eating on the playground qualified as a picnic.

* * * *

By the time Saturday arrived, Emma was almost looking forward to it. However, when it came time to dress, she found herself in a real dilemma. Her picnic attire options were practically non-existent. Amanda had often accused her of dressing older than her age. After standing in her walk-in closet for twenty minutes she was inclined to finally agree with her. She scanned the row of dresses and skirts. For the first time it occurred to her she’d been dressing to please Richard all those years. How could she not have realized it before now?

Memories flashed through her mind as early as when they’d been dating. He’d always preferred her to dress conservatively and feminine. Thinking about her ex caused Emma to pause from what she was doing for a moment. Two years had gone by since their amicable divorce. She wondered how long it would take to wipe away the memory of being with the same man for ten years. At least thinking about him and his betrayal with another woman wasn’t as painful anymore. She actually hoped he was happy finally, because she certainly hadn’t been able to make him happy.

They’d sold their restaurant business and most of their joint holdings, splitting everything right down the middle. Once the divorce was final Richard hadn’t wasted any time in marrying his little waitress, who was twelve years his senior, and leaving town. The last she heard they were living in the sunshine state.

The house was the last asset between them and Emma had been allowed to live in it until it was sold. However, that all changed once she’d signed the papers two days ago. Now there was nothing left to prove they’d even been married. She hadn’t kept so much as a single photo of just the two of them together. She gave herself a little shake, annoyed for letting Richard monopolize her thoughts again. He was history. She was looking forward to moving into her new town house down at the lake.

Reaching for an old pair of jeans hanging at the back of the closet, Emma wondered why she’d kept them. A long time had gone by since she’d had a reason to wear them, recalling she’d only purchased them to go on a weekend camping trip with Amanda and her class one year. Ten years and at least ten pounds ago… Doubts surfaced that she’d be able to get into them as she yanked them off the hanger. By the time she managed to work them over her hips and zip them up, she was gasping as if just running a mile on the treadmill.

She stepped out of the closet, facing the full-length mirror on the back of the bedroom door. Her mouth turned down at the picture she presented in skintight jeans and lacy bra. Maybe an over-sized shirt would help complete the look she was going for. A quick glance at the clock on the dresser revealed it was nine-thirty and she was running out of time. Well, who was she
hoping to impress anyway? She quickly slipped the jeans back off and took a pair of scissors to them, cutting them off at mid thigh before grabbing the ends of her shirt and tying them together at her waist. Sighing at her reflection, she slipped into a pair of sneakers, grabbed her purse and keys and headed for the door.

Amanda wasn’t going to recognize her.

****Author’s note: **KISS ME** was previously published as Cupid’s Arrow under the author’s real name with publisher Whiskey Creek Press. ****
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tory Richards often describes herself as a grandma who likes to read and write smut. Known for her smokin’ hot erotic romances, she’s also penned erotic paranormals, and contemporary suspense romance. Writing is a hobby for Tory. It thrills her to be able to share her stories, and she loves seeing her characters come to life with each new book cover. Though published with a few epubs like Ellora’s Cave and Liquid Silver Books, she also self-publishes her stories on Smashwords. All of Tory’s books are available on Amazon.

Tory began writing short stories on notebook paper when she was only ten. At thirteen she received her first manual typewriter, a few years later an electric one, and not until she was forty-five did she get her first computer. For many years writing was a secret hobby as well as therapy for Tory. She didn’t submit to a publisher until her daughter and niece encouraged her to pursue her dreams. Her first book, Cupid’s Arrow (under her real name) AKA Kiss Me (under her pen name) was on the publisher’s best sellers list for two consecutive months. First chapter is included with this book.

Originally from Maine, Tory has spent most of her life in Florida. She’s retired from Disney and spends her time between family, friends and writing. Besides writing her likes include: spoiling her grandchildren, any kind of sandwich, sweet iced tea, good coffee, traveling, going to the movies, watching Syfy, taking care of her four cats, and naps.

She loves to hear from readers so you can email her at: toryrichards60@gmail.com.

****

Author’s other books:
Up in Flames
Her Hands-On Man
Passionate Encounters
Yield to Me
Breathless Surrender
Talk Dirty to Me
Serve and Submit Series
The Evans Brothers Trilogy
The Perfect Fit
Hot Spot
The Promise
Out of Control
Happy Birthday Baby!
Touch Me
Scent of a Wolf’s Mate
The Mating Ritual
Bishop’s Angel
Wicked Desire
All the Right Moves
The Mercenary Way
Nothing but Trouble
Burning Hunger
Surrender to Desire
Instant Attraction