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# MAKING THEM HAPPY

THE MEN OF SPACE  
STATION ONE #9

MARLA MONROE

## The Men of Space Station One #9

### Making Them Happy

Beverly wants nothing more than to make Caleb and Jeff happy in their new life on planet Alpha. They are two of the sexiest men she's ever seen, which worries her that they will be disappointed with her. She isn't a model-perfect woman, but she can take care of a house and garden. Will it be enough for her handsome cowboys?

Caleb and Jeff think Beverly is the perfect woman for them. How can they make her understand that she's exactly who they want? When a foreign cell is found in her bloodstream and there are questions surrounding the babies being born on planet Alpha, what will the trio do when Beverly becomes pregnant?

The families on Alpha face dangerous creatures and poisonous plants every day. Now they are worried about how the planet is affecting their children as well. Will the strange cells in their bloodstream prove to be deadly, or will they be their salvation?

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# **MAKING THEM HAPPY**

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**MARLA MONROE**

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# Chapter One

Jeff Bledsoe watched his friend Caleb Matthews maneuver the truck-like transport up to the loading dock of the spaceship they had just disembarked from. The shuttle had brought them safely from a slowly disintegrating Earth to Alpha, a newly colonized planet offering its transplanted inhabitants a second chance. The sun's constant solar eruptions were slowly tearing Earth apart and had rendered most of the females barren from Shear's Disease. Those still found to be able to reproduce had been sequestered in bunkers beneath the ground to protect them from the sun's growing toxic energies.

Caleb nestled the transport snug against the loading dock and smiled. Jeff was thankful it was Caleb driving instead of him. He wasn't as confident with things as Caleb seemed to be. They had only met about nine months ago when they had been chosen to be a part of the colonization of planet Alpha. Jeff was chosen because of his cattle ranching experience. He was the foreman of a large ranch in Montana. He had started there as a kid and worked his way up to the foreman position through hard work, guts, and determination.

His new friend Caleb came from a similar background, except he hailed from Texas. He also had experience with breeding horses as well as cows. Caleb hadn't stuck with one ranch his entire career. Instead, he'd traveled from ranch to ranch gathering experience before building his own ranch from start to finish. At the age of thirty-three, he was one of the youngest ranch owners with the number of acres he'd managed to accumulate and work without having been born to it. Jeff admired Caleb's ambition and determination. He wondered what it had cost him to leave Earth behind.

He jumped out of the transport to help Caleb load up. They had already ordered the supplies they wanted while they waited in line earlier. He and Caleb had discussed what they wanted to begin with over the last few weeks of their six-month trip across the universe and made out a master list encompassing everything from food to fencing materials. They had used the information supplied in their education classes about the planet that had recently been updated with the experiences of the pioneers of the planet from earlier shuttles.

Though it hadn't been disclosed when they had agreed to join the next group of people going to planet Alpha, their studies revealed that there were numerous dangers on the planet they would need to plan for. Although their housing had been taken care of, they would have to build the fence to protect their wife and eventual children. It would be their first priority.

Jeff glanced over at where Caleb was checking off the supplies. Jeff was charged with arranging them in the transport buggy. They had yet to see their wife since the marriage ceremony back on Earth. That brief encounter had been less than satisfactory since she'd been covered from head to toe in a wedding dress and veil. Even lifting the veil to bestow the traditional kiss hadn't offered much of a glimpse of her before she was whisked away to prepare for the trip.

"How in the hell are we supposed to find Beverly when we get finished?" Caleb's question seemed to come out of nowhere.

"Not sure, but she's supposed to be waiting for us with our luggage. I hope she still is by the time we make it there."

"She's probably going to be a little mad at having to wait so long. I sure don't like starting out that way with her."

"Surely they told the women we would be getting supplies before we came to get them," Jeff said.

The thought of an angry wife to deal with on top of everything else didn't sit well with him. They needed to start out on a positive note if this arranged marriage was going to work. Although it had seemed to work out for all of the previous families on the planet, he still had his doubts. It would be hard enough to share her between him and Caleb as it was. They were both strong, opinionated men, and sharing a woman wasn't something that came natural to them. Add to that the fact that they had known each other less than a year and it had the makings of a mess as far as he was concerned.

Caleb checked off a roll of fencing and shrugged. "You would think so, but we've already figured out that they haven't exactly been honest with us up front on some things. Face it, there's no telling what we're likely to discover now that we're here."

"I hope she's prepared for what we have ahead of us. We don't really know anything about her."

“Yeah, I’ve worried about that. What if she isn’t able to work a garden or she doesn’t really know how to cook?”

“I guess we best be ready for anything. All we do know about her is that she can get pregnant, according to the health tests and exams we all went through. Otherwise, she wouldn’t be on this trip at all.”

Caleb finished checking off the supplies, and Jeff made sure they were secure on the transport, leaving plenty of room for their luggage in the process. It was time to go find their wife. Jeff closed the hatch and locked it down before climbing back into his seat and fastening the harness. He watched Caleb do the same before nimbly moving them away from the loading dock and other transports in line behind them.

“Let’s go get our wife.” Caleb grinned across at him and pointed the buggy in the direction of the luggage pad and hopefully their woman.

\* \* \* \*

Beverly Eggers finally had all the luggage together after tracking down one of Jeff’s trunks. She just prayed the men hadn’t come and gone already. If they were out looking for her, they would be pissed. Not that she could blame them. They were probably tired from loading supplies and ready to get to their new home. Lord knows she was.

Although she was glad to be out of the bunkers on Earth where she had spent the last four years of her life, Beverly wasn’t quite sure what to think about being chosen to populate a strange planet that no one had heard of before the sun started having heartburn and destroying Earth. Neither was she exactly pleased to be married to two men she had never heard of before her wedding and hadn’t seen since the ceremony. She had expected to be able to get to know them on board the shuttle sometime during the six-month trip it took to reach planet Alpha.

Once everyone had boarded the spaceship, they had been hurried to their quarters and shown how to strap in for takeoff. Then they were informed that they wouldn’t be seeing their spouses until they landed. They had to concentrate on learning everything they could about the new world as soon as possible. Their lives would depend on it.

She had tried all during the trip to remember what her new husbands looked like, but other than believing them to be tall and strong looking, she

drew a blank. She finally recalled that Caleb had dark-brown hair that was shaggy when they left Earth. Jeff's was a lighter shade of brown and cut short. She sure hoped they remembered her because she wasn't sure she would be able to pick them out when they showed up with the transport. Being seated on their luggage was probably the only thing that would prove her connection to them. More than likely they didn't remember her any better than she could them.

The sound of another buggy pulling up snagged her attention. She stood up and strained to see what the men who got out would look like. The first man to jump down from the transport had shaggy, light-brown hair under a black Stetson. The second figure moved around the front of the vehicle and wore a similar black Stetson as well, but his hair was much darker and he had it pulled back. Had they both let their hair grow during the trip? Beverly didn't know what to do, so she stayed where she was.

The two men headed her way in determined strides. As they grew nearer, she had to swallow at their imposing figures. She didn't remember them being so tall and built so broad. Then she had been wearing extremely high heels with her wedding dress since it was much too long for her. The dresses were reused for every set of brides that came through the process. She had decided she was lucky that it had at least closed in the back so she wouldn't be flashing bare skin to everyone.

The two men walked up to stand in front of her. They both removed their hats, and the results left her momentarily tongue-tied. They were both handsome men. The man with the longer, dark hair spoke first.

"Are you Beverly?"

She nodded, unable to say anything yet.

He stuck out his hand. "I'm Caleb Matthews. Sorry it took us so long, but we had to wait in line for a spell to load up."

Beverly shook his hand, marveling at his firm grip. He had honey-gold eyes that were mesmerizing. He stood around six foot three inches and had broad shoulders and a wide, muscular-looking chest. His square face had wide cheekbones and a chiseled chin. She could easily imagine his strong arms wrapped around her. The sound of a throat clearing next to her jerked her back to the present.

"I'm Jeff Bledsoe. Pleased to meet you, Beverly." His face was all angles and hard planes with warm, hazel eyes that held green and brown

tones. She had to look up at him as well and figured he was an inch taller than Caleb but not quite as wide as the other man. Where Caleb's body looked more muscular, Jeff's seemed more streamlined. Neither man could be labeled weak or puny.

"I—I'm Beverly Eggers. I guess we didn't really get a good look at each other back on Earth." She swallowed and jumped to pick up some of the luggage. "I have everything together here according to the list they gave me. I hope it's everything. I had to search for some of it."

Beverly knew she was babbling, but she couldn't help an attack of nerves at finally being alone with them and knowing next to nothing about either man. Not only that, but she was their wife and was expected to trust them with her well-being. Somehow the reality of the situation hadn't seemed so daunting while they'd been six months off from landing. Now that they were about to head off into the wilds of a planet they knew very little about, she wasn't as comfortable with the idea as she had been.

"We'll get the luggage. It looks like everything of mine is here. What about you, Jeff?" Caleb took her suitcase from her.

"Mine all appears to be there. Let's get loaded and get on the road. We've got a good five-hour trip according to the information we have." Jeff took the handle of one end of a trunk.

Twenty minutes later, everything loaded and secure, Jeff double-checked Beverly's harness then fastened his own. She watched as Caleb started the transport, and the hovercraft-like buggy rose off the ground and turned toward the far horizon. Despite the noise when outside of the vehicles, she found that inside it was fairly quiet. She listened as the two men talked about their destination and their confidence in the transport's GPS before they lapsed into silence.

At twenty-eight, Beverly wasn't a virgin by any means, but she hadn't had a lot of experience with men either. Being what she thought of as pleasingly plump, she hadn't had a lot of dates growing up. Then, when the knowledge of Shear's Disease became widespread, she, along with every other fertile female, had been rounded up like cattle and shipped below ground in bunkers designed to keep the sun's harmful rays from touching her.

Now, she wasn't sure how to act around two such virile and handsome men. Their sexuality oozed from them like an overstuffed pastry. She had

no hopes of making them happy, and the knowledge that they were stuck with her didn't help. She would have been more than content with two decent guys who would be happy with her like she was. Now she would have to try and change who she was to make them happy. That thought depressed her even more than leaving behind everyone she knew.

"Hey. What's wrong?" Jeff leaned over and looked at her.

She hadn't realized that she was crying until he spoke. Now on top of being depressed, she was embarrassed as well.

"Nothing. I guess I'm just missing home. I mean nothing here looks the same, really. The trees are weird colors and shapes, and the grass is blue."

"It will be okay, Beverly. Just give it a chance." Jeff smiled at her.

She smiled back and vowed not to act so weak again. They were real cowboys and used to roughing it, she was sure. She didn't think they would appreciate a whiner on top of someone who looked like she did. At least she would be good at housework and taking care of the garden. She had plenty of experience with that, having grown up with four brothers on a farm. She could cook and clean and put up vegetables better than most.

"Where are you originally from, Bev?" Caleb asked.

"A little town in Iowa. I grew up on a farm."

"Do you have any brothers or sisters?" This time Jeff asked the question.

"I have four brothers. What about you two?"

Caleb grinned. "I owned a ranch outside of Bandera, Texas. I've got two sisters and one brother."

"I'm from a ranch outside of Billings, Montana. I have one sister back home. She's married and has twin boys."

"So we're going to live on a ranch here on Alpha? Cows or horses or both? Back on the shuttle they only told me about things I would need to handle." Beverly frowned.

"That's not right. They should have told you all about your new life." Caleb looked across her head at Jeff. "We're going to be heading up a second ranch operation next to the original one. There will be about a thousand acres between us, but there's another ranch house with a family halfway between the two."

Jeff picked up the conversation, "Then there is another family moving in about a fifteen-minute walk from us on the other side. They were on the

shuttle with us. You didn't get to meet her?"

Beverly shook her head. "Not that I know of, but then there were so many women there, and all any of us really learned was about the planet and how to live off of it. One of the other women said she'd overheard that they had trouble with previous trips where people got together and, um, fraternized, so they divided the ship up so that it wouldn't happen again."

It hadn't helped that some of the women had even gotten together during the long trip. To prevent that from happening again, they had moved the women from group to group to keep them from forming any close friendships. She had wondered if they had done that with the men as well. She didn't know her husbands well enough yet to ask something so sexual.

"We met Sloan Hucklebee and Nelson Jones while we were training who will be the ones moving in next to us. They actually encouraged us to spend time together since we're going to all be working together. I think their wife's name is Faye, but I'm not for sure." Caleb scratched his head.

"I'm pretty sure that was it. I liked them. They seem to be hardworking men." Jeff pointed out the window. "Look at that. What does that look like to you?"

Beverly followed his gaze to where he was pointing out the window toward their left. A massive-looking thing that looked a little like a cross between an aardvark and a praying mantis seemed to be watching them from a distance. She couldn't make out any specific details other than it looked scary as crap.

"I think it's one of those things we're building the fence against. It's in that pamphlet on dangerous predators." Caleb had slowed down while they were looking, but sped up again. "Is it following us?"

"Doesn't look like it, but it's sort of hard to tell from this distance. We need the binoculars up front where we can see better." Jeff continued to look out the window.

"Do you want me to climb over in back and look for them?" Beverly started to unbuckle her harness.

"No!" Caleb stuck out a hand to stop her. "That thing is big enough that if it decides to ram us with you in the back, you could get hurt with all those supplies back there."

"I wish I had kept my carry bag up front with me. I had some of those pamphlets they were handing out at the station in it. I bet it would be in one

of those.” Beverly shivered at the thought of the thing coming after them.

“I don’t even see it anymore, so it’s doubtful that it’s following us.” Jeff turned back from the window and smiled at her.

She was thankful that he made the effort, but she could still see worry in the stiffness of his shoulders and the way his jaw was clenched. Caleb’s shout of *no* had shaken her as well. She wasn’t used to being yelled at, no matter how important it might have seemed. Even her brothers hadn’t yelled at her. She hoped this wasn’t how their relationship was going to go in the future.

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## Chapter Two

Caleb felt like a bastard for yelling at Beverly earlier. He hadn't meant for it to come out so loud, but all he could think was that if she got back there and something happened, the supplies could have crushed her. He would never have been able to live with that. Now she was as white as a sheet and looking straight ahead. He noticed that she was worrying the material of her jeans with her fingers. No doubt he'd scared her to death. He glanced over at Jeff, but the man was intent on watching the windows for any signs of other predators.

He sighed and concentrated on driving the transport. They still had another hour and thirty minutes before they made it to their new home. He needed to be alert in case something else happened. They were vulnerable out in the middle of nowhere and so far from town. The buggy was outfitted with a radio, so they could contact the town if anything happened, but it would be several hours before anyone would be able to get to them.

He stole quick glances her way, enjoying the fact that she had a heavenly body. Covered as she had been in her wedding dress back on Earth, they hadn't been able to tell much about her. Now he could easily see curves that had his dick hard and his balls aching. She couldn't be much over five foot four inches with honey-gold hair that softly curled down her back. He could easily imagine holding on tight to that glorious mane as he sank his cock deep in her hot cunt.

He noticed Jeff checking her out as well. No doubt his partner was just as enamored with her as he was. Both of them had similar tastes in women he had discovered. They liked rounded over thin, which amazed him since a lot of his buddies back on Earth went after the anorexic bottle blondes. Beverly's pine-green eyes seemed hesitant when they'd approached her, but he was sure they would relax once she got to know them. Or at least he hoped that would be the case.

The silence in the transport stretched, feeling almost oppressive in the wake of their earlier conversation. He didn't think Jeff noticed since he was watching all around them. He just hoped that Beverly would get past the incident by the time they arrived at their destination. Deep down he knew he needed to apologize, but he also needed to be sure she would take him

seriously in the future. Caleb vowed he would figure out a way to make it up to her later. Neither he nor Jeff would ever abuse a woman either physically or emotionally.

Finally, the GPS signaled that they were within a few miles of their new home. As soon as he saw a shape that looked like a house, he pointed it out to the others.

“Look, I think that might be our house.”

“Hard to tell anything about it from this distance,” Jeff said.

Beverly didn’t say anything. He glanced toward her and sighed. She was awake at least. Then, as they drew nearer, the shape became much easier to see. It was indeed a house along with several other outbuildings around it. Now he noticed that his quiet wife leaned forward as if to get a better view.

“What do you think of the area around the house so far, Bev?” he asked.

“It’s hard to tell much. The trees are colorful, and the blue grass sort of blends with them.”

Jeff laughed. “Leave it to a woman to think about color coordination.”

She frowned and turned toward the other man. “I’m not sure what else to say about it. I don’t know if it’s safe out there or not. For all I know, everything out there is dangerous.”

Jeff cocked his head. “I guess that’s true. We’ll have to really look at those pamphlets we all have and make note of anything that we aren’t sure about.”

“Well, looks like we’re here. Let’s check out the house. Then we need to unload this stuff before it gets dark.” Caleb turned off the transport, and it settled down to the ground.

He unfastened his harness as he watched Beverly fumble with hers. He waited until she had hers off before he climbed down. He would leave Beverly to Jeff for right now. He pulled out the gun stowed behind the seat and noted that Jeff did the same before he helped their wife out of the transport.

“Stay between us, Bev, until we check out the house. I don’t want to take a chance that something dangerous might be inside.” Caleb didn’t look at her. He assumed she would follow his directions as he walked toward the front porch.

Caleb unlocked the door with the key they'd been given and pushed it open. He stepped inside, leading with his gun. Nothing jumped out at them, and he couldn't tell that there was anything inside the house. Without waiting to see if his wife and partner were following him, he walked deeper into the house and began searching each room.

Twice he turned around to nearly run over Beverly as she followed close behind him. Jeff then took the lead as they moved to the next room until the entire house had been searched and pronounced free of dangerous creatures.

"Jeff and I are going to unload the transport. Stay inside where I know you'll be safe." He followed Jeff back outside leaving their wife alone in the house.

He was sure she was much safer in there than she would be outside helping them. Besides, she was a woman. She didn't need to be unloading supplies. Beverly already had a huge task ahead of her in taking care of them, the house, and the garden. Thank goodness there were two of them to help her when she needed it. Even though he knew that women had survived back during pioneer days in the Wild West, Caleb wasn't exactly thrilled to think that their wife was going to have to learn to live in similar conditions. At least they had electricity generated by solar energy. That was something anyway.

"She's a quiet thing." Jeff shifted the luggage closer to the door of the transport so they could reach it easier.

"Yeah. I hope she's prepared for life here. Even though the house is really nice and we have electricity, it isn't going to be a walk in the park. The transport was two weeks late getting here with all the delays on Earth. We still have to get a garden in the ground as well as that fence put up, and we don't have a lot of time to get it all done."

"We'll manage."

Caleb carried one side of the trunk while Jeff had the other side. They carried it upstairs into the master bedroom then turned around and unloaded the rest of the luggage. When they started out after the last of the trunks and suitcases had been left upstairs, Beverly met them at the door.

"Um, how long before you'll be ready for dinner?" She looked everywhere but at them.

“I figure it will take about an hour to unload the supplies and then we’ll probably want a shower before we eat. Hour and a half should do it.” Caleb resisted the urge to hold her by the chin until she looked into his eyes.

“Okay. I’ll have something ready by then. Do you, um, want me to unpack for you or should I leave your things alone?”

Jeff exchanged glances with him. “Go ahead and unpack for me if you don’t mind, honey.”

“Same for me. Just put things where you think they need to go. We’ll learn where everything is.”

She smiled and quickly glanced at them before turning to walk away. Caleb wasn’t sure what made him do it, but he grabbed her wrist and tugged her back against him. She made a small squealing sound but quickly covered it as she landed with her back against his chest. Her ass nestled nicely a little below the juncture of his thighs. Warmth from her body seeped into his skin. Without thinking about it, he leaned in and rubbed his cheek against hers before kissing her there.

“Everything’s going to be fine, Bev. If you need us, just yell out the door. We’ll be unloading the supplies.” He released her and followed Jeff outside to take care of business.

\* \* \* \*

Beverly brushed her fingers across her cheek where Caleb had kissed her. What had brought that on? One minute they were prowling around the house checking for intruders and the next he had her in his arms kissing her cheek. She wasn’t sure what to think.

Shaking her head to clear it, she hurried up the stairs to unpack. She had a lot to get done before they finished unloading. Arranging their things in the drawers and closet gave her a little insight into their individual personalities. Jeff seemed more laid-back and reserved with his choice of clothing. He proved to be a boxers man who chose conservative colors in his shirts.

Caleb, on the other hand, wore briefs and seemed to like brighter colors in his shirts. He was also the more outgoing of the two, and when she found his black leather bag in one of the trunks, she nearly passed out. It held an assortment of toys she wasn’t exactly thrilled with. The man was into kink,

and she was married to him. Beverly shivered at the thought of being tied up while he had his way with her.

*Oh, God. How will I ever please them when I'm nothing like what they are used to?*

Part of her cringed at the thought of being totally at his mercy, but another part of her was getting wet. She squeezed her legs together in an effort to stop the trickle of arousal that moistened her pussy lips.

She quickly closed the bag and hid it in the back of the closet they were sharing. With everything unpacked, she shut her thoughts down on what she had gotten herself into and returned to the kitchen. While she'd been upstairs, they had unloaded all of the supplies for the house. It took her a good twenty minutes to sort out the staples and arrange them in the already stocked pantry and fridge.

It took her a few minutes to decide on what to fix for dinner, but by the time they had returned for their showers, she had a decent meal started. When the sound of their boots descending the stairs reached her ears, Beverly rushed to finish transferring the food to the table.

"Something smells mighty good." Caleb walked into the kitchen freshly showered wearing jeans without a shirt.

Her brothers had never eaten at the table without a shirt before. She wasn't sure what to think. Then Jeff walked in behind him dressed the same way. He smiled at her before taking his seat at the table across from Caleb.

Beverly joined them and watched as they began passing the food around, piling their plates high. She was glad she knew enough about hungry men to have cooked plenty. Her brothers had been able to put away some food.

"Did you get everything put away?" Caleb asked.

"Y-yes. I think so. Someone had already stocked the kitchen fairly well."

"Looks like you managed to unpack all our things, too." Caleb's eyes watched her.

"Um, yes. I think I put everything where you can find it." Beverly could tell he was alluding to his black bag of toys.

She refused to bring it up. It was just too embarrassing to mention. She didn't know them well enough to talk about sex so openly. Oh, who was she kidding? She doubted she would ever be comfortable talking about sex with

them. She was so not the woman for them. The damn computer program they used to match them up was flawed. No way would they be happy with her.

“Food’s great, Beverly.” Jeff spoke up as if he could tell she was uncomfortable.

“Thanks. I wasn’t sure what you liked. You’re going to have to tell me what your favorites are and what you don’t like.”

“I’m sure anything you fix will be good.” Jeff’s warm smile eased her discomfort some.

She smiled back at him, feeling her face heat at the compliment. Knowing that she needed to lose some weight if she was going to be attractive to them, she had limited how much she had put on her plate. She was glad neither man noticed that she hadn’t eaten as much as they had. Of course, being a woman and not working as hard as they did, she shouldn’t eat that much anyway.

“That was amazing.” Caleb wiped his mouth with a napkin and stood up.

“I’m stuffed.” Jeff stood as well.

When both men gathered their plates and headed for the sink, Beverly jumped to her feet and attempted to grab their plates.

“Here, I’ve got them.”

“We can take our plates to the sink.” Caleb frowned at her.

Beverly didn’t know what to think. Her father and her brothers had never done that before. They left the housework entirely up to her and her mother when she was alive. She busied herself with clearing the table to cover her discomfort. They were going to take some getting used to.

Once they had disappeared into the living room, Beverly released a sigh of relief. Together the two men were nearly overwhelming. Part of her wanted to tear off their clothes and rub herself all over them while the other half cringed at the thought of them seeing her without clothes. Maybe she could talk them into keeping the lights off. She held no illusions that her body would be anything like the women they were used to.

Besides having muscular thighs and arms from working on the farm back home, she had a rounded belly and wide ass. No amount of exercise seemed to change that. She would have to watch what she ate to lose some of the extra padding.

After dealing with the dishes and wiping down the kitchen, Beverly didn't have any further reason to avoid the living room now. She stepped into the other room and headed toward the couch. The men were each settled in one of the lounge chairs, relaxed and talking. When she started to sit down, Caleb's rich voice stopped her.

"Come over here a minute, Bev."

She froze and looked toward him. Nothing about his expression hinted at what he wanted. She licked her lips and walked over to him, stopping just shy of his reach. He frowned at her.

"Are you scared of me?" he asked.

"N-no. What did you want?" She didn't move any closer.

"I want to get to know you, honey. Come here."

Beverly drew in a deep breath and inched forward a step. His frown grew deeper. She took another step, which placed her within touching distance. He reached out and tugged on her hand. The tiny zap of a spark shot up her arm and straight to her pussy. If he felt it, he didn't let on. She nearly fell onto his lap, catching herself with a hand to his chest. Heat spread through her hand and up her arm. Caleb's chest boasted hot, hard muscles that bunched under her hand.

The tingle in her belly surprised her. She couldn't ever remember feeling anything like that before. A flame seemed to grow in her womb, making her pussy wet in the process. Beverly had no idea what was happening to her. One look into Caleb's eyes let her know that he was well aware of her situation and planned to take advantage of it.

"Please."

He smiled a slow, sexy smile. "Don't worry, honey. I plan to take real good care of you."

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## Chapter Three

The tension in Beverly's body had every protective instinct in him on fire. Her eyes were wide with worry, and she had a death grip on her lower lip with her teeth. Much more and she would draw blood. Caleb soothed his hand up and down her arm in hopes it would help relax her some. He wasn't used to handling nervous women, but he figured they couldn't be much different than a frightened filly. They both needed a firm, calm hand.

"Easy, Bev. Why don't you sit with me while Jeff and I talk about putting the fence up?"

"Okay." She carefully pulled her hand away from him and started to perch on the arm of the chair.

Without giving her a chance to regain her balance, Caleb pulled her fully onto his lap with one arm around her waist. He turned to Jeff to continue their conversation.

"We definitely need to include enough land for the garden and a play area for kids. No sense having to enlarge it later. We should have enough fencing materials."

Jeff nodded, his eyes on Beverly. "I agree. I'm sure once we start work there won't be a lot of spare time to do more than keep up with normal chores around the house."

"We'll set the poles first so the concrete can cure while we get the garden ready." Caleb looked at Beverly. "I'm assuming you already know how you want to row up the garden, or did you need some help?"

"I have it all planned out. I wasn't sure how much land we would have available for it, so I have a couple of different sketches to choose from. I didn't get to look outside to see where it would go." She seemed a little more relaxed now that they were talking about the garden.

Caleb couldn't help but feel relieved that she had lived on a farm. It meant she was used to hard work and handling gardens. They had been very lucky to have landed a woman who not only was experienced with those things, but who was so pretty as well. His swollen cock was testament to just how attractive her voluptuous curves were. Glancing over at his partner, he noticed how Jeff had to adjust himself as he stared at her.

“You can show us when we get ready to mark it out. We’ll start on the fence posts first.”

Beverly’s eyes seemed to droop as she slowly began to lean back against his chest. He grinned when she jerked forward to sit up again.

“Relax, honey. You can lean against me,” Caleb assured her.

“Oh, I better go take a shower before I fall asleep. I guess all the excitement was a little more than I thought.” She wiggled off his lap, drawing a moan from him as she rubbed against his rock-hard cock.

Her face turned a cute shade of pink when she seemed to realize what she’d done. Caleb wanted to kiss away her embarrassment, but he knew it was too soon to push her. As much as he wanted to claim his wife, getting to know her first would probably be a better idea. He and Jeff had discussed it while they had unloaded the fencing material.

“Um, I’m going to go on upstairs.” She took a step backward. “I guess I’ll see you later.” Then she turned and walked toward the stairs fast enough to win a race.

As soon as her footsteps disappeared, Caleb turned to Jeff and chuckled. “She’s as nervous as a cow in a pen full of bulls.”

“I guess this is pretty overwhelming for her. I mean she’s left her friends and family and landed on an unknown planet with two men who she knows nothing about. We’re going to have to be patient with her.” Jeff’s eyes were still looking toward the stairs.

“Yeah. It’s going to be a long night as hard as I am for her. I’ve never been around a woman as nervous as she is. I don’t understand what it is about us that has her so jumpy.”

“You never know what’s on a woman’s mind at any given time. We’ll just have to wait her out until she’s comfortable enough around us to tell us.”

Caleb nodded. Jeff was right. Women were nearly impossible to second-guess. The thing was, he was more used to turning them away than pursuing them. He’d never had trouble attracting a woman’s interest. The thought hit him that maybe she wasn’t attracted to them like they were to her. How in the hell would they be able to get past that?

“What if she’s not interested in us as men?” Caleb asked.

“Fuck! Hadn’t thought of that. I guess I just figured that since we were matched with her that she would be. I guess the only thing we can do is

treat her good and make her as happy as possible. Not much else we can do, Caleb.” Jeff’s voice had flattened some.

He figured the thought of their wife not being attracted to them was depressing to Jeff like it was to him. He sighed and ground his teeth. He would do everything in his power to change her mind. That was for damn sure. The idea that he wasn’t making his woman happy burned in his gut. Never mind that they’d only known each other a matter of hours, not days or months.

“Think she’s had time to finish her shower?” he asked Jeff.

“Probably. You ready to head up?”

“Yeah. We’ve got to get an early start in the morning. No use sitting here stewing about it.”

His new friend stood up and stretched. “I’ll grab my shower in the spare bathroom.”

Caleb followed the other man upstairs and eased into the bedroom as Jeff continued down the hall. He expected the lights to be off, but one of the lamps on the bedside table was still on. Beverly was in the middle of the bed with her back turned away from the door. Unsure if she was still awake or not, he was careful not to make any noise as he headed toward the bathroom. It looked like he would be taking care of business in the shower tonight. Slipping beneath the covers with a hard-on didn’t appeal to him when his wife wasn’t ready to help him with it yet.

\* \* \* \*

Jeff adjusted the water as he stepped into the shower. The hot water eased some of the tension he’d carried around with him all day. Muscles tight from worry eased as the water cascaded down his body. Worry over everything from keeping them safe to how to please his new wife had built inside of him all day long. Now that they were finally in their house and at the beginning of their new life, he wasn’t so sure he’d made the right decision in coming there.

Caleb was so much more at home in his own skin than he was. The other man didn’t seem to harbor the fears that plagued him about their present circumstances. God knew he had never lacked confidence before in

his life, but right now, standing next to the other man in this strange world, Jeff wasn't sure he was up to the task he'd set himself to.

The throb in his balls reminded him that just a few doors down he had a new wife to take care of. She would need them to be strong and supportive while she navigated their situation. Not only was she charged with taking care of the house and garden, she was supposed to take care of them as well. Any woman would find that a daunting challenge, especially someone who seemed a little shy and reserved like their Beverly. He wanted to help her ease into their ménage lifestyle but knew prolonging things would only build her tension.

He couldn't stop his head from recalling how tempting her body was. Her breasts would be slightly more than a handful he couldn't wait to explore. He wanted to taste her nipples and find out if they were a pretty pink or dusky mauve. He ached to sink his fingers in her hair and tug on it as he tunneled his cock in and out of her sweet pussy or that tight ass. The need to grab her ass cheeks and spread them wide had his dick standing straight out from his body.

Without thinking, he grasped his cock at the base and squeezed. The thought of how hot and tight she would be soon had his hand running up and down the shaft in slow, tight tugs. As hard and turned on as he was, Jeff figured taking the edge off now might not be a bad idea. He didn't want to scare her by climbing into bed sporting a raging hard-on. Nor did he want to shoot his load as soon as he got his dick inside of her.

Hot water poured down his body as he fisted his throbbing cock and pumped up and down it. It didn't take much for him to imagine Beverly's tiny hands wrapped around his shaft, moving up and down it before she licked her lips and opened her mouth. He would guide his swollen cock past her luscious lips while she held on to the base.

"Fuck." The word slipped past his lips as he imagined her hot, wet mouth closing around him.

He could almost see her eyes as they gazed up at him as he slowly pumped his cock in and out of her mouth. Those amazing green eyes would be wide with amazement as he urged her to take more and more of his shaft. He would thrust his hands into her hair and hold her head while he took her mouth as his own. He'd coach her on how to take him down her throat. The thought nearly brought him to completion right then. Instead, he drew in a

shaky breath and slowed his hand down some. With the image of her on her knees in front of him clear in his mind, Jeff moaned and tugged on his balls with one hand. He could feel his cum boiling in them, fighting to shoot up his shaft. He fought it, but he was too close. Cum erupted in thick ribbons, making his ass cheeks clench with the force of his orgasm sending him up on tiptoes.

Jeff leaned against the back of the shower while he regained his strength. Then he rinsed off and finished his shower before shutting off the water and climbing out to dry off. His legs still felt a little weak, but he felt in better control of himself now. He wouldn't hurt Beverly for anything.

When he walked into the enormous master bedroom, it was to find Beverly already in bed, staring up at Caleb with an uncomfortable expression on her face. Caleb stood in all his naked glory on one side of the bed staring down at her, confusion clouding his face.

"What's going on?" Jeff asked.

Caleb looked over at him and shrugged. "I'm not sure. I started to get into bed, and she stopped me."

"You're naked!" Beverly's voice held a hint of panic.

"Um, we sleep that way, Beverly. I take it you don't." He could see the top of her pajamas peeking out from beneath the covers she held close to her neck.

"I-I guess I just assumed you would wear pajamas, too." She slowly lowered the covers until they rested in her lap.

Caleb sighed and shook his head. Things were obviously not going the way he had planned. Jeff needed to figure out a way to ease them all into the inevitable. Caleb was proving to be a little too aggressive for their sweet Beverly. Maybe he did bring something to the relationship after all. He walked closer to the bed.

"Beverly, nothing has to happen tonight, but we're married. I don't want you to be uncomfortable around us though."

"I'm sorry. I guess it just startled me to look up and see Caleb totally naked like that. I wasn't expecting it." Her expression smoothed out.

"It never dawned on me that you would be shocked to see me without clothes. I'm sorry if I scared you, Bev." Caleb took another step toward the bed.

She nodded and threw back the covers on his side of the bed. Jeff watched his partner climb on the bed and pull the cover back up. With Caleb settled, he walked over and climbed beneath the covers as well. He could sense their wife's tense body between them. They needed to do something to help her relax without making it worse. He looked over at Caleb and jerked his head to the side before turning over to face away from them.

"Bev, why don't you roll over on your side and scoot up closer to Jeff's back. You'll be more comfortable like that."

Jeff could feel the bed shift behind him as he assumed she followed Caleb's directions. After a few seconds, she stiffened behind him and drew in a sharp breath. No doubt Caleb had scooted up behind her and wrapped his arms around her. It was what he would have done if he'd been on that side.

"Just relax, Bev. We won't attack you. We all need a good night's sleep before getting to work in the morning. Go to sleep, honey," Caleb said.

"I—I'm sorry. I don't know why I'm so nervous. I don't want you to think I'm a prude or something. I'm not."

"Don't worry about it, baby. Like Caleb said, we all need some sleep. We'll take it one step at a time." Jeff felt her hand ease across his waist to settle lightly against his stomach.

Jeff lay there awake for nearly an hour thinking about what all they had to get accomplished in the next few days. They were supposed to meet with the other ranchers Danny McGuillis and Andrew Rousseaux in six days. They would get the lay of the land and help divide up the herd that had grown too large for them to handle with just their few ranch hands. With any luck, they would be able to enlarge their herd successfully as well. They would be working closely with Sloan and Nelson to make that happen.

He had liked the other two men almost immediately. They had known each other back on Earth and didn't find the idea of sharing a wife all that strange. He and Caleb had asked them countless questions on the subject of sharing a woman, taking advantage of their knowledge. He had a feeling they would be asking more in the near future.

Beverly's soft breath whispered across his shoulder. It soothed him knowing she was there beside him. He didn't know much about her at all, but already he felt a certain amount of protectiveness toward her. She was

extremely important to them. Without her, they would have no one to take care of the house, cook their meals, or see to the garden. There would be no one to carry the next generation. Most importantly, though, there would be no chance of having a home complete with love and affection. That was something he longed for more than just about anything.

Jeff had grown up in small family with parents who had doted on each other. His sister's twins were precious, and he hoped to someday fill their house with the sounds of children's voices. He'd worked hard to get to where he had been before Earth had started to become a wasteland. It had been his dream to settle down once he'd achieved his dreams and find a woman to love and build a home with. When things had started falling apart, he had thought he'd lost his chance at that dream. Now it was there within reach once again. All he had to do was have patience and work with his new partner to win the trust and affection of their wife.

Relaxing deeper into the comfortable bed, Jeff yawned and allowed sleep to claim him with the thought of a little girl with Beverly's bright-green eyes to lead him into a comforting dream. The image comforted him despite worries about strange, dangerous creatures they knew nothing about.

## Chapter Four

Beverly opened her eyes to find the room still cloaked in darkness. She looked toward one of the windows to see that dawn was just beginning to lighten the edges of the curtains. She allowed her eyes to adjust and was pleased to see that the men were still sleeping on either side of her. She needed to get up and start breakfast. They would be up soon to start putting up the fence.

She crawled over the covers toward the end of the bed and slipped onto the floor. Searching for clothes in the dark had her making a mental note to lay out her clothes the night before from now on. Without making a sound, she tiptoed into the bathroom and closed the door before turning on the light to clean up and dress. The bathroom still gave her a shock. She had never had both a shower and a huge tub before. She had shared a bathroom that only had a shower with her brothers back home. Needless to say she had enjoyed a long soak in the tub the night before. It was a luxury she wouldn't soon get used to.

Once she was dressed, Beverly turned off the light and opened the bathroom door to get a start on breakfast.

"You're up early." Caleb's voice startled her.

"Yikes! You scared me." She barely remembered to keep her voice down in case Jeff was still asleep.

Caleb chuckled. "Sorry. I thought you saw me sitting up. I was just waiting on you to get finished before I got up."

"I'll have breakfast ready soon. The bathroom's all yours." She ducked her head and hurried through the bedroom door.

The sound of Caleb's rough laugh followed her down the hall to the stairs. Even though he was more aggressive than Jeff, Beverly didn't feel like he would hurt her. In fact, he reminded her of her older brother. They both had way too much self-assurance as far as she was concerned. It made them cocky and arrogant. She and Seth had bumped heads more than once because of his attitude. She could see that happening between her and Caleb once they knew each other better.

After setting up the coffee, she started bacon and pulled out the egg substitute and cheese to make scrambled cheese eggs. Then she prepared

the toast, making sure she made enough of everything to fill two large, active men. By the time they both wandered downstairs, she just about had it ready to eat. They both grabbed mugs of coffee before sitting down at the table.

“Smells delicious, Bev.” Caleb sipped from his cup.

“Just eggs, bacon, and toast today, guys. I’ll make omelets tomorrow after I’ve had time to go through the staples and what’s in the freezer.” She set bowls of food on the table before taking her seat at the end of the table.

The men filled their plates, passing the bowls to her as they finished with each. Beverly smiled with relief when they both nodded their approval of the meal. She hadn’t known if they would like the way she cooked or not. Some people were picky when it came to food. If they were, she wouldn’t be able to keep them satisfied. She wasn’t a fancy cook, having been raised to make standard country meals. Evidently the men were well versed in standard ranch fare.

“We’re planning on mapping out where we want to put the fence and then set the poles today. When we finish eating, you need to come outside with us to be sure we take in enough room for the size garden you have figured on planting.” Jeff turned up his cup and emptied the contents down his throat.

Beverly jumped up and grabbed the pot to refill his coffee cup. She warmed hers up and refilled Caleb’s as well. Both men watched her as she returned to her seat.

“What?” She looked from one to the other.

“You don’t have to wait on us hand and foot, Bev. We can get our own coffee.” Caleb looked a little upset.

“I don’t mind. It’s my job to be sure you have what you need.”

Jeff cleared his throat. “Baby, you’re going to be working just as hard as we do taking care of the garden and the house. We don’t expect you to treat us any different than you would have if we’d been back on Earth.”

Beverly nodded and continued eating. She had to make herself remain seated when the two men stood up and gathered their dishes. They rinsed them in the sink and stacked them on the counter before filing by her chair and dropping a quick kiss on her cheek.

“I set a radio on the counter by the stove. We each have one, so if you need us for anything, just push the button on the side and talk into it. Be

sure to let go after you finish speaking so you can hear us answer.” Caleb squeezed her shoulder before turning and walking toward the door where Jeff was standing.

As soon as the door closed behind them, Beverly jumped up from the table and hurried over to watch them from the window over the sink. She enjoyed watching them move. They were both good-looking men with amazing bodies. She still couldn't believe that they were her husbands. Not only were they handsome and nice, but it appeared like they weren't going to treat her like their maid either. Having been that already for her father and brothers, Beverly couldn't help but find it amazing that they were going to be different.

As soon as she had finished the dishes, she straightened the bedroom before returning to the kitchen to take stock of their supplies. Even though she was used to cooking for hungry men, it was going to be different because of the differences in some of the food stuff she had available to use. Until they got some chickens from the other ranchers, they had to make do with egg substitute. The only fresh produce she had to cook with were root vegetables that had come from the other's gardens. Then there were the new vegetables that were native to Alpha alone.

“Might as well get started on lunch.”

The bread that had been left for them wouldn't last much longer. She needed to make some so it could rise before she baked it. She hesitated using some of the new flour that was being produced on the planet. She wanted to use up the supply they had brought from Earth with them first.

When she glanced through the window thirty minutes later she could see Jeff and Caleb digging holes for the fence posts. They were far enough back that she couldn't really tell who was who except by the color of their shirts. The odd vegetation surrounding the house amazed her. Blue grass and red and yellow trees just seemed bizarre. No doubt it would become more familiar over time. Their children wouldn't know anything else.

At the thought of children, Beverly found herself blushing. She was sure the men wouldn't want to wait another night to consummate their marriage. She'd been surprised when they hadn't tried the night before. Of course she'd freaked out when Caleb had shown up nude to get in the bed with her. It hadn't even occurred to her that they would sleep in the buff. Her brothers didn't. They all wore pajama bottoms if nothing else.

*I might not be a virgin, but I'm sure they think I'm naive now. Way to go, Beverly.*

With a huff, she pushed away from the window and checked the time. It was time to make the sandwiches. She'd decided on peanut butter. Since she didn't know what kind of jelly they liked or if they even wanted it on their sandwiches, she hadn't mixed it up that way. If they wanted some when they sat down, she had several different jars on the table for them to choose from.

When they hadn't returned by noon, Beverly picked up the radio and called for them.

"Hey, Bev. What's up?" Jeff's voice was clear over the radio.

"It's noon. I have lunch ready on the table. Time to take a break." She smiled.

That hadn't been so bad. She felt as if she were back at home with her father and brothers now. She could handle this.

"Time got away from us. We'll be right in."

She poured tea over ice and waited for them to return. It didn't take them long to file into the kitchen and disappear in the laundry room to wash their hands before pulling out their chairs at the table.

"I didn't know if you liked jelly on your peanut butter sandwiches or not, so I didn't add it. You can add your own if you want to. Next time I'll know what you like." She waited for them to start.

Caleb took a couple of sandwiches off the plate before passing it toward Jeff. He grabbed his and handed it to her. She took hers then reached for the grape jelly at the same time Caleb did.

"Sorry." She snatched her hand back.

"Go ahead. You first, honey." Caleb pushed the jar toward her.

She felt her face burn as she opened the jar and dipped out a spoonful. When would she ever get past feeling so out of sorts around them? They were her husbands for goodness sakes. She shouldn't be so shy. If they noticed her discomfort, neither man acknowledged it.

"Do you like strawberry or peach?" she asked.

"I do. What about you, Jeff?"

"I like all of it. Well, I don't know about the stone berries. They mentioned them on the shuttle, but we didn't taste any to know what they taste like." Jeff pointed to the jar of homemade jelly from the native berries.

“We had them while we were on our way here. We did a lot of cooking in our classes. They’re pretty good, but you have to use a little more sugar to sweeten them than you would any other fruit.” She knew her face was red once again. It annoyed her to no end that she blushed so easily.

“So they grow wild here, huh?” Caleb had finished his first sandwich and was adding strawberry jelly to his second one.

“Yes. I plan to look for some around here in the fall. I’ll want to put up as many jars as I can for the winter.”

The men looked at each other but didn’t say anything. Beverly couldn’t help but wonder what that was about. Before she could ask, Jeff spoke up.

“We’re moving fairly quickly with setting the poles. The ground isn’t rock hard, so digging is pretty easy.”

“That’s good. I know you’re worried about getting everything done before you start work.” Beverly hoped they would get the garden started soon.

She needed to get seeds in the ground as soon as possible. She didn’t know what to expect for a growing season. Based on what they had been taught on the shuttle, they were several weeks late getting set up. They couldn’t afford the garden not producing a good crop. They would be dependent on it for the winter.

“Thanks for lunch, Bev. We better get back out there. I want to start work on the garden by tomorrow afternoon if we can.” Caleb stood up and carried his plate to the sink.

“I think it’s going to be more like the day after, Caleb. I can’t see us getting all the poles set much before tomorrow afternoon.”

Beverly listened to them argue good-naturedly as they walked out the back door. Caleb seemed to be the more gung ho of the two of them with Jeff being more reserved. Between the two of them, they would get everything done that needed to be done. She needed to get back to work. It would be time to put the bread in the oven soon, and she wanted to have the kitchen cleaned up and dinner started by then.

Deep down inside of her, thoughts of the coming night plagued her. She couldn’t help but be nervous regardless that she wasn’t as naïve as they obviously thought her. She’d had a couple of lovers in her short life. Neither of which had really stirred her blood, but then romance books always made it sound much better than it actually was. Still, she’d never been with two

men at one time, nor had she really experimented during sex. For some reason, she felt like Caleb, if not Jeff, would be more sexually experienced than the men she'd been with. Although she wasn't really scared, she was a little bit apprehensive. Since divorce wasn't an option for them on planet Alpha, Beverly wanted them to be satisfied with her. Could two men who absolutely screamed sex appeal be content with someone like her?

\* \* \* \*

Caleb jabbed the posthole digger into the ground with all of his strength. He was bound and determined to get as many holes dug as possible. He and Jeff were taking turns digging holes while the other set the poles in the concrete like mix. It kept them from wearing themselves out too quickly. Although the ground wasn't nearly as hard as he'd worried it would be, it still wasn't a walk in the park to dig in it.

After drawing out the dirt and dropping it to the side, he checked on Jeff's progress. His partner had the concrete in the hole and was using the level to assure it was straight up and down before it set in place. The other man had just as much experience in ranching as he did, but he seemed to stay back and let Caleb take the lead. He wasn't sure why, and it bothered him. He hadn't found anything to make him think the other man had somehow lied about his background, yet something about him was off. He didn't like feeling that way when he needed to be able to count on him to have his back and help keep Beverly safe.

He guessed he didn't have much of a choice except to trust him. Until he did something that proved otherwise, Caleb would continue to depend on him keeping his side going. Up until the final days of their trip across space, Caleb hadn't doubted his buddy at all. Then, as soon as the shuttle had started slowing down and then gone into orbit around the planet, Jeff's demeanor had changed slightly. It wasn't anything that he could put his finger on or a specific thing that seemed to have triggered the change, but it was there, subtle as it was.

He shoved the posthole digger deep into the hole once more to remove the loose dirt. It was almost like Jeff was taking a backseat in everything. Why would he do that? Hell, Jeff was even a year older than he was.

"Ready to switch up over there?"

Caleb's head jerked up at the sound of Jeff's voice. "Naw, I'm fine. I'll do one more hole then we can change. How are the poles holding?"

"Setting about right I think. It's fairly warm out here today. I've checked back on the others, and they're all holding their level."

Nodding, Caleb checked the depth of the hole he was working on. One more scoop of dirt should do it. He could feel Jeff's eyes on him as he pulled out another load of dirt. The silence between them seemed easy enough, but he was used to talking while he worked. Obviously Jeff wasn't.

"How should we handle Beverly tonight?" he finally asked as he moved to the next spot.

"What do you mean?" Jeff started preparing the concrete mix they were using.

"Well, she's a mite skittish. I don't want to make her uncomfortable, but we need to instigate sex or it's going to get mighty uncomfortable here."

"It would probably be a good idea to ease her into it by starting out in the living room before we head up to bed."

"You mean sort of fool around some?" Caleb thought that was a pretty good idea.

"Yeah, pet on her and kiss her some, that sort of thing."

Caleb glanced over to where Jeff was slowly pouring the mixture into the hole. He paused and looked up at him. "She deserves some attention before we jump on her."

"Oh, I agree with you." Caleb smiled then went back to digging. "I get the feeling she's not used to attention."

"I don't think she expects much out of us where sex is concerned. I'd wager that the men she's been with didn't spend much time making sure she enjoyed it," Jeff said.

He nodded, agreeing with Jeff. "I think you're right. I for one intend to make sure she enjoys herself. I like sex—a lot. Making sure that she's satisfied will go a long way toward opening the door for more sex. I'm all for more."

Jeff looked up at him and grinned. It wasn't often the other man smiled so openly. "Oh, I enjoy sinking into a warm, wet pussy just as much as you do. I think that if we play our cards right, she'll be just as eager to play anytime we want to."

Caleb nodded and returned to digging. Relief poured over him. He had wondered, despite their frank talks back on the shuttle, if Jeff would think his rather abundant sexual appetite was over the top or not. They had discussed sex a lot after they had gotten to know each other better. Much to his surprise, Jeff had shared women in the past and was comfortable doing it. He admitted that it would take some adjusting to get used to sharing the woman they were married to since he'd always thought he would have a wife all to himself.

He had to be honest and agree with that. Caleb had never planned to share his wife with anyone either. He was a jealous man to some extent. Still, after spending so much time with Jeff and getting to know the man, he didn't think they would have trouble in that area when it came down to it.

They continued working in silence for nearly thirty minutes before switching places. He planned out in his head what he would do to seduce their wife that night. His cock was hard as one of the poles they were setting by the time the sun began to set. He expected to hear their radios to go off any minute now. As long as she hadn't called and they still had enough light to see by, they would continue working.

"Fuck!"

Caleb jerked around to stare at Jeff. "What is it?"

"Look over there."

He followed Jeff's outstretched arm and bit back a curse. Several of the weird, insectile beasts stood about thirty yards away from them. Standing up as they were, they looked even more menacing than the one they'd seen on the way to their home the day before. The fact that there were three of them watching increased his heartbeat so that he could hear it in his ears. It made concentrating harder.

"Think we can make it to the house before they attack?" Caleb asked.

"I don't think running is a good idea at all. Get behind me and watch where we're going. We'll walk toward the house at a slow pace. I'll watch them while you keep us aimed in the right direction."

"Got it." He eased over to stand behind Jeff with his back to him. "Ready?"

"Let's go."

Caleb stepped forward and heard Jeff do the same. After several feet Jeff called a halt.

“What’s wrong?”

“They moved toward us some. They’ve stopped, but they’re watching us closely.”

Caleb didn’t turn to look. He had to trust that Jeff was watching. Looked like he was putting his trust in the other man sooner than he thought.

“Okay, let’s try it again,” Jeff said.

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## Chapter Five

Beverly picked up the radio to contact the men as she walked over to the window to look out. She had just started to press the button when she saw them easing toward the house with Caleb facing the house while Jeff faced the opposite direction. She frowned and lifted the radio to her mouth when she saw the creatures that were stalking them. Cold chills raced down her spine at the sight of three large beasts moving toward them.

She quickly put down the radio to make sure she didn't accidentally press the button and make a noise. She was afraid if she did, the ugly things would attack the men. Instead, she hurried into the other room and grabbed the gun they had left out. She was a good shot, but she prayed she wouldn't have to use it. Carefully she eased the door open and watched the creatures as the men drew closer.

Once they were in sprinting distance, Caleb said something to Jeff and they both ran for the house. Beverly threw the door open wide, and as soon as they were inside, slammed it closed again. She quickly locked it and set the gun on a chair before hugging both of the men.

"Don't ever open that door again when those things are out there!" Caleb pulled away and grabbed her upper arms holding her still.

"I wasn't about to shoot through the window. That would have been stupid."

"No, stupid was putting yourself at risk by opening the door in the first place."

She glared at Caleb, jerking away from him before thrusting her hands on her hips. "I wasn't in any danger. You were the ones in danger. I was covering your asses with the rifle. I'm a damn good shot."

Caleb's jaw worked in obvious anger. She wasn't about to let them treat her like a worthless female like her brothers had tried to do. She may be shy when it came to some things, but she wasn't a fainting damsel either. Beverly knew how to take care of herself.

"Let's all calm down. No one was hurt." Jeff's voice of reason reminded her that he was there as well.

"I don't like her jumping into dangerous situations." Caleb wasn't going to give up easily.

“I didn’t jump into anything. I merely cracked the door and sighted the bastards in case they rushed you.”

“I can smell dinner, Beverly. Is there anything in the stove you need to check on?” Jeff asked.

She huffed out a breath and narrowed her eyes at him for interrupting her and Caleb’s stare out. He needed to realize she wasn’t going to hide like a scaredy-cat from everything that might be dangerous. Otherwise, he was going to always be upset with her, and that was no way to start a relationship.

“I’ll go check on it while the two of you clean up.” She stomped over to the stove as they walked toward the laundry room.

She couldn’t help muttering about stubborn men as she pulled the meatloaf out. It looked to be ready. She set it on top of the stove while she mashed the potatoes. By the time they had returned to the kitchen, she had everything on the table waiting on them. No one said anything while they filled their plates and ate. Tension fairly throbbed in the air around them. It made eating difficult for Beverly. She didn’t like confrontations, but she sure as hell wasn’t going to back down from one.

After they had finished and disappeared into the other room, she relaxed her muscles and quickly cleaned up. She put off joining them for as long as she could by giving everything a good wipe down. With nothing else to do, Beverly drew in a deep breath and walked into the other room where both men were sitting in their recliners talking about the group of giant mantises that had stalked them. Jeff had one of the brochures in his hand that listed the native wildlife of planet Alpha.

“The sonar we have at the edges of our property isn’t much of a deterrent for most of these things. It sounds like the only thing that has worked on this mantis thing was when one of the women screamed. It didn’t seem to care for that too much according to the pamphlet,” Jeff was saying.

Caleb looked up as she walked into the room. “Come here, honey.”

She hesitated but lifted her chin and walked over to him. He reached out and snagged her hand, pulling her closer to him.

“Sit in my lap while we talk. You need to know about these bastards. They’re very dangerous.”

Beverly let him help her up to his lap but held herself stiff in his arms. She just wasn't ready to forget how he'd acted earlier. They wouldn't always be around. She wanted to be sure they knew that she could take care of herself.

"These things can move fast and stand anywhere from five to seven feet tall." Caleb tightened his hold on her.

"I noticed when I was watching them out the door. I'm not stupid. I know they are dangerous and would never take a chance around them. That was why I was in the house and not out on the back porch with the gun. Why didn't y'all have your guns with you?"

Caleb stiffened beneath her. "That was a mistake we won't be repeating. We'd left them on the porch when we went back out after lunch."

Jeff ducked his head, but not before Beverly saw the smile on his face. He knew she'd made her point even if Caleb was going to be stubborn about it.

"The fact remains that you shouldn't have opened that door at all." Caleb glared at her from inches away.

"I'm going to be working out in the garden while you both are out guarding the herd. I can take care of myself and know better than to take unnecessary chances. I was raised on a farm, Caleb."

"This isn't Iowa, and those things out there aren't like anything we've ever dealt with before. There is no telling what is out there just waiting for one of us to make a wrong move. When the fence is up, I'll feel a lot better. Just stay inside until we have it finished." He let out a breath and stared at her for a second. "Please."

Beverly could tell he wasn't used to saying that. He'd made an exception for her, which she was sure he hadn't intended to do. She smiled and nodded.

"I'll stay inside until you get the fence put up as long as you keep your guns close to you at all times. It goes both ways, Caleb. I'm going to worry about both of you out there, too."

Caleb didn't say anything. He pulled her tighter to his body and hugged her. She enjoyed the feeling of comfort and safety that his arms gave her. He stroked her arm with his hand as he nuzzled his face against her cheek. Suddenly the comfort and safety turned to arousal and awareness. Heat from his hand seeped into her skin as his other hand squeezed her hip. She

opened her eyes to see Jeff watching them with heavy-lidded arousal. She couldn't help the shiver that slid down her spine.

"Let's head upstairs, Bev. I think we all need to relax some." Caleb stood up, still holding her as if she didn't weigh a thing.

She had no doubt what they had in mind as they walked up the stairs. She held on tightly to Caleb's shoulders, afraid that he would drop her if she didn't. His muscles bunched and flexed beneath her hands as he strode down the hall into the master bedroom. Looking over his shoulder, she couldn't help but moan at the sight of Jeff pulling off his shirt behind them. It was obvious by the well-defined muscles she could see on Jeff and feel on Caleb that both men worked hard.

Caleb released her legs and allowed her to slowly slide down his ripped body so that she felt every inch of him. There was no mistaking the bulge that had his zipper sticking out. She couldn't pull her eyes away from his as he slowly released her next to the bed.

"Don't move." Caleb reached behind him, pulling at the back of his T-shirt until he could draw it over his head and down his arms.

Beverly licked her lips as he dropped the shirt to the floor. Then her eyes were drawn to his hands as he slowly unbuttoned his jeans before drawing the zipper down over the evidence of his arousal. His stomach muscles bunched as he drew in a deep breath before bending over to shove his pants down. Since both men had removed their boots when they came inside, he didn't have to worry about them now.

Stepping out of his jeans, Caleb stood back up giving her a full view of his impressive physique, complete with the mushroom cap of his dick peeking out the waistband of his boxers. He caught her staring at it and grinned. Heat poured over her cheeks at the knowledge of what they would no doubt be doing soon. Her heart double-timed it when he slipped his fingers into the boxers and pulled them down exposing his thick shaft. It bumped against his belly when he stood back up.

"Your turn, honey. I can't wait to see that sexy body." Caleb grinned and watched as she slowly lifted her hands to the hem of her T-shirt.

Looking away from him, she caught sight of Jeff standing just behind him, nude except for the black boxers he wore. He was watching her as if he couldn't wait to see her naked as well. His hazel eyes seemed darker somehow. Neither man moved a muscle as she lifted the shirt and drew it

over her head. She skipped her bra and unfastened her jeans before slowly shoving them over her hips. When she started to bend over to remove them, Caleb stopped her.

“Wait. Turn around before you do that.”

Her eyes widened, but she turned around before bending over and removing them. She stood up again but didn’t turn around. Instead, she removed her bra and, after dropping it, lowered her panties until they fell to her feet where she stepped out of them. Then, she slowly turned around with her arms crossed over her breasts so they couldn’t see all of them. She hadn’t realized she had it in her to tease this way, but it felt good.

“Fuck me.” Caleb’s breathing sped up as she looked from him to Jeff.

“Climb up on the bed, baby. We want to explore every delicious inch of you.” Jeff took a step toward her.

Beverly took a step back at the sight of the two men moving her way. The back of her legs hit the edge of the bed. Caleb’s expression bordered on frightening while Jeff’s face held so much passion she didn’t think she would be able to catch her breath. Quickly, she turned around and climbed up on the bed, crawling toward the center on her hands and knees.

“Aw, baby. Your ass is perfect. I can’t wait to sink my teeth into those round globes,” Caleb said.

She couldn’t help the whimper that slipped past her lips at the thought of them touching her there, much less putting their mouth on her. They climbed on the bed toward her, looking like two sleek cats getting ready to pounce. The two men didn’t exactly scare her, but they did make her tremble at the intense looks they gave her.

“Lie back on the bed, Bev, and relax. We’re going to take good care of you. Isn’t that right, Jeff?”

Jeff smiled at her. “I’m looking forward to tasting her sweet cream.”

Just the thought of him licking her down there had her juices flowing and her nipples beading. Caleb closed his eyes and drew in a deep breath as if he could smell her, and maybe he could. His nostrils flared as he lowered his body to lie next to her. Before she knew what he intended to do, he buried his face against her neck, licking and kissing her there. His hot mouth moved down her neck to her shoulder where he nipped at her before drawing her skin into his mouth to suck and rub with his tongue.

“Oh, God!” She nearly screamed as he rubbed one nipple with his finger at the same time Jeff closed his mouth over the other one.

The rasp of Jeff’s tongue across the pebbled nub had her clit swelling. Caleb played with her breast as he leaned over her and captured her mouth which his. She hadn’t been expecting it, so he caught her mouth open and took advantage of it by plunging his tongue inside. While he explored every recess of her mouth, Jeff drew on her breast, taking as much inside of his mouth as he could manage. He flattened her nipple against the roof of his mouth and sucked so that she felt like he would swallow her. Fire raced up and down her spine.

Jeff’s tongue circled her nipple over and over before finally rubbing across it. Caleb continued to plunder her mouth while pulling and rolling her nipple with his fingers. The feel of both men playing with her breasts at one time seemed so decadent. They both pressed their hard cocks against her hips as they slowly drove her insane with their mouths and fingers.

Nothing she’d ever experienced came close to what she was feeling now. Just when she thought she would pass out from lack of oxygen, Caleb pulled back from the kiss and moved his mouth down her chin to nip his way down her neck. He soon replaced his fingers with his teeth and nibbled her hard nipple before running his tongue all around it. Beverly ached to feel his tongue against the tip now. It felt swollen and achy, much like her swollen clit. Finally it registered with her that she was trying to move her body to make him lick over her nipple. It was obvious that he knew what she was trying to do by the smothered chuckle and the way he avoided her maneuvers.

“Be still, little mouse,” Caleb said with a laugh. “Good things come to those who wait for them.”

“You’re driving me insane.” She couldn’t stop the soft growl of frustration.

“Poor baby.” Jeff pulled away from her breast.

As Caleb finally licked and sucked the tortured nipple in his mouth, Jeff trailed kisses down her chest and abdomen until he reached the crease of where her thigh met her pelvis. He nipped at her there then licked the ticklish area before slipping between her legs, pushing them out to fit his wide shoulders there.

“Fuck, you smell like paradise. I could stay here forever.”

“What does she taste like, man?” Caleb asked from his spot by her breast.

“Mmmm.” He drew his tongue through her pussy lips in one long lick. “Sweet ambrosia.”

“I can’t wait to taste her. Hurry up and make her come, Jeff. I can smell how hot she is from here.”

“Just wait until you taste her. There’s nothing like it. I could make a meal off of her.” Jeff ran his tongue through her folds before moving up to circle her engorged clit.

Beverly groaned when he didn’t lick across it. If he would just run his tongue over it a couple of times, she was sure she would fly. Just a little pressure right where she needed it and the climax would carry her away.

Caleb had taken over both breasts and was pulling and pinching on her nipples, sending sharp tingles of electricity straight to her clit. She wanted to come so bad that she had to bite her lip to keep from screaming at them to hurry up and make her. Never had anything felt this good, this right. Always before she’d been left hanging and had to finish herself off later if at all. This time she had no doubt she would climax before they were through with her.

Almost as if they had planned it, Caleb grasped one nipple with his teeth and gently bit at the same time he pulled the other nipple tightly between his thumb and forefinger to just this side of pain while Jeff grasped her engorged clit between his teeth and rubbed it with his tongue. Beverly bucked against them both as every muscle in her body clinched then released as she screamed out their names with her orgasm. She struggled to breathe around the overwhelming pressure in her lungs as the spasms drained her strength. Surely she couldn’t live through anything this exquisite.

If it took everything inside her, Beverly swore right then and there that she would figure out how to make them happy. She would make sure that somehow, she would be enough for them.

## Chapter Six

Jeff felt the first rippling of Beverly's body as her orgasm slowly rolled through her. He quickly lapped at her cream as she gushed with her climax. His cock throbbed in need at the sound of her screaming their names. He ground it against the mattress as he devoured her pussy. He couldn't wait to fill her hot cunt with his dick. Knowing that he'd had a part in bringing her pleasure swelled his chest with pride. Nothing turned him on more than seeing a woman lose control during her climax except maybe feeling it against his tongue.

He continued to clean her sweet pussy juices with his tongue until she lay still again. Then he slowly crawled up her body to stare into her eyes before he kissed her and shared her unique taste. He loved seeing the slightly dazed look in her eyes. It took every ounce of his control not to plunge his hard cock deep into her cunt. Instead, he slowly dragged it back and forth over her pussy until she responded with a whimper of need. That sound tightened his balls, and he finally began to slide his aching dick into her body.

She was so wet he easily slid into her tight sheath as if she was made for him. Immediately, hot, wet heat enveloped him, drawing a hiss from his lips. This was what home felt like. This is what he had been missing all those years when he thought he had it all but still felt something wasn't right.

Looking up, he stared into Caleb's face and nodded. "Perfect. Just perfect."

The other man nodded and grinned before he bent over Beverly and rubbed his cock against her lips. Jeff watched her eyes light up as she opened her mouth and quickly licked a bead of pre-cum from Caleb's cockhead. The other man drew in a sharp breath and closed his eyes as she took him into her mouth.

"Holy fuck!" Caleb's eyes flew open as she closed her lips around him.

Jeff smiled and let the erotic picture of her sucking his partner's cock deep into her mouth add to his already heated need. With each slow thrust into her tight cunt, Jeff drew closer and closer to losing his control. He wanted this to last. He didn't want to ever leave the comfort of her body.

Hearing her moans, he realized he'd closed his eyes again. When he opened them, it was to the sight of her throat rippling around Caleb's dick deep inside her. The other man's face was drawn up in ecstasy that almost appeared painful as he climaxed. Jeff could well imagine the bliss that overwhelmed him. Jeff wasn't far behind him as he watched his wife swallow his partner's cum then lick him clean.

Pressure built at the base of his spine as he tunneled in and out of her tight sheath, increasing his speed as he lost the tight control he'd been trying to maintain. He shifted his angle and finally found Beverly's hot spot, raking over it with the head of his cock with each stroke. Her gasp of breath told him all he needed to know, but her soft keening as she approached her second climax nearly did him in.

"Come, baby. Let me feel you explode on my cock." Jeff held her hips in a tight grip as he thrust inside of her over and over again.

"Oh, God, oh, God, oh God. I can't breathe," she whispered before screaming as her orgasm took over.

Jeff's balls drew up, and cum exploded from his cock as she tightened around him almost to the point of pain. Nothing had prepared him for the rapture that took his breath then slammed his heart against his ribcage. He emptied his seed deep inside her womb. The feel of her legs wrapped around his waist as she jerked beneath him pleased him. Knowing that he'd made her feel good added to the pleasure he felt.

He collapsed on top of her but quickly rolled to the side, pulling her with him as Caleb settled down at her back. He struggled to regain control of his breathing and dreaded when his spent cock would eventually slip from her warm body.

"That was fucking amazing," Caleb said from the other side of Beverly. "Honey, you're amazing."

Beverly opened her eyes and smiled shyly. "I've never done that before."

"Done what, Bev?" Caleb asked.

"Climaxed during sex."

Jeff lifted up on his elbow to stare down at her. "You're kidding. What sort of jerks have you been dating?"

Her eyes shuttered before she looked away. "I—I thought maybe it was me."

“Hell, no. You’re the most responsive woman I’ve ever been with. You’re perfect, honey.” Caleb’s words seemed to please Beverly.

Jeff basked in her happy glow. Then she yawned, and he knew she was worn out and needed to rest. They all needed to. They had a lot of work to get done in a short amount of time.

“Go to sleep, Beverly. We all need to get some sleep.”

She didn’t open her eyes back up but nodded her head with a soft hum of agreement. Jeff turned over and pulled one of her arms over his side where he curled his hand around it and held it next to his chest. He needed her touch to relax enough to drift off, something he would think a little closer about tomorrow. How could she have become so important to him in such a short time?

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Caleb woke up with a jerk. He wasn’t sure what had caused him to do it, but now that he was wide awake, there would be no way he would be able to go back to sleep. Besides, there were only a couple of hours till he had to get up anyway. Might as well start the coffee and watch the sunrise for the first time in their new home.

After slipping out of the bed, he pulled on his jeans and padded barefoot out of the room and down the stairs. He turned on the light in the kitchen and set up the coffeepot to brew. The moons had already set, but the first vestiges of dawn were already peeking in the eastern sky. He poured a cup of coffee and stood at the window to watch the planet come alive. With each second that passed, more of the strange new world they lived in revealed itself like a shy virgin.

There was so much they didn’t know about Alpha, and some of it could easily kill them. How would he and Jeff ever be able to keep Beverly safe and happy? They knew next to nothing about their new home. It scared him a little and pissed him off a lot. He was used to being in total control of everything around him, but now he wasn’t, and that grated on his nerves.

Despite his not wanting to move, Caleb couldn’t help but turn away from the amazing sight in front of him to gaze at the even more amazing one stepping into the kitchen just as barefoot as he was.

“Morning, Beverly. How did you sleep?” Caleb asked as he watched her pour a cup of the dark liquid.

“Morning, Caleb. I slept really well. Much better than I did on the shuttle.”

She sipped her coffee as she joined him at the window. For a long time they just stared out at the emerging world around them as the sun’s rays awakened the colors that still seemed strange to him. Caleb wanted to enfold her in his arms but wasn’t sure how he would be received. Despite their lovemaking the night before, Caleb still wasn’t sure of his place with her. It was obvious that he would end up being the tough one in their relationship. As much as he liked being in control of things, he wasn’t sure he wanted that role at all.

“Have to agree that sleeping on the shuttle wasn’t easy.”

“Coffee’s good. Thanks for making it.”

He grunted and continued to watch the sky grow brighter while the grass and plants emerged from the shadows. Beverly’s presence seemed to make it all seem more, more incredible and more real. She seemed to ground him when he would have plunged into the middle of it all and tried to make it his. It wasn’t his. It was theirs, and that was something he would need to get used to. No longer was he in absolute control, owner of everything within his gaze.

“Soon as we finish eating, Jeff and I will finish up the posts then start on the garden. Probably need to see that plan you have for it.”

“I’ll get it when I finish breakfast and have it waiting for you when you come in for lunch,” she said.

Beverly walked away from the window and began to gather items to make breakfast.

He turned back to look out the window and drink his coffee. He should have hugged her. Why hadn’t he? Turning, he started to walk over to where she was pulling things out of the fridge when Jeff walked in and immediately pulled her into his arms and kissed her. She looked flustered but pleased.

Scowling, he turned back around and glared out the window. He felt Jeff walk up next to him before he actually saw him. The other man had a contented look on his face and cup of coffee in his hand.

“You’re up mighty early,” Jeff said.

“Need to get those poles set so we can get to work on the garden.”

“I’ll start out on digging holes.”

“Fine.” Caleb saw the other man stiffen at his surly tone. He sighed and tried again. “How many more do you reckon we have left?”

“About ten or twelve. Should be finished by lunch or a little after.”

Caleb nodded and forced himself to let go of the bad mood he’d worked himself into. They hadn’t even been in the house twenty-four hours and already he was fighting the bit like a wild horse. Either he took to the reins and shouldered the responsibility or he was going to be bucking against Jeff every step of the way. They needed to work together, be a team. It would take both of them to survive and keep Beverly safe.

He glanced over to where Beverly stood working over the stove. She was a pretty thing and so giving. She wasn’t exactly what he was used to, but she was perfect for the life they would be leading. They didn’t need a simpering woman who couldn’t boil water much less run a house and work in a garden. They needed a strong woman who could handle whatever the planet threw at them.

Maybe she wasn’t his normal type, but she was his wife and one day would be the mother of his children. She deserved his best in all things. He’d learn to accept what she could give him and forget about the rest. Looking over to Jeff, he figured she was right up his alley. He appeared to be more down-to-earth and was definably more relaxed than Caleb was.

He looked down at his empty cup. He hadn’t remembered draining it. Walking back across the room, Caleb poured more coffee before taking a seat at the table. Jeff followed him over and sat across from him.

“Is something bothering you, Caleb?”

Caleb jerked his head up and stared at him. “Why would you think that?”

“You’re awful quiet this morning. You’ve never been like this since I met you.”

“Guess the enormity of the situation finally hit me. I’m just thinking over everything to be sure we don’t screw something up. It’s not just planning now. This is it. We’re here, and it’s for keeps.” He tried to keep his earlier thoughts locked inside so they wouldn’t show on his face.

Jeff nodded and sipped his coffee. “You’re right. This is the real thing. The good news is that we’re not alone. We have each other, and we have the

other families here for support.”

“When are we going to meet the others?” Beverly interrupted them, setting plates of food on the table.

Caleb breathed in the wonderful aroma of bacon and eggs. He grinned when she set a platter of pancakes on the table next.

“Once we finish getting the garden in, I thought we might meet our closest neighbors. I’ll call them up on the radio tonight after dinner.” He figured by then it would do them all some good to visit after having been on their own for nearly a week.

“I can’t wait to meet the other women here. I’m sure we can learn a lot about what to really expect from them since they’ve been here longer. I heard someone back at town say that some already have children.” Beverly took her seat at the head of the table and waited as they passed around the plates of food.

“Yeah, I’m pretty sure both of the main families have children. Don’t know if they are boys or girls though. We’ll find out soon enough.” Caleb dug into his food and the conversation lagged while they all ate.

After breakfast, he and Jeff rinsed their plates and sat them on the counter by the sink before grabbing their guns and heading out the door. They heard Beverly tell them bye and to be careful as Jeff closed the door.

“She’s a good cook, that’s for sure.” Caleb walked next to Jeff as they set out for the supply shed.

“Yeah, she is. We’re damn lucky to have gotten someone who already had experience with gardens and cooking. Six months of education on a spaceship isn’t exactly a guarantee someone will be able to handle the actual experience, especially on a strange planet,” Jeff said.

“You don’t have to tell me that.” He looked over at Jeff and wondered if the other man knew that she wasn’t the type of woman he would have chosen as a wife.

Shaking that thought off, he switched the subject back to the fence and getting the garden tilled up. They talked about where to put it and how soon Beverly would get to plant while they carried their supplies and tools out to the section of land they were enclosing. Neither man spoke after that unless it was about what they were working on.

Both men kept a wary eye out for anything that didn’t belong. Neither one of them wanted a repeat experience of the day before. Caleb made sure

his rifle was close at hand at all times. When they switched places and he was digging while Jeff set the posts, he wondered what their wife was doing. He glanced toward the house but didn't see any sign of her. They were really too far away to see into the windows. He prayed she stayed inside like they had demanded.

Several hours later, Jeff finished the hole he was digging, picked up his rifle, and walked off. Caleb wasn't sure what the other man was up to, but he finished up the post he was working on and followed him. As he walked in the general direction the other man had taken, he saw Jeff walking back toward him.

"Where did you go off to?" he asked.

"It's lunchtime. I wanted to see how many holes we have left to dig."

"What did you figure out?" Caleb held his rifle across his arms like a baby.

"Looks like we have four, maybe five left. I think we can finish them and still have time to break ground on the garden. May not be able to till it up and row it today, but that's okay."

"Think it's going to be hard to break up the ground and till it under?"

Jeff shrugged. "I don't really know. Where we're digging right now seems easy enough. Maybe the area we choose for the garden will be, too."

They heard their names called and jerked around to stare toward the house. Both men took off running as if their lives depended on reaching the house as fast as possible. When they skidded to a stop at the steps up to the porch and didn't see Beverly, Caleb's heart stuttered in his chest.

## Chapter Seven

After calling through the window for the men to come eat, Beverly slipped into the pantry to find a jar of jam or preserves. She nearly lost her balance on the ladder when she heard the back door slam open against the wall and her name called out in a panicked voice.

“Beverly!”

She wasn’t sure which of the men shouted, but she stepped down from the ladder and hurried out of the pantry.

“What’s wrong?” She looked the two panting men up and down for injuries. “Where are you hurt?”

“What?” Caleb scowled and stomped up to stand so close to her she had to hold her breath to keep their chests from touching.

“What in the hell were you thinking to open that door and call us if nothing was wrong?”

“I didn’t open the door. I opened the window and called you for lunch.” She felt her anger begin to build.

“If we didn’t want you opening the door, why would we be okay with you opening the damn window?” Caleb demanded.

“The window has a screen on it. The door doesn’t.” She jerked her hands on her hips and glared at him.

Before Caleb could answer her, Jeff spoke up. “Baby, you scared the hell out of us. We thought something was wrong.”

“I’m sorry. I just called your names and said lunch was ready. Why would that scare you?”

“We couldn’t understand you really. We heard our names, and that was it.”

She frowned and shook her head before relaxing her arms and dropping her hands from her hips.

“I guess calling through the window isn’t going to work then. How about if I ring a bell for lunch and you’ll know what that means? If I call out, something is wrong and I need you.”

Caleb sighed and nodded. “That sounds like a good idea. Do you have a bell?”

“I’ll look for one. If we don’t have one around here, we can get one the next time one of us is in town.” She turned and walked over to the table to sit down. “Might as well eat. I know you’re busy out there.”

Once they had finished eating, the two men carried their plates to the sink before turning to head back outside. Not much had been said during the meal, but she knew they were close to being finished with setting the posts.

“Did you still want the plans I had made for the garden?” She picked them up off the counter where she’d set them before lunch.

Caleb turned back around and nodded. “Yeah. Let’s see what you have.”

She handed them to him and stuck her hands in her pockets to see what he would say. She’d worked hard on those while on the shuttle, wanting to make sure she had everything in the best possible location so that the different plants would complement each other and produce well. Caleb and Jeff looked over her plans and nodded.

“These look good. I think the second one will be the best fit for what we have here.” Caleb handed her the other pages and folded that one before sticking it in his back pocket. “We should be able to at least break ground later this afternoon.”

“Let me know if you need anything. If you’ll come in after you finish the posts, I’ll have something for you to snack on and a drink.” She didn’t want to sound needy, but Beverly wanted to know what was going on. She wanted to be a part of setting it up.

“We’ll see how things go,” Caleb said.

Jeff dropped a quick kiss on her head before they left her alone in the kitchen once more. She hated that she’d scared them earlier. She hadn’t meant to. Now they were on edge, or at least Caleb was. Jeff seemed to have gotten past it.

She sighed and quickly cleaned up the dishes and the kitchen before putting together the snack for later. Then she gathered what she needed for meatloaf and potatoes for dinner. Several times she stopped and looked out the window to see what they were doing. They had made it around the house now and were out of sight. She didn’t like not being able to see them and wondered again how she was going to handle them being off dealing with the cattle every day.

“I’ll be too busy to worry about them. Between the garden and keeping house, I’ll have my hands full.”

At least she hoped that would be the case. Plus, she could always talk to the other women with the radio. They had shown her how to use it, but she didn’t know anyone yet to talk to. Once they met the others, maybe she would feel comfortable talking with them some.

The afternoon passed quickly as she explored the house in detail, putting things away as she went. Finally, the men walked in around four in the afternoon for a quick break. She poured tea for them and set a plate of jam-filled cookies on the table.

“Did you finish the poles?” she asked.

“Yep. Got them all in the ground. Once they set overnight, we can start running the fence.” Jeff held up a half-eaten cookie. “These are delicious.”

“Thanks. The berries are stone berries that grow wild here. I hope we can find some bushes close by. I want to be able to make our own jelly and preserves.”

“We’ll look for some once we have things set up around here. You’re not going off on your own though to pick them.” Caleb’s gruff voice brooked no argument.

Beverly just shook her head. She wasn’t stupid. Why did he make her feel that way, like she lacked common sense? She changed the subject so he wouldn’t know that he’d hurt her feelings.

“Are you going to break the garden up this afternoon or wait until tomorrow?”

“We can’t afford to waste daylight and with having an extra hour in the day, we should have time to get it started anyway.” Caleb nodded over at Jeff. “He’s going to start with the tractor while I measure off the area.”

She smiled up at Jeff. “I can’t wait to start planting.”

“Let’s hope we can get it plowed and rowed up soon so we can help you get started.”

“Oh, don’t worry about getting it in the ground. Once you have it rowed up, I can handle planting. I’m used to doing it alone.” She cleared away the dishes as they stood up to go back outside.

Caleb seemed to want to say something by the way he kept opening his mouth and closing it, but he finally just shook his head and walked toward the door. She touched his arm with her hand. When he turned around, there

was a deep furrow between his brows that gave her the impression he was unhappy about something.

“Be careful out there. Don’t stay out once it begins to get dark. Those things seem to come up about that time of day.”

“We’ll be up as soon as we get to a stopping place.” His gruff voice sounded a little stiff to her. Was he angry with her about something?

Beverly watched through the window as they stepped off the porch heading for the supply shed for the tractor and whatever other tools they needed. Somehow she’d upset Caleb again. How would she ever be able to become what he wanted if she continued to disappoint him in some way?

Fighting tears, Beverly concentrated on cooking dinner. At least in this she knew she could please him. He seemed to like her culinary skills if nothing else. If only she could please him in other ways.

\* \* \* \*

After dinner, Beverly finished cleaning the kitchen and joined the men in the living room area. They were once again relaxed in their lounge chairs talking about putting the fencing up the next day. When she walked in, they quieted and watched her much like a cat would stare at a bird through a window. She felt almost stalked when their eyes followed her to where she sat on the couch. Once she had settled with a book, they started talking once again.

She struggled to concentrate on the suspense she was trying to read, but her mind kept straying to the night before and how they’d taken her. She hesitated to say made love to, because they didn’t know each other well enough for that. And she didn’t want to relegate it to just fucking because they had been too careful and tender for that.

Nearly two hours passed with her having to reread several pages in order to know what was going on in the book. She gave up and decided to shower and head to bed. She knew the guys would be up shortly. They were winding down the conversation it sounded like. She put aside the book and stood up. Both sets of eyes zeroed in on her almost immediately.

“I’m going to shower and go on to bed. It’s been a long day.”

“We’ll be up in a few minutes,” Caleb said.

Beverly nodded and smiled as she walked to the stairs and climbed them without looking back. The silence behind her seemed heavy for some reason. As if they were watching her and couldn't turn away. Maybe that was wishful thinking on her part though.

The shower proved to work magic as the warm water soothed away the tightness in her muscles left over from the nerves that plagued her. All she wanted was to make the men happy and be what they needed. She held no illusions that she would have been their choice of wife, but they were together and needed to make the best of it. She'd do her part. The question was, would they be able to accept her?

By the time she made it out of the shower, the men had come upstairs. She had pulled on a short, lacy nightgown with matching panties and could feel their eyes on her as she crossed the room to climb into bed. They had already showered before dinner and were just waiting on her to climb in as well.

"God, you look good, baby." Jeff stopped her before she could crawl to the middle.

His eyes darkened as he traced the lace along her neck. She couldn't stop the smile that crept across her lips at his attention. She looked over to where Caleb stood on the other side of the bed. His face betrayed nothing of what he was feeling. He always seemed to be in control. She wanted to shake some of that control, wanted to see him lose some of the discipline that seemed to rule his actions.

Jeff kissed her, and her thoughts evaporated as his mouth coaxed hers to play. His tongue teased and tangled with hers as he took away all of her worries and doubts with just one kiss. When he finally pulled back to stare into her eyes, raw emotion peered down at her. What did it mean? She wanted to ask him what he was thinking, but Caleb had climbed onto the bed and was pulling her out of Jeff's arms.

"I want a taste of you, honey." Caleb nipped her lower lip before slanting his mouth over hers and slipping his tongue along hers.

Beverly marveled at the differences in their taste, in the way they kissed. Jeff sipped at her and enticed her to play along. Caleb, on the other hand, demanded she give him what he wanted and expected nothing less than everything. While Jeff left her aching and needy, Caleb left her breathless and spent. Between the two of them, she knew she had no hope

of escaping with her heart intact. They would own her body and soul. That wouldn't be a bad thing except that instead of receiving their hearts and souls she would be left with nothing to fill her once again. She harbored no dreams of ever owning a piece of them.

Even as Caleb claimed every crevice of her mouth with his tongue, she felt her fears slip away in the heat that threatened to consume her. His hands molded her breasts as he covered her with his body. Pulling away from the kiss, he lifted her nightgown over her head and tossed it off the edge of the bed.

"You don't need to ever wear anything to bed with us, Bev. We like you naked and open to our touch. We'll keep you warm at night." He lowered his head and drew in one nipple that he teased with his tongue before lightly biting it.

She moaned and thrust her breasts up for more. Then Jeff took the other nipple into his mouth, and between the two men, she lost herself in their slow seduction. She couldn't think when they touched her like this. Jeff had one hand in her hair while the other one mounded her breast deeper into his mouth.

"Fuck, I need more." Caleb's harsh voice played havoc with her heartbeat as he slowly licked and sucked his way down her body.

He stopped and paid close attention to the last rib along her ribcage, licking along the skin covering it. Then he found the ticklish spot at the juncture of her pelvis and hip. Instead of diving into her aching pussy as she had hoped he would, Caleb detoured down her inner thighs. Each stroke of his tongue or barely there touch of his fingers brought a low groan from her mouth and a shiver over her body.

"Please, Caleb. Don't tease me."

His soft chuckle against her thigh gave her little hope he would cut his play short and give her what she needed, craved.

"Bev, honey. I could explore your body all day long and never get enough of you."

She wished that were true. She knew he only said those things to be kind. That fact quickly drifted away as he finally nuzzled her mound with his nose. Warm fingers separated her folds, and his first lick through her juices had her pumping her pelvis in an attempt to force more of his tongue over her sensitive flesh.

“God, your cunt is so hot and wet. You smell like the freshest of springs, and I want to drink until I’m drunk off of your sweet nectar. Give me more, Bev.” Caleb entered her pussy with his finger even as he continued to lap at her juices.

“Please!” She couldn’t say anything more because, at that moment, he added a second finger, pumping them in and out.

Her breath came in sharp pants that did nothing to spread the much needed oxygen throughout her body. Surely she would pass out soon if she didn’t manage to get a full breath.

Then he changed how he was stroking her, his fingers curling up to press against her sweet spot. Before she realized it, an orgasm rolled through her, arching her back and contracting her cunt around Caleb’s fingers.

“Aw, hell, yeah. Give me all that cream.” He sucked on her clit then licked all around her folds until he seemed satisfied that he’d gotten everything she had to give.

Beverly lay panting, her hands gripping the bottom sheet in a squeeze release pattern. He chuckled and crawled up over her body once again. This time, he didn’t kiss her. Instead, he licked along her neck before shifting his pelvis and sliding his long, hard cock deep into her wet cunt. The sudden invasion tore a gasp from her mouth. Caleb stilled.

“Are you okay?”

“Please don’t stop.” She tried to make him move with her hips.

She reached up to run her hands down his chest as he pulled back and plunged in again and again. She turned her head toward where Jeff lay next to her on the bed expecting him to want her to suck his thick cock, but he just lay there with his head propped up with his hand and watched her. When their eyes met, he smiled and leaned over to whisper in her ear.

“I love watching your face when you’re turned on. The only thing better is to see your eyes go dark and glassy when you come.”

Caleb suddenly rolled over with her, and she found herself on top with his dick deeper than before. It almost felt like he was in her throat.

“Jeff, play with her ass. We need to be getting it ready for when we take her together.”

Beverly’s eyes widened as she watched Jeff roll off the bed and pull something out of the drawer of the bedside table. She refocused on Caleb’s

face. His honey-gold eyes were darker and filled with his arousal. She knew they would be having anal sex but had hoped they would give her some time.

*Hell, I've had six months to get used to the idea. Why does it scare me so much?*

She, like the other women on the shuttle, had been lectured on this and even given butt plugs along with lube and instructions on how to prepare themselves. It wasn't like she hadn't used the butt plug and tried to get used to the invasive feeling of something in her ass. It was just that anal sex seemed almost like a punishment, like the ultimate type of domination. She didn't want to feel as if she wasn't their wife, but their plaything.

Caleb must have noticed a change in her because he held her still with his hands on her hips. She tried to move on him, but he stopped her and looked up at her.

"What is it, Bev?"

"N-nothing. What do you mean?"

"You stiffened up. Are you afraid of anal sex? I thought they talked about it while we were on the shuttle."

"Talking about it and doing it are two different things, Caleb," Jeff pointed out.

She felt Jeff's hand on her lower back as he rubbed slow circles over her skin. She wanted to lean back against him but held off. This was important. She didn't want to give the wrong impression.

"Yes. We did talk about it and all. I guess it makes me nervous. I thought maybe we would have a little more time before we, uh, tried that." There, she'd said it.

"We weren't going to do it tonight, baby," Jeff assured her. "We just want to get you ready so that, when we do, it won't be such a shock and maybe you won't be so nervous. We would never do anything to hurt you, baby."

Caleb rolled his hips, and his cock moved inside of her. It distracted her enough that she didn't resist when he slowly pulled her down to his chest.

"Just relax and let Jeff play with you back there. He won't hurt you. I promise."

All she could do was nod her head and wrap her arms around Caleb's sides. One of his hands rubbed up and down her back while the other

smoothed her hair from her face.

Jeff's hands massaged her ass cheeks before she felt his lips there kissing each side. When he slowly drew his finger down the crevice to rub over her back hole, she moaned and nearly jumped. Something wet pressed against her there, and she gasped when she realized it was Jeff's tongue.

"No!"

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## Chapter Eight

Beverly nearly jerked out of Caleb's arms. This wasn't right. He shouldn't do that.

"Easy, Beverly. Has no one every kissed or licked you there?"

"No. It's wrong."

"Nothing's wrong as long as it doesn't hurt anyone. It feels good, doesn't it?" Jeff asked in a soft, deep voice.

She didn't say anything as he licked her all around the little rosette then nipped at her buttocks before kissing the wounded spot. Warmth spread through her body like a full-body flush. She shouldn't enjoy this, but she did. Then something cool slid down the crack of her ass and Jeff's finger drew it down to her tiny opening where he rubbed it in and all around the puckered star.

"I know it's a bit cold, but it will warm up. Try and relax your muscles for me, Beverly." Jeff's voice sounded so dark.

She couldn't help but recognize the need in it. He wanted her there. She tried to relax her butt so that when he slowly pressed one finger inside of her she didn't fight it. Instead, she moaned when he began to pump it in and out of her dark hole.

"Just think, honey. Soon you'll have both of us inside of you at one time. I'll take this hot pussy while Jeff fucks your tight ass."

Caleb continued to tell her dirty things they wanted to do to her while Jeff added more lube and then a second finger. This time it pinched as he carefully pressed them past the tight ring of muscles in her ass. She hissed out a harsh breath while he moved them in and out of her.

"Maybe we should think about playing with a butt plug next time, Jeff. What do you think about that?" Caleb's deep, controlled voice reminded her that he had the bag of toys in the closet.

"Just thinking about her walking around with it in her ass while we're at work would keep me hard all day," Jeff said.

She wasn't sure how she felt about that. Maybe knowing that they would be thinking about her would help her deal with the uncomfortable feeling of something in her butt.

“What do you think, Bev? Have you ever played with a butt plug?” Caleb asked.

“J—Just on the spaceship. We talked about them then.” She wondered about some of the other toys she’d seen there. “D—Do you like to use those things in your bag?”

“Only if you want to use them. We’ll go slow and see what you like. We’ll never do anything you don’t like.”

“You’re doing so good, baby,” Jeff said. “Relax and see how full you feel now.

“Once you have us both inside of you it will be amazing. Imagine how it will seem to be full of cock.” Caleb began to pump his dick in and out of her body again while Jeff pumped his thick fingers in her ass.

A wicked pressure built deep inside of her. She couldn’t believe it. How could she possibly climax with Jeff’s fingers in her back hole? It wasn’t right, but she couldn’t ignore the tightening in her cunt or the hot electricity that seemed to simmer just below her skin. When her heart began to thump harder and harder, she was sure it would push right through her chest.

Caleb increased his pace and thrust harder into her pussy while she struggled to stay still for the dual assault on her senses. His dick stroked places inside of her that tightened her all over. That made her more aware of the fingers in her ass that were sending signals to her clit that she had pleasure nerves even where she didn’t think she did.

“Fuck! I’m not going to last much longer. She’s so fucking tight.” Caleb’s confession was the last straw.

Beverly wanted to feel him come inside of her, knowing he hadn’t been able to hold off as long as he wanted to. She tightened her muscles on his thrusting cock even as her own body began to quiver inside.

“Aw, hell, honey. Do that again.” Caleb pressed a hand between their bodies and began to rub over her clit.

Everything caught her just right. She cried out their names as her body exploded into a sea of white-hot bliss that threatened to consume her. She couldn’t stop the scream that followed as Caleb filled her cunt with his hot cum. Splash after splash coated her cervix.

When she was finally able to open her eyes and draw a complete breath again, Beverly realized that not only had Jeff removed his fingers but was cleaning her with a warm, wet cloth. She didn’t even have enough energy

left to complain about it. When the cloth disappeared, she chanced looking over her shoulder, but he was already gone. She closed her eyes for a second but opened them when the bed dipped.

“Jeff? You didn’t, um...”

“Don’t worry, baby. I’ll get mine later. Rest now.” Jeff helped Caleb settle her between them.

When Caleb didn’t say anything, she looked over and found him sound asleep. She was a little disappointed that he hadn’t said anything to her afterward, but he was bound to be exhausted after working so hard all day.

“I wish I had been able to see your face when you came,” Jeff said as he pressed tight against her back.

“I feel guilty that you didn’t.” Beverly felt his hand on her waist, so she pulled it around her.

“Don’t be, baby. There’s no keeping score. It all works out in the big scheme of things. Just rest.”

She couldn’t help it when her eyes closed and wouldn’t open back up. She was tired. It would take some time getting used to working again. After six months on the shuttle, she’d gotten out of the habit of getting up early and taking care of a house. Soon she’d have the garden as well. She needed to get back in the swing of things fast. Even as she worried about being able to handle it all by herself, she thought again about how distant Caleb seemed to be. She would try harder to get him to accept her, starting out by losing some weight. No doubt he was used to thinner women with more sophistication. Jeff seemed more down-to-earth, but what man wouldn’t prefer that their wife be petite?

Beverly vowed to become the perfect wife for them no matter what. She could do it. She had to do it. There was no way she could spend the rest of her life with two men who weren’t happy.

\* \* \* \*

Something woke Caleb up earlier than usual the next morning. He lay still listening but heard nothing that would account for the way he’d jerked awake. Then he realized that Beverly wasn’t in the bed anymore. He glanced over at the clock and found that it was almost an hour before sunrise. What was she doing up?

He checked to be sure Jeff was still asleep before he climbed out of bed and quickly dressed in the dim light from the cracked bathroom door. Once downstairs, he headed straight to the kitchen. Sure enough, he found her sipping coffee at the table. She was sweating. He couldn't figure out why when the house was a pleasant temperature. Even if she'd done something dumb like go outside, she would have been cool, not sweaty. He walked all the way into the kitchen, catching her off guard.

"Good morning, Caleb." She watched him as he stepped into the room.

"Morning. What are you doing up so early?" He walked over to the coffeepot and poured a cup before grabbing a seat at the table.

"I woke up and was wide awake, so I figured I'd come on down here so I wouldn't wake you guys up."

"Why are you sweating?"

"Oh, um, I was moving some things around in the pantry to where I wanted them. I guess I got hot in that small space." She didn't look at him as she sipped her coffee.

"Do you need me to move anything that's up high? I'd rather you didn't climb up on a ladder if you don't have to."

She finally looked up and smiled at him. "No thanks. There wasn't anything up high I needed to move. Most of that stuff I rarely will use anyway."

He watched her and nodded without saying anything. She was keeping something from him. Why? What was there to hide? They barely knew each other as it was. Worry set up housekeeping in his chest. He didn't like the unease that was apparent to him in her eyes.

"If you're up, I'm sure Jeff will be up soon. I better start breakfast." She stood up and hurried over to the refrigerator.

Caleb watched as she made breakfast. She settled down while she cooked as if the process gave her some measure of comfort. Just as he stood up to pour another cup of coffee, Jeff walked in with a smile on his face.

"Good morning. Why am I the last one out of bed this morning?" he asked.

Beverly smiled at him before taking down a cup for him. "You were sleeping so well. Both of you worked hard yesterday. I'm sure you needed your rest."

Caleb nodded at the other man as he sat across the table from him and took a sip from his mug. He turned his gaze back to their wife and watched her flirt around the kitchen like a dancing fairy. There was something about her that settled him. No, she wasn't his normal type of woman, but she filled some part of him he hadn't even realized needed filling. He looked over at Jeff and wondered if she would grow to love them over time. Jeff, he was sure, would be able to win her affections. Him? He wasn't so sure.

"Okay, guys. Eat up." She started setting bowls and platters on the table.

Once she had refilled their coffee, she joined them at the table. He and Jeff had been discussing the fence and garden. She joined in asking when they thought they would have it completed so that she could venture outside.

"I'm already getting claustrophobic and bored. I'm used to being outside a lot."

"We should have the fence done by tomorrow night. Then we'll work on the garden again," Caleb told her.

"When are we going to go see the others?" she asked.

"Let's get the garden started and we'll find out how they are doing." Jeff smiled.

"Have you found a bell yet?" Caleb asked her, changing the subject.

"Actually I found something better. It's an air horn. I don't have a clue what it was supposed to be used for, but if it works, it will be perfect."

"I guess we will see if it works at lunch." Caleb wiped his mouth with his napkin and stood up to carry his plate to the sink.

"I just hope I don't deafen myself when I try it." He grinned when she laughed.

"Ready to go, Jeff?" he asked.

"Let's get going. I'm anxious to get it finished." Jeff added his plate to the dishes in the sink and headed toward the door.

"Be careful out there you two. I'll try the air horn around lunchtime." Beverly followed them to the door and smiled when they both kissed her before walking outside.

Caleb watched as she closed the door behind them before stepping off the porch. The tools were in the supply shed as was the fencing material. He and Jeff each grabbed what they needed and carried a roll of fencing

between them. Then they returned and grabbed a gate. They planned to have one gate at the back of the yard and one by the side of the house. They were putting up a six-foot fence, but he worried it wasn't tall enough based on the creatures they had seen already.

While they worked together pulling the fencing tight and securing it to the posts, Caleb thought about what else needed to be done before they officially started to work. They needed to make sure the small barn that would house three horses was ready and then get them from their partner ranch back east of them. Then there were the dreaded chickens that they were supposed to raise as well. He hated dealing with chickens, but they were necessary.

"What are you thinking about?" Jeff asked.

Caleb chuckled. "Thinking about all the things we've still got to get done before next week."

"Seems like an awful lot. I agree. We may need to postpone the chickens 'til next weekend or even the weekend after that."

"You thought about them, too?"

Jeff shook his head. "I don't like dealing with them, but we need them for the meat and the eggs. They're messy things."

"I'm just glad we thought about including the damn chicken coop in the fenced in area. I don't ever want Bev outside the fence without us. It's too dangerous."

"I agree," Jeff said. "Another thing we've got to do is comb the fenced in area for any of those dangerous plants listed in those pamphlets."

"Crap! I forgot about that. You're right." Caleb sighed and tightened the puller to stretch the fencing while Jeff secured it to the post.

They worked in silence for a while, each of them lost in thought. Caleb kept thinking about how Bev had looked that morning all sweaty. Then he thought about how she'd been anxious about having anal sex the night before. If it was something she absolutely couldn't handle, they would work around it, but it was more than that. She had been nervous around them from the beginning. He kept going back to when they had been on their way out to the house that first day. Had he screwed everything up between them by yelling at her in the buggy?

He wanted her to not just trust him, but like him as well. He wanted her to eventually love him, them. He'd never felt uncertain about anything in

his life until now. When it came to ranching, he was secure in his knowledge and experience. He considered himself an expert on the subject.

Women had never worried him either. He'd always been confident in how he interacted with them. He treated them well and made sure they were always satisfied both sexually and emotionally. When many men grumbled and complained that they couldn't understand the female mind, he had never had trouble deciphering their moods and expectations. Why was he having trouble now when it was so important? What was different about his wife? Not even a week into their new life and already he felt overwhelmed.

"Jeff?"

"Yeah?"

"Do you feel like Bev is uncomfortable around us?"

Jeff stopped what he was doing and looked at him. "What do you mean?"

"I feel like she's shying away from us most of the time. Haven't you noticed how she seems to avoid touching us or looking at us?" he asked.

"I guess I haven't. I'll pay closer attention from now on. I mean, yeah, she's obviously shy, but I figured that is to be expected since we basically just met a few days ago."

"Maybe I'm reading too much into it then. I'm just not used to a woman being nervous around me."

"I wager that you're used to a different breed of woman than our Beverly is."

Caleb stopped what he was doing and frowned. He didn't realize that Jeff would be able to pick up on that so easily. Had he let something slip that the man picked up on? What about Bev? Had she noticed something as well? Was that why she seemed much more reserved around him?

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Caleb, you're a very successful rancher worth a lot of money. I had even heard about you when I lived over a thousand miles away from you. You dated the daughters of rich ranchers and businessmen. Women who weren't raised to work on the ranch but to act as hostesses and chair social clubs. Beverly has worked on a farm all her life. I doubt she's ever been to a social function much less hosted one."

"Are you saying I'm a snob?" Caleb's hackles jumped up.

“No. I’m not saying any such thing. I’m just saying that she is probably feeling a bit intimidated by your background. Hell! I’m even a little intimidated by it. Give her some time to figure out that you don’t think less of her.”

Caleb worked on the fencing for a few minutes while he thought about it. Was that why Jeff seemed to defer to him on a lot of things? He turned his thoughts back to Beverly and what he needed to do to ease any concerns she might have. It worried him that she might feel as if she didn’t measure up. He honestly didn’t think less of her.

“Do you believe I think less of her?”

Jeff shook his head. “No. I believe you aren’t quite sure how to take her, so you’re careful around her. She can sense that, and it probably confuses her to some extent.”

Caleb swore under his breath. He didn’t regret that she wasn’t like any of the women he’d once dated. She was exactly what they needed here. She wasn’t less than those women. She was just different. How was he supposed to fix this?

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## Chapter Nine

Beverly eased out of bed early Thursday morning. She couldn't wait to finish breakfast. They had finished rowing up the garden the day before, and she would finally get to plant today. Neither man had moved when she slipped out of the room after dressing. She hurried downstairs and put the coffee on. Then she set everything out for breakfast when they woke up.

Knowing it would be at least another forty-five minutes or so before they stirred, she hurried down the steps into the cellar to gather up what she needed to plant. She had already arranged the seeds in the order she would need them and packed them in a box to carry up the steps. As she picked up the box, something shifted behind her, making her jump. She whirled around but didn't see anything out of the ordinary. Everything looked the same to her.

Shaking her head, Beverly climbed the steps and deposited her box by the back door. Stopping to pour a cup of coffee, she gazed through the window over the sink at the moonlit world beyond. With more than one moon to light up the night, one could easily see at night. She smiled at the sight of the freshly turned earth before setting her cup on the counter and heading back to the cellar. When she had gathered the hand tools and a pair of gloves, she looked around once more to be sure she hadn't forgotten something before returning to the pantry and closing up the cellar door.

Just as she dropped everything on top of the box by the back door, Jeff walked in stretching his arms above his head. She couldn't help but admire his broad shoulders and wide chest. The navy-blue T-shirt he wore did nothing to hide the rippling of muscles from her eyes.

"Morning, Beverly. You were up awfully early this morning. Did you even sleep?" he teased.

"Oh, I slept. Dreamed about my garden," she shot back with a wide smile.

He chuckled and gave her a quick kiss before grabbing a mug and pouring his coffee. She washed her hands and started breakfast.

"Is Caleb up yet?" she asked.

"Yeah. He was dressing. He should be down in a minute." He leaned against the cabinets. "I see you already have everything ready by the door."

“I wanted to be ready to get started as soon as I had the breakfast dishes finished. No reason to waste time.”

“Who’s wasting time?” Caleb walked in and headed directly for the coffee.

“You are. Lying around in bed all morning,” Jeff said with a straight face.

Caleb frowned at him and shoved him out of the way. “I got up the same time you did.”

Beverly snuck a glance at Caleb to see if he was really upset over Jeff’s teasing or not. She decided he wasn’t when he took a sip from his cup and smiled. She would be glad when she felt more comfortable around them. Well, around Caleb mostly. She didn’t really feel as awkward around Jeff as she did with Caleb. She felt fat and clumsy around him.

“Morning, Bev. Breakfast smells good.” Caleb kissed her on the cheek, careful not to get in her way as she turned the eggs.

“It should be ready in about two minutes. Jeff, can you set the table for me please?”

Jeff turned and grabbed plates. To her surprise, Caleb pulled out silverware and helped. She nibbled on her lower lip. She hadn’t considered that Caleb might think he needed to help as well. Somehow asking Jeff to pitch in hadn’t seemed like such a big deal, but asking Caleb seemed wrong. Now she wondered if she might have hurt his feelings by not including him. Would he think less of her that she hadn’t already had the table ready? Why hadn’t she done that before she had even gotten her damn seeds out of the cellar? She couldn’t do anything right.

“Hey. Why the frown?” Jeff asked.

She jerked as she was pulling out the biscuits, hitting the back of her hand on the top of the oven. She dropped the pan of biscuits on the oven door.

“Damn!”

“Aw, hell, baby. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to startle you. Let me look.” Jeff grabbed her hand. “Let’s get some water on it.”

“What happened?” Caleb hurried over to the sink and turned the water on.

“She burned her hand when I scared her. I’m so sorry.” Jeff urged her over toward the sink then held her hand under the cool water.

“It’s not your fault, Jeff. I’m sorry. I’m so clumsy.”

“Stop that, Bev! You’re not clumsy. Anyone could have done that if they got startled.” Caleb frowned at her. “Let’s look at it again and see if it blistered or not.”

Beverly pulled her hand out of the water and was relieved to see that, other than a red spot, there wasn’t any sign of a blister forming. She didn’t have time for something that could cause more problems.

“I’ll put a bandage on it so my gloves won’t aggravate it while I’m working,” she said.

“Maybe you should let us plant and you supervise so you don’t get it dirty.” Caleb handed her a towel to dry her hand.

“No! I mean, it’s nothing. The bandage will keep any dirt that gets under my gloves off of it. It will be fine.” She cringed that she had shouted at him.

She was so nervous around him that she couldn’t think straight half the time. The only time she seemed to relax was when they were having sex, and even then she worried that she wasn’t doing it right. An image of the toys she had discovered when she had unpacked for them taunted her. She was sure Caleb wanted to use them but he had promised they would go slow. Even as thoughts of them seeped into her mind, she realized that maybe she wasn’t as worried as she had been to begin with.

“Caleb, you know how she’s been looking forward to planting her garden. There’s no way you’re going to talk her out of it.” Jeff laughed as he carried the biscuits over to the table.

“I guess I’m lucky she didn’t attack me for suggesting she let us do it.”

Beverly looked at him and let out a relieved breath to see that Caleb was smiling as he said that. Maybe he wasn’t too upset after all. She grabbed the plate of eggs off the stove, and they sat down to eat.

Nearly an hour later, Beverly pulled on her gardening gloves after cleaning up the kitchen and carried her box and tools outside. The men had already gone out to the little barn to make sure it was ready for their horses. She had been pleased to learn they would have three so she might get to ride some with them. She hadn’t been riding in years. She missed it.

The rich, red-colored dirt seemed so odd, but then everything about Alpha was different. From the multiple moons to the blue grass, nothing

reminded her of Earth. She felt a little bit of homesickness creeping in, so she stiffened her back and got to work.

By the time she had finished planting half the garden, she was slightly sweaty and her back ached. It was obvious that she hadn't done much all the years she had been in the underground bunkers on Earth. She was so out of shape. At least she'd been working out some in the early mornings when the men were still in bed. She couldn't tell a difference yet, but hopefully she would be able to tell something in another week. Between working in the garden and yard, something had to work.

She had just finished planting the last row when Jeff and Caleb walked up. They looked just as sweaty as she was. They looked out over her garden and nodded.

"Looks good, honey. Ready for a break?" Caleb asked.

She smiled, warmed by his praise. "Perfect timing. Let's clean up, and I'll fix sandwiches for lunch."

They walked to the house and took turns in the laundry room washing up. Then Beverly pulled out the bread, meat, and condiments. When she started pulling out bread, Caleb hip checked her out of the way.

"We'll fix our own. You have a seat and let us wait on you this time. You've been just as busy as we have."

"Close your mouth, baby. You'll draw flies," Jeff said, grinning.

"I thought they said there weren't any bugs around here," she said.

The men laughed and worked on the sandwiches while she sank down in a chair. She wasn't sure what to make of them, especially Caleb. He was the one who had grabbed the knife away from her. Maybe she hadn't been fixing the sandwiches like he wanted them. She watched as he made each one and didn't see any difference.

Jeff sighed and passed her a plate with two on it. "Your sandwiches are just fine, baby. We thought we would give you a break is all."

Caleb stopped what he was doing and stared at her. She fidgeted with the napkin by her plate, uncomfortable with his scrutiny.

"What?" she asked.

"Did you think we didn't like how you made them?"

When she didn't answer he dropped the knife and cursed before walking off and staring out the window. Beverly struggled not to cry. She

couldn't believe she'd screwed this up as well. Why couldn't she do anything right?

Caleb walked back over to the table and sat down across from her. He reached across and grabbed her hand in one of his.

"Bev, look at me."

She glanced up. His eyes seemed guarded as he smiled softly across the table.

"You're doing great, honey. I love your cooking. I know we don't know each other very well, but it takes time. Don't worry so much about everything." He leaned down and kissed her fingers. "I know it's a big adjustment to live with two men that you don't know anything about, but we'll work it out."

She blinked her eyes, trying to get rid of the tears that hovered there ready to fall. She just nodded, afraid her voice would crack and she would break down and cry for real.

He sighed and released her hand before grabbing his plate and taking a bite from his sandwich. Jeff sat down and began to eat as well. Beverly swallowed around the hard knot in her throat and forced herself to take a bite from her own sandwich. It tasted like cardboard, but since he had made it, she had to eat it. She just didn't think she could stomach more than one.

When she had finished, she picked up her plate and started to walk away, but Jeff grabbed her arm.

"You finished already? What about the other sandwich?"

"I'm full. There's no way I could eat two. I never eat more than one." She hastened to add. "It was delicious though, Caleb. Thanks for making them for me."

Caleb nodded, but there was a frown line between his eyebrows that said he didn't quite believe her. Jeff grabbed the uneaten sandwich off her plate with a grin.

"More for me, then." He waggled his eyebrows and winked at her.

Beverly smiled and shook her head. "Don't blame me if you get fat."

"No way. We work too hard out there." Jeff turned to Caleb. "Right?"

"Bev, you worked hard planting the garden. Are you sure you don't want that sandwich?"

She nodded then turned away before he saw something in her eyes that would give her away. She was still a little hungry, but another glass of water

or tea would take care of that.

While they finished up, she gathered all the lunch supplies and put them away. She still needed to water the newly planted seeds and clean her garden tools before putting them up. As she opened the kitchen door to walk outside, Caleb stopped her.

“How much more do you have to do out there?”

“Just water and clean up my mess. Did you need something?”

“No. We’re going to be in the office setting up a time to pick up the horses and meet with Sloan and Nelson. Don’t stay out there any longer than you have to. I’m not real comfortable with the fence yet.”

She looked from Caleb over to where Jeff stood in the doorway to the living room. He didn’t say anything, but she could tell he felt the same way. She nodded her head and smiled.

“I won’t be long. I promise.”

Caleb smiled at her and squeezed her hand. “Thanks.”

Beverly continued outside and looked around the backyard. She didn’t see anything unusual outside of the weird colors and plants. Determined to stay aware of everything around her, she hooked up the watering system and gathered her tools. It was strange not to hear birds or insects. The wind provided some noise as it swished through the trees and shrubs, but for the most part, it was eerily silent. She supposed that would change once they had horses and chickens and maybe some cows in the area. She sure hoped so. She didn’t like feeling like she was the only living thing on the planet.

Once she had everything cleaned and dried off, she moved the watering system once more and waited until she was satisfied everything had been thoroughly soaked. After putting up her tools, she would begin her diary keeping up with the garden. There had been so much talk about how fast everything grew on Alpha that she was eager to compare it to what she was used to from back home on Earth.

She hauled in the box full of tools that had originally contained her seeds and opened the cellar door. A noise from the back part of the house reminded her that the men were in the office. She decided to let the guys know she was back inside before she carried everything back down to the cellar. She wanted to look through everything while she was down there so she would know what they had available.

The office door was open, and the sounds of someone talking over the radio filtered out through the living room as she drew closer. When she stepped inside the office, both men were leaning back in a chair with their feet on the desk. Caleb held the microphone as they listened to someone talking about the cattle they would be responsible for. Neither man looked up when she entered the room.

Not wanting to interrupt them, Beverly backed out and returned to the kitchen. She'd go ahead and do what she had planned. It sounded like they would be busy for a while. She would be finished by the time they got through.

Walking down the stairs with the box proved awkward. She soon realized that she could easily fall since the box was so large she couldn't see her feet and where she stepped. Once she'd made it down to the bottom, Beverly let out a breath of relief. All she needed was to fall and get hurt. The guys would have blown a gasket if that had happened. They wouldn't let her come back down again without one of them with her.

Setting the box down, she put away the tools and began to explore the room and its contents. Besides the fresh root vegetables they'd gotten in the city with their supplies, there were jars of all sorts of canned vegetables and fruits. A storage box held flour, sugar, and cornmeal. All in all, they were pretty well set for the summer.

Since she was down there, Beverly decided to go ahead and carry up some potatoes and carrots along with some posh to cook a roast for dinner the next day. She needed to set the roast in the fridge to defrost. Since microwaves didn't work on Alpha for some strange reason, she had to learn to get meat out the day before she planned to cook it. Otherwise, thawing became an issue.

After depositing the vegetables on the counter, she washed her hands and started a pot of coffee. She was sure the guys would appreciate it while they were in the office. Once it was ready, she poured two cups and carried them into the other room. When she walked in, both men looked up from where they were bent over one of the desks looking at something.

"Thought you might like some coffee," she said and handed them their cups.

"Thanks, Bev. This will hit the spot." Caleb took a sip and grinned.

"Where's yours?" Jeff asked.

“In the kitchen. I’m going to sit in there and work on my garden diary.”

“Why don’t you sit back here with us? There’s plenty of room.” Jeff indicated that there were actually four chairs in the office.

“Oh, I don’t want to disturb you guys. I know you are busy.” She started to back out of the room.

“Nonsense. Get your coffee and whatever you’re working on and sit back here with us.” Caleb frowned.

“O–okay. I’ll be back in a minute.” Beverly hurried out of the office and back to the kitchen.

She wasn’t sure if Caleb really wanted her back there or not, but she wasn’t going to argue with him. Besides, it would be nice to have some company while she worked. It wouldn’t be long before they wouldn’t be around during the day. She planned to enjoy the next few days she had left with them at home and make the most of them.

When she returned, the sound of Caleb’s voice stopped her before she got to the door. He sounded exasperated.

“...not what I was expecting. I told you that. She’s what we need here though. She knows about gardens and putting up vegetables. Can you imagine anyone I’ve dated being able to function here?” Caleb asked.

“Give her some time. She’s still feeling her way around us. I’m sure she’ll get better in time. We just have to be patient.” Jeff seemed to agree with Caleb.

Beverly knew Caleb wasn’t happy with her. She thought she was doing better, but obviously he was still disappointed in her. What was she going to do? Tears welled up behind her eyes. She fought the urge to run back to the kitchen, but she couldn’t very well hide when she’d said she would be back. With as much composure as she could muster up, she carried her coffee cup and diary into the room.

## Chapter Ten

Caleb could tell that something was wrong when Beverly walked back into the office. She didn't look at them. Instead, she walked over to the empty desk and pulled up a chair with her back to them. He'd seen the sheen of tears in her eyes. Fuck! She'd heard them talking about her. How much, he didn't know, but it had obviously been enough to upset her.

*What the hell am I supposed to do now? If I say anything to her about it, she'll just clam up and deny that anything is wrong. Why couldn't I just leave well enough alone? It's only been a few days.*

Totally disgusted with himself now, Caleb looked at Jeff. The other man was staring at their wife's back, a thoughtful look on his face. When Caleb nudged him with his ruler, Jeff turned back and lifted a brow. He nodded his head toward Beverly. His partner just shrugged one shoulder and shook his head.

With a sigh, Caleb returned to the map they were studying that outlined the area that the two ranches occupied. When they had talked with Andrew from the other ranch, they'd found out that the herd had grown to well over fifteen thousand head. While that wasn't anything to sneeze at, he'd run much more on his ranches. The difference being the number of hands available to work them and the supplies they had access to back on Earth weren't available here on Alpha.

While the other ranch had fencing around much of their land now, it had taken them several years to build it. The land he and the others would be working was totally open. They would have to start working on adding fence as soon as they could. Andrew had filled them in on a lot of the dangers in the area and how they'd handled them so far. As it was, they were lucky to have made it the first year the women were with them. It didn't make him feel any better about leaving Beverly alone while they were working, radio or no radio.

"So what do you think, Jeff? Pick up the horses tomorrow morning and meet up with Sloan and Nelson tomorrow afternoon?" Caleb asked resigned to having to start over again with Beverly.

"I think that's a good plan." Jeff turned toward where Beverly was sitting. "What do you think, baby?"

“I—I’m sorry. What did you say?” She didn’t turn all the way around.

“We’re going to go pick up the horses tomorrow morning and then go see Sloan and Nelson and their wife tomorrow afternoon. Does that sound good to you?”

“Yeah. Whatever you think is best. I’d like to meet their wife.” She turned back to what she was doing.

Caleb pressed his lips together as he ground his teeth together. He wouldn’t make the mistake of talking to Jeff about her unless there was no chance she was anywhere near again.

“Radio over there and see if that will work for them.” Caleb handed the mike over to Jeff.

Once his partner had them on the speaker, he stood up and walked over to where Beverly was sitting. He pulled one of the other chairs over next to her and sat down, draping his arm around the back of her chair.

“Did you get everything finished outside you wanted to?”

He watched her lick her lips and nod. “Everything is done. All we have to do now is keep it watered and watch for it to break ground.”

“Sounds good. You worked hard getting it all done.” He squeezed her shoulders then kissed her cheek. “Want some more coffee, honey? I’m going to get a refill while Jeff’s talking to Sloan.”

She started to get up, but he stopped her. “No. I’ll get it. You’re busy, and I’m just hanging around now.”

Beverly smiled and handed him her cup. “Thanks. Just a couple of swallows. I’ll be finished with this in a little bit and need to start dinner.”

Caleb took her cup and, after nabbing Jeff’s, headed to the kitchen. Once he’d refilled their mugs, he started back toward the office when something out of the corner of his eye caught his attention. When he turned back toward the kitchen to see what it was, there was nothing there. Scowling, he set the cups back down and looked all around the room without finding anything to account for the brief flash of color he thought he’d seen. It had looked like a mottled brown color. There was nothing in the area that would explain what he thought he saw.

He reclaimed the coffee and returned to the office. After handing Jeff his cup, he sat down next to Beverly again and handed hers to her. She smiled and took a tentative sip before continuing with her diary. He admired her careful writing and the well-drawn illustrations she’d made showing the

dimensions of the garden. He wondered if she'd had any training in drawing.

After another twenty minutes or so, she closed the book and leaned back in the chair. Closing her eyes, she sipped the last of her coffee. He thought she was so pretty with her creamy complexion and the way she filled out her jeans. Besides that, she was a genuinely nice woman. He admired her enthusiasm and determination to do her best. But it was that determination that was giving him problems. How did he convince her that he liked her like she was and that she didn't need to try to impress him?

"You look tired, honey. How about an early night tonight? We'll help you clean up after we eat then run you a bath." Caleb ran his fingers up and down her arm

"Th—that sounds nice." She smiled, her eyes trying to close again as he continued to run his hand up and down her arm.

"Come on. Jeff can finish up on the radio while we work on dinner together." He stood up and reached down to pull her out of the chair.

"You don't have to help me. I can do it," Beverly said in a breathy voice.

"I know, but I want to help. I used to like to cook some." He guided her through the door and back to the kitchen.

"What was your favorite dish to cook?" she asked.

"I guess it would be between lasagna and a nice juicy steak with baked potatoes." He grinned down at her.

She smiled and rolled her eyes. "I would have guessed the steak, no problem."

"Now ask me what my favorite dish to eat is."

"What is your favorite dish to eat?"

"You."

\* \* \* \*

All the air slammed out of Beverly's lungs when he said *you* to her innocent question of what his favorite dish to eat was. She hadn't been expecting that. One minute he was talking about her not being what he had wanted to Jeff and the next he was telling her things like this. Confusion swirled in her head.

“I—I didn’t expect that.” She quickly looked down at the counter where she was working.

“I can tell. I know you’ve heard me tell you how good your sweet pussy tastes. How I can’t get enough of your spicy juices.” Using one finger, he tilted her chin toward him so that she had to look at him. “Well?”

“Um, yes, but that’s just sex talk. All men say those things, don’t they?”

His eyes darkened, and she could see his jaw working as if he was trying not to say something that was on the tip of his tongue. Beverly wished she had kept her mouth shut.

“Maybe some men say things they don’t mean during sex, but I don’t, Bev. I’m not that kind of man.”

“Okay.” It came out in a whisper.

She couldn’t tear her eyes away from his. They held hers as he slowly lowered his head until his lips captured hers in an achingly gentle kiss. She barely caught a whimper before it escaped. Then he was pulling away.

“So, let’s get this dinner on the road so we can see about that bubble bath.” He started chopping onions while she fought to regain her composure.

Later, as they were eating, Jeff filled them in on what the plans were for the next afternoon. They were pretty sure they would be back well before lunchtime with the horses, so they planned to drive to their new neighbors around two thirty for a short visit and planning session.

“You and their wife can visit while we work out a work schedule of sorts,” Jeff said.

“When are they planning to divide the herd up?” she asked.

“We’ll go over there Monday morning and separate them out then spend the night and drive this way on Tuesday,” Caleb told her.

“Oh! I hadn’t realized you would be staying overnight.”

“Think you’ll miss us while we’re gone?” Jeff asked with a smile.

“Of course I will.” She frowned at him. “Plus, I’ll worry about you while you’re gone.”

“Nothing to worry about, honey. We’ll be fine, and there will be plenty of other guys around while we’re working the herd.” Caleb took a sip of his tea.

“We’ll talk more about it closer to time. Don’t let it bother you now,” Jeff said.

They finished eating, and when she started gathering the dishes, Caleb reminded her that he and Jeff would take care of the kitchen. She was to *relax in her bubble bath* while they cleaned up.

Beverly hugged each man then climbed the stairs to run her bath. As soon as there was enough water in the tub with a decent number of bubbles, she climbed in and let the warmth seep into her tired body. She quickly bathed then leaned back to soak. She wasn't sure how long she'd been there, but the water was beginning to cool off and the bubbles were slowly dissipating until there wouldn't be anything hiding her any longer.

Just as she sat up, the door opened and cool air circulated around her, chilling her wet body. Caleb walked in and closed the door behind him.

"Sorry about the cool air. Looks like you're getting out anyway." He grabbed the towel off the warming bar and held it spread out for her.

Beverly stood up then stepped out of the tub into the warm cloth. Caleb gently rubbed and patted her skin until she was completely dry. Then he led her out of the bathroom and eased her under the covers. When she opened her eyes, it was to the sight of Caleb getting undressed. His body was truly gorgeous. She'd never seen men as handsome and muscled without being grotesque as Caleb and Jeff.

"Like what you see, honey?" Caleb grinned at having caught her ogling him.

"I can't help it. You're both so good looking and sexy. I can't believe you're my husbands."

Caleb's mouth furrowed in a frown, but he quickly got rid of it and tempted her with a sensual expression that promised all sorts of naughty things. She had just lifted her hands to invite him into her arms when Jeff walked in.

"Ready to take care of our wife?" Jeff asked.

Caleb spread out his arms. "I'm not standing here naked to pose for *Playgirl*."

"But you could totally pull it off," Beverly said before she realized it. Popping her hand over her mouth, she stared at them, horrified at her bold statement.

Jeff started laughing so hard he ended up sitting down on the edge of the bed. Caleb growled at the other man before turning his attention to her. He climbed on the mattress and tore the covers off of her.

“I think someone is having some dirty thoughts and needs to be punished.”

Beverly squealed when the covers came off and tried to roll off the other side of the bed as Caleb advanced on her. Jeff ran around to the other side and stopped her from getting off the bed.

“Oh, no you don’t. Caleb isn’t finished with you yet.” He turned her around and shoved her back on the bed before landing a swift slap on her ass.

She yelped this time and froze when Caleb’s wicked smile from less than a foot away caught her attention. She realized they were playing with her. She’d never played like this before. Beverly wasn’t sure what to do or say.

“What are you going to do to me?” she finally asked.

Caleb tilted his head to one side as if thinking about it. Then he ran a finger down her chest between her breasts to her belly button.

“I think a lesson on holding off your orgasm is in order.”

“What?” Her eyes flew wide open at that. “What do you mean holding off my orgasm? I can’t control them.”

Jeff snickered. “Sure you can. We’ll teach you how much better they are when you hold them back until you can’t stand it any longer. You’ll thank us later.”

“She’ll curse us first, though,” Caleb said. “Get the rope.”

“Rope? Why do you need rope?” She had a feeling she was getting in over her head.

Jeff disappeared into their closet for a few seconds. When he returned, he held several lengths of rope. Obviously it had come from Caleb’s toy bag. It wasn’t the kind they used with horses or cattle. He dropped it on the bed next to her before holding one end up in front of her.

“Feel it, baby. It’s soft rope. It won’t hurt you as long as you don’t pull too hard against it. We’d never hurt you.”

Caleb knelt on the bed and urged her to sit back down. Beverly wasn’t sure she could do this. Why would they want to tie her down if they weren’t going to hurt her? It didn’t make sense to her.

“I’m not sure this is a good idea, guys.” She tried to get back up, but Caleb gently pressed her shoulders down until she was lying flat on the bed.

“Trust us, Bev. We want to make you feel good. We would never do anything to hurt you. Just give this a chance. If we do something you don’t like, just tell us to stop. We’ll stop.” Caleb’s eyes seemed to implore her to give them a chance.

Fear warred with a tiny edge of excitement. She wanted to trust them and see what they would do, but the inner conflict was winning out. As if Jeff knew she was going to say no, he leaned over and kissed her. His lips sipped at hers before his tongue slipped between them and claimed her mouth as his. She was lost, and when he finally moved back, she nodded her head.

“Okay.”

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## Chapter Eleven

They each took a hand and lifted it over her head so that they could secure her to the bedposts with the rope. Even though they didn't tie it tight, she could tell there would be no way she could actually get loose. They then moved on to her legs and tied them in the same manner so that she felt like a giant X splayed out on the bed. At first, she didn't worry about it too much, but the longer she lay there, the harder it became to remain calm.

Jeff moved to the side of the bed so she could see him and slowly took off his clothes in a teasing parody of a dance. As each area of his body was revealed, heat inched higher inside of her, one degree at a time. They both climbed up on the bed and knelt beside her so that she could easily see them.

Jeff wrapped his hand around the base of his cock and slowly started pumping it up and down. When she turned her head toward Caleb, she realized he was doing the same thing. Where Jeff gripped his at the base and pulled up, Caleb fisted his near the middle and ran his hand over the tip of it with each pump of his hand. Both of them squeezed to the point of what she thought had to be painful. When a drop of pre-cum pearled at the tip of Jeff's dick, he wiped it off with one finger and held it out for her to lick. His essence exploded on the tip of her tongue, salty and tangy with a hint of musk.

As if choreographed, the both stopped masturbating and lay down beside her. Jeff leaned over and ran his tongue all around her areola without touching her nipple. Caleb licked around her belly button then up between her breasts, leaving a wet trail in his wake. When he reached the top of her cleavage, he also circled her nipple, leaving the hardened nub dry.

She fought to keep from begging them to suck her nipples. No way would she give in to their torture this quickly. She wasn't weak. The fear dissipated some since they hadn't done anything to worry her so far.

Jeff kissed the corner of her mouth then sucked and nipped his way around her jaw to her ear. He sucked on her earlobe before whispering what they would do to her.

"Just think how it will feel when both of us suck those taut nipples into our mouths. I can already taste those pretty berries. We're going to lick our

way down your body until we reach your toes. Then we'll suck on them one by one."

Caleb took over whispering in her other ear. "Then I'm going to nibble my way up your thigh until I reach that hot, wet pussy. It's going to taste so good. I can already feel how wet you're going to be when I bury my face there. I'm going to suck all your juices up then make you come so you'll make more."

"You have enough for both of us, don't you, baby?" Jeff ran the tip of his tongue all around the shell of her ear.

Beverly shivered. She was beginning to have trouble focusing when they talked that way to her and each was doing something different to her body with their hands and mouths. Maybe she wouldn't be able to handle much more after all.

"Will you have enough of your tangy cream for us, honey?" Caleb asked.

"Y—yes. Oh, God, you're killing me." She hadn't meant to say that.

They chuckled against her body so that she shivered again. Caleb had returned to her feet and was massaging each of them one at a time. When she felt wet heat around her big toe, she nearly screamed. When had her toes turned into erogenous zones? Teeth scraped up her toe then back down again. She felt it all the way to her pussy. If he didn't stop soon, she just might climax from that alone.

Jeff had returned to her breasts and was rubbing and squeezing them, but he didn't play with her nipples like she wanted him to. Without meaning to, she arched her back in an attempt to get him to touch the hard nubs. She was almost certain if they did, she would go up in smoke.

"Don't move, honey. Be still for us. I don't want you to accidentally rub your skin raw with the rope." Caleb ran his fingers around the rope on her ankles, and Jeff did the same with her wrists.

They must have been fine because the next thing she knew, both men had licked across her pebbled nipples. It was too fast for her to savor and enjoy it. She did whimper this time.

"Don't tease me like that."

"Shh, honey. We'll take care of you—eventually. Let it build, Bev. Feel how good it is when it grows inside of you." Caleb's words did little to alleviate the need that had already built deep in her core.

“I bet if it stuck my fingers in that hot cunt of yours it would be wet and tight, squeezing my fingers like vise grips,” Jeff said.

“Do it. Put your fingers inside of me.” She couldn’t believe she’d demanded that they finger-fuck her.

Caleb chuckled. “Not yet, honey. We aren’t finished playing yet.”

While Jeff played with both of her breasts with his mouth and fingers, Caleb ran one finger all around her slit and through her pussy lips without entering her or touching her throbbing clit. Jeff ran his tongue all over her breasts, and then, without warning, he nipped her nipples hard enough to have her gasping followed by a long rasp of his wet tongue.

“Oh. My. God!” She panted as an orgasm threatened to erupt, but no matter how hard she strained for it, it remained just out of reach.

She screamed in frustration when Jeff merely started licking her neck and sucking on her earlobe again. Then Caleb teased the entrance to her pussy with the tip of his finger. No matter how much she bucked, she couldn’t force it in any farther than the entrance.

Caleb finally lay between her legs and spread her pussy lips apart with his fingers. She strained against the ropes in an effort to get closer to him. He licked all along the seam of her pussy but only ran the tip around her clit with each pass. She groaned, wanting to give in and beg them to make her come. She fought though. She wouldn’t beg. Not yet.

“What does it feel like, honey, when you’re stretched thin with need and so close that you can taste it?” Caleb’s soft voice was a stimulant in and of itself. If he kept talking low and dirty to her, she’d come for sure.

“It itches, like a thousand ants are marching over my skin. I need to rub somewhere—anywhere. My muscles are poised just on the edge so that if they tighten even an eighth of a centimeter I’ll explode. I burn inside like a river of molten lava is flowing through my veins.”

Beverly thrashed her head from side to side. She couldn’t get comfortable with the need riding her so hard. Surely they would help her soon. She couldn’t survive this painful ache much longer. She’d even resorted to trying to blow cool air across her hard nipples in an effort to obtain some form of relief.

Both men stared down at her with heavy-lidded eyes. She could tell they were just as turned on as she was and were probably in a bad way themselves. Still, that didn’t help her any at the moment.

Then everything changed.

Jeff sucked one nipple deep into his mouth and rubbed it with his tongue while pulling and twisting the other one. Caleb made a nest between her thighs and started licking her pussy juices with wild abandon. Suddenly it was too much, too soon. She had been sure she would detonate with just one touch, but now she was hung on the edge and felt as if she would never get free.

“Oh, God! Stop. I can’t take it. It’s too much.”

Caleb released one of her swollen folds. “No. It’s not enough. You can take more.”

They tortured her with their hands and mouths until Beverly felt as if her head would explode from the pressure. Finally Caleb looked up at her with eyes as wild as she knew hers were.

“Come, Beverly. Come now!”

He latched onto her clit with his teeth and strummed it like a guitar string pulled tight at the same time he thrust his finger deep into her cunt and found her hotspot. While he stroked with his finger and tongue, Jeff bit one of her nipples and pinched the other one. Stars exploded behind her eyelids that she had squeezed tight. She felt as if all the muscles in her legs and ass were convulsing at the same time.

Her veins burned with fire as her orgasm pulsed through her body in never ending waves. Surely she would die from this. There was no way she wouldn’t stroke out from the pressure. Nothing had ever prepared her for this. They hadn’t even fucked her, and she was totally wasted.

The next thing she knew, her arms and legs had been released and the men were massaging them to stir the circulation. With the way she felt, she was sure she had levitated off the bed and pulled her joints out of their sockets. Every muscle ached in a delicious way. Somehow she needed to catch her breath and regain some of her ability to move. She needed to tell them how wonderful it had been. She needed to take care of them now, but right then, she was toast.

\* \* \* \*

“What, baby?” Jeff smiled and leaned down to hear what she was trying to whisper.

“So good.”

He chuckled. “We’re not finished yet.”

Her eyes widened, and both he and Caleb laughed at her panicked expression. He kissed her lightly on the lips since she was still panting, trying to catch her breath. He slipped down her body and moved between her legs. Pulling them over his arms, he rubbed his throbbing cock up and down her copious juices so that his cockhead dragged over her clit several times. With each touch, she jerked her hips against him.

He was so hard he knew he wouldn’t last long. That was probably a good thing considering that she was exhausted and Caleb still wanted to bury himself in her pussy as well. He lined his dick up with her slit and thrust into her wet sleeve. Fuck, she felt good.

“Aw, baby. I’ll never get enough of your sweet pussy.” He pulled back and thrust again.

Caleb was talking to her as he tunneled in and out of her hot cunt. Nothing had ever felt as good as their Beverly.

“You should watch his cock disappear inside your pussy, honey. It’s so damn sexy. Look at his face. See how good he feels buried in your cunt? I can’t wait to feel you squeeze my dick, Bev. I know it’s going to be so good.”

Jeff opened his eyes and watched his shaft burrow deeper into her body over and over again. Then he looked up to watch her face as he angled his dick to rub her sweet spot. Her eyes rolled back, and her mouth fell open.

*Thank God she was close. He wasn’t going to be able to hold on more than a few more seconds.*

He pulled her legs higher over his arms, making the angle deeper. A soft keening erupted from her throat, growing louder with each stroke of his cock into her depths. Finally, he felt her ripple around him, squeezing him until his balls erupted, his cum shooting up his shaft and deep inside her. Over and over, he sent streams of cum to coat her womb. He felt as if every drop of liquid in his body had left him with his climax.

Her *oh, God, oh, God* finally made it through his ringing ears as he gently pulled out and stretched out next to her. With shaking hands, he lightly stroked her still-quivering belly to help her calm down. He felt as if his eyes were crossed. Suddenly he wanted some water, but he didn’t think his legs would hold him yet. He’d go get them all some in a few minutes.

Caleb rolled over and captured her lips in a kiss. He could tell she was still fighting to breathe by the way her chest rose and fell too fast to be normal. Caleb released her from the kiss seconds later but continued to torture her with nipping kisses and licks down her chin and around to her neck. He left small, red areas along the way. Then he lapped at a spot between her neck and shoulder before pulling back and taking his place between her legs.

She reached out to him with one arm. He took her hand, and she smiled at him. Jeff was glad she wasn't asking him to wait or telling him to stop. Caleb would if she asked him to. He had no doubt that his partner would honor her request. Not many men would be able to control themselves at this point.

He watched as Caleb's long dick was slowly swallowed up by Beverly's body. All of that flesh just disappeared as he fed it to her dripping pussy. He had no trouble getting inside of her with the combination of his seed and her cum. It wasn't long before he was thrusting in and out of her in quick strokes that seemed almost desperate, and maybe they were considering the intense expression on Caleb's face.

"Fuck yeah! Your pussy is so good, honey. Squeeze me like that again." Caleb's eyes closed for a second.

Jeff could tell his friend was close when his rhythm began to falter. He reached down and stroked Beverly's clit while he watched her face. He didn't want to miss seeing her come. Her mouth flew open even as she yelled out their names. The look of rapture on her face was beyond beautiful.

Caleb's hoarse shout followed soon after. Jeff jerked his hand from between them as the other man collapsed on top of Beverly with a grunt. Shaking his head, Jeff pushed Caleb off of their wife before he smothered her.

"Sorry. So damn good. Can't breathe." Caleb was wheezing as he struggled to take a deep breath.

Jeff watched as the other man found her hand and brought it to his lips to kiss. He hoped Beverly was aware enough to notice. Her eyes were closed and she was gasping as well.

After a few minutes, she opened her eyes just enough that he could see how hazy they still were. She tried to lick her lips, but her tongue appeared

to be too dry to do the job. He smiled.

“Will you two be okay for a second while I run downstairs to get some water? You’re not going to die on me or anything are you?”

Caleb forced out a breathy chuckle. “We’ll be fine. I’m not that old yet.”

Jeff nodded, and after dropping a quick kiss on Beverly’s cheek, he hurried downstairs to the kitchen and grabbed one glass and the water pitcher. He figured that was the easiest way. They could share the glass, and he would return the pitcher back to the kitchen before they fell asleep.

When he made it back upstairs, he walked into the bedroom to hear Caleb talking to Beverly in a soft voice as he stroked her head.

“You’re perfect, honey. I don’t think I’ve ever come that hard before.”

Jeff didn’t hear what she said as he set the glass on the bedside table and poured water into it. He offered it to her first. Caleb helped her sit up while she drank the entire glass. He refilled it and offered it to her again, but she just shook her head. Caleb eased her back down to the pillow then emptied the glass as well. Jeff finished off a glass himself before taking it all back downstairs again.

This time when he made it back they were both sound asleep. He smiled and climbed back into the bed, snuggling up against Beverly’s back. She was curled around Caleb with her head on his shoulder. Maybe things were looking up. So far everything had fallen into place without much trouble. Now all they had to do was pick up the horses, divide the herd, drive it to their land, and work out a schedule with the other two men that worked for all of them.

What could go wrong?

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## Chapter Twelve

Beverly paced around inside the house the next day waiting for the men to return with the horses. They'd driven the transport over to the other ranch and would pull the horses back in the trailer behind it. They couldn't go very fast with it attached on the way there or back, so it would take most of the morning. The wait was driving her crazy for some reason. She'd never been a worrier before, but since arriving on Alpha, she'd developed the irritating tendency.

With the garden newly planted, all she'd had to do was check to see if it needed watering. Since it didn't, that left her with too much time on her hands. After making a brief entry into the diary that there was nothing to do, she walked around the backyard to look over the plants. Caleb and Jeff had already searched for anything that was poisonous and destroyed it outside of the fenced area. Still, she carried her pamphlet on dangerous plants that one of the other women who lived on the planet had printed up. She wasn't going to take a chance.

Even though she hadn't found anything, she had located a stone berry bush just outside the fence that they could harvest come fall. The guys would have to go with her, but that was fine with her. She could pick berries while they watched for danger.

After exploring the chicken coop that stood ready, Beverly returned to the house and made a quick sweep through the house to be sure there was nothing that needed cleaning or washing. Now she was left with nothing to do but pace and stare out the windows. She checked the clock for the thousandth time and found that they had only been gone a little over three hours. It would be another two or three before they made it back.

She sighed and decided that, since she was bored, she might as well exercise. She hadn't gotten up early enough to do her normal routine before the men made it up since they were leaving out before dawn. She'd rushed to put together something for them to eat then watched as they hitched up the trailer and pulled out as the sun made it up over the short treetops.

After thirty minutes of jogging in place, doing jumping jacks followed by lunges, she stretched out on the floor in the living room to do leg lifts and sit-ups. She hated this part. It didn't help that halfway through them she

ended up with stomach cramps. Then she managed to hit her left ankle on the coffee table hard enough to leave a red spot the size of a silver dollar. When she'd finally completed her routine, Beverly collapsed back to the floor and closed her eyes to rest for a few minutes. She had plenty of time to get up and take a quick shower before the guys made it back.

A weird noise jerked her eyes open sometime later. Had she fallen asleep? She looked around her but didn't see anything. Her ankle burned, and her belly was sore from the cramps. She closed her eyes again, but a scuffling sound had her sitting up and looking around in earnest. She was positive she'd heard something. She stared at the couch, wondering if there was something under it. Realizing she was on the floor right next to it, Beverly jumped up and climbed on the coffee table. There was no way she could check underneath. If there was something there, it might attack her.

Several long minutes went by as she sat cross-legged on the table without another sound interrupting the creepy silence. Finally, she talked herself into getting off the coffee table and hurrying upstairs to take a shower. She still didn't check under the couch. The guys could do that when they returned, if she told them. That was all she needed. They would tease her and think she was prone to hysterics if she told them she heard a noise and was afraid there was something under the couch.

She quickly showered, washing her hair so it wouldn't smell like sweat. She wanted to make a good impression with their neighbors. She hoped she and the woman would become good friends. It would be nice to have someone to visit with occasionally and talk to over the radio when possible.

As she dried off, the place on her right ankle burned when she wiped over it with the towel. Funny, she thought it had been the other leg. She didn't bother looking at it. Instead she dressed in pale-blue capris with a white blouse and sandals. She left her hair down, though she normally wore it up in a ponytail. Thank goodness it wasn't so hot yet that she couldn't tolerate it down.

She heard the sound of the transport as it pulled up to the barn. Beverly looked out the bedroom window to see them climb out of the buggy and walk back to the trailer. She couldn't wait to see the horses. Even if she couldn't go out to check on them right now, she could get a closer look with the binoculars.

It didn't take long to find them in the office and return to the living room window to watch them unload the horses. Two of them were a pretty bay color with white socks. The third was a dapple that pranced a bit when they led him from the trailer around to the barn. They all looked like wonderful horses to her from there. Her husbands didn't look so bad either. With a giggle, she returned the binoculars to the office and hurried to the kitchen to make sandwiches.

After another twenty minutes, they stomped off their feet on the back porch and opened the door. Caleb walked through first and grinned as he hurried toward her with arms open wide.

"No! I just got out of the shower. Don't you dare get horse on me." Beverly ran around the kitchen table in an effort to avoid him.

Jeff walked in and laughed as Caleb chased her around the table again.

"Jeff. Don't let him get me dirty. I just changed clothes." Beverly was laughing so hard she had trouble talking.

Finally Caleb stopped and pouted in her direction. "Can't even get any sugar from my wife when I've been out working my ass off."

She grinned and cocked her head to one side. "I don't know about that. Looks like you've got a nice round one to me."

He lunged for her again, and she screeched as she ran into the living room. They followed her but continued on up the stairs.

"We're going to clean up. Be down in a little while to eat, Bev," Caleb said.

She drew in a deep breath to calm down and returned to what she had been doing when they walked inside. She had enjoyed that. If only everyday could be like that. Maybe they would be. They hadn't been together a solid week yet. She needed to stop feeling so anxious. Caleb seemed to be happy with her now. She was sure over time they would all come to care and maybe even love each other. She glanced toward the door. At least she hoped so.

\* \* \* \*

"How long will it take you to be ready to leave, Bev?" Caleb asked after they had finished eating.

“Just give me twenty minutes to wipe everything down.” She quickly gathered up the plates and carried them to the sink.

They were only a fifteen-minute walk away and less than that by transport, but the men had taken longer than they had planned to clean up and dress. She was glad they were taking the transport since they might be late getting home. She didn’t much want to walk in the late afternoon when those mantis creatures might be out roaming around. Even though they hadn’t seen any sign of them since that first time, she wasn’t willing to take any chances.

Drying her hands on the dish towel, Beverly went in search of the men to tell them she was ready. They were sitting in the office discussing the horses.

“Ready, baby?” Jeff asked when she walked in.

“All ready. I can’t wait to meet them.”

Caleb pulled on her hair before wrapping an arm around her shoulders. Jeff swatted her on the butt and took the lead as they walked through the house to the back door. It was easier to go out the back and through the gate to get to the shed where they kept the transport than it was to walk all around the front to get to it. Plus, since they had parked by the barn to unload the horses, it would have been even farther from the front.

“Were our neighbors there picking up their horses when you were there?” she asked.

Jeff fastened her into the harness before fixing his own. “Yeah, they were loading up and getting ready to leave when we got there.”

Caleb started the buggy up and pulled away from the barn. Beverly looked around them as they drove in hopes of spotting any more stone berry bushes. They seemed to arrive before she even had time to settle in for the ride. Caleb pulled them up close to the porch then cut the motor. While Jeff unfastened their safety gear, Caleb jumped down from the transport and walked around to wait on them to climb down.

They had just walked up on the front porch when the door swung open and a tall man with tanned skin and shaggy, black hair stepped out on the porch. He looked to be a couple of inches over six feet and had dark eyes. Caleb climbed the steps and held out his hand.

“Hey, Nelson, how was the trip home with the horses?”

“Caleb.” He shook his hand. “No trouble at all. They seem to be settling in fine. Hey, Jeff.”

Jeff kept one hand at the small of her back as they stepped up on the porch. Nelson smiled and shook Jeff’s hand.

“This is our wife, Beverly. This is Nelson Jones.”

The other man nodded his head toward her. Beverly smiled.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“Come on in. Sloan is inside with our wife, Faye. She’s been jumping up and down like a kid all excited about meeting you.” Nelson opened the door and ushered them inside.

Beverly saw right away that their houses were exactly the same except in the color schemes. She guessed it was easier to build a lot of them in a short amount of time if you only had to deal with one set of plans.

Her attention was drawn to the pretty, blonde-headed woman walking into the room from the direction of what she assumed was the kitchen. Another tall man with light-brown hair stood beside her. The woman had the prettiest blue eyes she had ever seen. She couldn’t have been more than five foot three, and she was almost as dark as Nelson.

“This is Faye and my partner, Sloan Hucklebee.” Nelson finished the introductions out.

“Why don’t we head to the kitchen? I have coffee ready, and we can take the men theirs in the office. I know they are planning to work.” Faye smiled and led the way to the kitchen. “Is it much of a trip between our places?” she asked.

Beverly shook her head. “No, I barely got settled in before we were here. I wouldn’t much like walking back and forth with the creatures we have out there, but it’s not far at all.”

“Have you seen any of them yet?” Faye asked.

“We saw one of the mantis things when we were driving to the house the first day, and then the next day when the men were coming in from working on the fence, there were several of them in the yard. It scared me to death until the men made it back inside.”

“We’ve had a couple show up right at dark, and we’ve had several run-ins with those dog like creatures they call dorries. Nasty things with a mouth full of teeth.” She filled the cups as they talked.

“I haven’t seen anything like that yet, thank goodness.”

“Let’s carry their coffee to them then we can come back and talk.” Faye led the way back to the office.

Once they had returned to the kitchen, they settled at the table. Beverly already liked Faye. She was a pleasant woman and seemed to be around her age. Despite her model good looks, the woman was friendly and didn’t seem the least bit snobbish.

“Have you gotten your garden in?” Beverly asked.

“Yes, thank goodness. It was a chore though. I’m a pretty good cook and can put up food without problems, but I have never worked a garden before other than some window boxes for herbs. I was a chef back on Earth.”

“Wow. I know your husbands are happy. You’ll probably come up with some really good meals using some of the native plants. You’ll have to teach me.”

Faye laughed. “I don’t know about that. We’ll see. I’ll be glad to share anything I make though.”

“I’ll help you with the garden when you have questions. I was raised on a farm, so I’ve always had one.”

“Boy would my guys like it if you had been here yesterday then.” She chuckled. “I think Sloan was ready to stuff my mouth with a rag by the end of the day. I had to ask a million questions. I should have paid better attention on the shuttle.”

Beverly laughed, and the two of them talked about everything from canning to how much they missed Earth.

“We’ll have to plan to talk to each other on the radio every day,” Faye suggested.

“I agree. I wonder how the men are going to schedule their workdays? They’ve been so busy that I haven’t even asked if someone has to work at night or not.”

Faye shook her head. “I think I remember Sloan and Nelson discussing it. They were saying that without fences to keep them in one general area, they might have to work some nights to keep them from scattering too much.”

“Maybe this first year they won’t have to since they won’t have more than six or seven hundred head to keep up with. Then, by the time the herd has grown, there should be more hands to help out.”

Beverly realized she was getting sleepy. She checked the clock on the wall and noticed it was only seven. Why was she so tired? She struggled with a yawn, covering her mouth.

“Goodness. I don’t know why I’m so sleepy all of a sudden.” She yawned again.

Faye laughed. “If your men are anything like my men, you’re not getting a lot of sleep at night.”

Beverly felt her face heat up. No doubt her cheeks were red as a barn. The other woman laughed.

“Don’t tell me you’re shy. How can you be shy with two husbands?” she asked.

“I guess I’m just like that. I can’t help it.” She wanted to change the subject, but it looked like Faye was anything but shy.

“Don’t you just love having both of them paying attention to you at one time? I mean who would complain about having two mouths on your breasts at the same time?” She giggled.

Beverly smiled but didn’t say anything. She was afraid she would embarrass herself. She totally agreed with Faye, but talking about it was a little beyond her reach.

“What about when they both take you at the same time? I’ve nearly passed out every time, it’s so good.” Faye looked at her then cocked her head. “You haven’t had sex with both of them at the same time yet, have you?”

“Um, no. Not yet.” She wished the floor would open up and swallow her.

“Why not? It’s un-freaking-believable!” the other woman said.

“Well, they’ve been, um, waiting for me to, um, get used to the idea. I’ve never really had sex like that before.”

Faye frowned and looked at her. “Bev, it’s amazing. You have nothing to be scared of. They should prepare you some before you try it. Have they been doing that?”

Beverly knew her entire face and neck were solid red by now. She nodded her head.

“Well, good. That means they know what they are doing. You don’t have to be nervous about it. Just remember to relax and push out against his cock when he’s pushing in your ass. It may burn a little bit at first, but it

stops after a few seconds, and once they get going, it's wonderful, almost spiritual how close the three of you feel."

Beverly couldn't believe they were talking about sex—anal sex at that. She knew the guys wanted to do it, but she'd balked each time they got close to trying it. They'd prepared her a little almost every time they'd had sex. It sounded like she was denying them all something that was special. Now she felt selfish and cowardly for holding out.

"Hey, there's nothing wrong with feeling a little unsure or nervous about it. It's not exactly conventional. I'd had anal sex before back on Earth before all of this, so I wasn't really worried about the two-on-one thing."

"I guess I led a pretty sheltered life. I've really only had two boyfriends, and they weren't very, um, adventurous."

"Nothing wrong with that except that you were missing out on some major pleasure. I bet you wouldn't want to go back to one-man missionary position now, would you?" Faye giggled and winked at her.

Beverly realized that Faye was absolutely right. Now that she'd experienced sex with Jeff and Caleb, she wasn't in any hurry to let go of them. Maybe it was time she relaxed and tried sex with both of them at the same time. They'd been very patient and hadn't pushed her when she'd resisted their efforts to get her to try it.

"What have you girls been discussing in here that has Beverly all red and embarrassed?" Caleb's deep voice startled her.

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## Chapter Thirteen

Beverly hadn't even heard them walk into the room. Looking up, the men all had amused expression on their faces. Faye frowned at them.

"None of your business. Did you want more coffee? I can make some real fast." She got up and walked over to the counter.

"No, thanks, Faye. We better head out. It's after eight now." Jeff wrapped a hand around the back of Beverly's neck and lightly squeezed. "We really appreciate y'all letting us drop in and visit for a while."

"It was our pleasure," Nelson said. "I'm glad we could work out the schedule so that it works for all of us."

"We'll see how things go and make a decision on if we need to make those changes we talked about sooner rather than later." Caleb nodded at Sloan.

Beverly stood up and let Jeff draw her out of the kitchen into the living room toward the front door. The other two men followed them, each having an arm around Faye. It was obvious to her that they all got along fine. She was glad for them and hoped that she and her husbands continued to grow closer. Maybe if she tried sex with both of them it would help like Faye had hinted at.

When Jeff started to open the door, Sloan stepped forward and grabbed the gun from next to the office doorway.

"Let me walk you out. Like I said earlier, we've had several of those mantis things around the house at night."

Caleb nodded, and they all walked out on the porch. The sun was just setting, and everything had an orangey ting to it. Caleb hurried over to the buggy and opened the passenger door before walking around to the other side to get in. Jeff helped her up into the transport while Sloan kept watch on the porch with the gun in his hands.

By the time they were buckled in and Caleb was ready to pull out, Sloan had disappeared back inside the house. When they turned around in front of the house to head back home, several creatures ran across in front of them but didn't attack or try and follow them.

Beverly shivered at the sight of them. "I hope there aren't any around our house waiting on us."

Jeff squeezed her hand. "Don't worry. We have the guns with us."

Caleb looked over at her and smiled. "Did you have a good time?"

Beverly grinned back. "I really did. Faye is nice. Did you know she was a chef on Earth? She's going to teach me some new recipes."

"That sounds good, but there's nothing wrong with your cooking, baby." Jeff kissed her cheek.

"I'm more interested in what had you blushing so badly," Caleb teased.

"None of your business, nosey." She smiled then yawned and closed her eyes. She was so sleepy.

"Looks like someone is tired." Jeff's voice sounded like it was coming from a different room.

Why couldn't she keep her eyes open? She hadn't really done anything all day long other than the exercises before lunch. Maybe it was lack of sleep. They hadn't slept much the night before. Even though they had gone to bed early, the guys had woken her up several times to play.

She knew she was drifting off, but she couldn't seem to help herself. She couldn't ever remember being this sleepy before. At some point she could have sworn the guys were trying to wake her up, but she couldn't make her eyes open. What was wrong with her?

\* \* \* \*

"What in the hell is wrong with her?" Caleb opened the front door while still holding the gun and watching for creatures so Jeff could carry Beverly inside.

"I don't know. I've never known anyone to sleep this deep before. She never has since we've been together."

Caleb put the gun up after closing and locking the door. "Take her upstairs. We'll try to wake her up again once we get her ready for bed."

He didn't like this one bit. Had she eaten something she was allergic to while they'd been at their neighbor's house? He hadn't seen anything sitting around like a cake or anything. He followed Jeff up and hurried over to pull back the covers on the bed so he could lay her down. They worked together to undress her.

"What is this?" Jeff held one of her sandals in his hand while holding her foot up.

“What?”

“See. This yellowish-green color on her ankle. I’ve never seen that on her before. I would have noticed.”

“Let’s get the rest of her clothes off then look at it.” Caleb quickly unbuttoned her blouse then pulled it off before unfastening her bra and removing it as well.

Jeff had her pants and underwear off and was examining the weird bumps on her skin.

“They look almost like blisters, but they’re yellow and green. It doesn’t make sense. What would cause that?”

Caleb shook his head. “Do you think this is why she’s not waking up?”

“It can’t be a coincidence. I don’t believe in them.”

“Me either. I’m going to call Sloan and Nelson on the radio and make sure she didn’t eat or drink anything while she was there that we didn’t. I’ll be right back.” Caleb hurried out the door and down to the office.

When he got hold of the other men, they checked with Faye and assured him that she hadn’t had anything other than the one cup of coffee like they’d had. Faye had told them that she’d started getting sleepy around seven though. She hadn’t complained of anything bothering her or mentioned the weird bumps on her ankle to Faye.

He thanked them and, after promising to let them know how she was doing, signed off and ran back up the stairs to check on her.

“There’s no change except that the bumps seem to be a little bigger, but I’m not sure,” Jeff said.

Caleb filled him in on what the others had said. “Do you think that maybe she was reacting to something when we thought she was blushing so badly?”

“I guess it’s possible. I don’t understand it. Surely if she’d gotten bitten or scratched by something she would have told us.” Jeff was sitting on the side of the bed watching her.

“Do you think whatever it is on her ankle is contagious for us if we touch it?” Caleb asked.

“Crap. I touched it.” Jeff looked at his hands, but they looked fine and weren’t bothering him or anything.

“We better cover it just to be safe. They look like little blisters. They might open up and drain at some point.”

Jeff nodded and left to locate their first aid supplies. Caleb felt her forehead but didn't think she was running a temperature. Right now, she looked like Sleeping Beauty. Nothing else seemed wrong.

His partner returned with the first aid box and a towel. They covered the oddly colored bumps and agreed that they looked a little bigger than before. Jeff wrapped more gauze around the bandage to make sure it didn't leak during the night.

Caleb tried one more time to wake Beverly up. "Beverly, honey. Wake up. You're scaring us." He shook her gently, but she didn't respond.

"Let's go downstairs and fix something to eat while we talk."

Jeff turned away but not before Caleb saw just how much this was bothering the other man. It was eating him up. Caleb was just as worried. He followed his friend to the kitchen and helped him fix soup and sandwiches. They sat down at the table and ate in silence for several minutes.

"Do you think there is something out in the backyard that is dangerous that we don't know about? I mean we don't really know about half the crap on this planet. The others have been discovering things every day that they've been here." Jeff ran a hand through his hair.

"I don't know. If she's not better in the morning or if she gets worse tonight, we'll radio into the city and ask the doctor there."

"This is why I think we need to go ahead and split our shifts so that one of us is always here to watch out for her."

Caleb agreed with him, but they didn't have the manpower yet to do that. If they did it that way, it didn't leave anyone to check on the cows at night if they started wandering off. Maybe once they got the herd there they could see how they acted. If they didn't spread out too badly during the night, maybe it would work out that they could work that way.

"We'll see how the herd reacts once they get here."

Jeff only nodded and picked up his bowl to take to the sink. It was obvious that right now, he didn't care how the herd did. He didn't want Beverly left on her own—period. Maybe he was right.

"Have you seen anything around other than the mantis things we saw the other night?" Caleb asked.

"No. Nothing. I mean we only found a few of those flowers that had to be pulled up. Sloan and Nelson had seen several of those dorries around

their place.” Jeff shrugged. “Maybe there’s something like a lizard or snake that was so small she didn’t notice it when it bit her. I know they haven’t seen anything like that around, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t out there.”

They talked a little longer trying to figure out what might have happened. Finally, Jeff stood up and said he was going to wash dishes then go back up and sit with Beverly.

“I think I’ll look through those pamphlets we got and see if there’s anything in there besides the descriptions of the animals. I never really read much beyond that part.” Caleb left Jeff in the kitchen.

He’d just started reading the last pamphlet one of the women who had been there for a couple of years had put together when he ran across descriptions of bites and scratches from various creatures. His hands shook as he began to read about them. There were even a few pictures of the healed areas. The fact that they were still discolored but healed didn’t bode well at all. On the other hand, he thought, they had lived.

After studying the wounds for nearly an hour, Caleb had narrowed it down to either a scratch or bite from a dorrie or one of the ratlike creatures called muskies. He rubbed his hands over his face before standing up and stretching. He needed to show Jeff what he’d found.

He checked the time and swore. It was nearly midnight. Carrying the pamphlet upstairs with him, he found Jeff sitting up in the bed holding Beverly’s hand and sleeping soundly. He didn’t look comfortable at all. He was going to have a sore back and a crick in his neck if he stayed that way. Caleb touched his shoulder and called him.

“Jeff. Wake up. I found something.”

The other man jerked then sat up straighter. He checked Beverly then yawned.

“What? Did you find anything?”

“Read over these two pages and see if you agree.” Caleb handed him the booklet with the pages marked.

Jeff read over both pages several times, paying close attention to the pictures. His face paled. Caleb could relate.

“I think it’s the muskie. What do you think?” he asked.

“I’m with you. Do you think it bit her or scratched her?”

“I don’t know. It didn’t really look like a scratch unless it just stuck her with its claws, making puncture wounds. I’m leaning more toward a bite.”

Jeff rubbed his face with both hands. "It says it will open up and drain, and at some point she should wake up. The operative word being should."

"Yeah, I caught that. I think we should radio the doctor in the morning and see if there is something new that they've discovered since this was printed," Caleb said.

"I agree, or maybe we should just take her back and let him see her."

"I'm thinking that moving her around can't be good for her. If the doctor wants to see her, we'll take her then."

Jeff nodded but didn't look convinced. He reached over and pushed a lock of hair behind her ear. He frowned and laid his hand against her cheek then her forehead.

"Damn. She's running a fever. Her skin is hot and dry."

Caleb checked her as well. What in the hell should they do now? The pamphlet had mentioned running a high fever, but it didn't say what to do about it. They didn't have anything they could give her to bring it down.

"Do you think it's too high? Should we try and cool her off with cold water?" Caleb asked.

Jeff checked her again. "I don't think it's too high right now. We'll need to keep a close watch to see if it gets any higher though."

"You get some sleep. I'll watch her for a while. Then I'll wake you up." Caleb walked around the bed and, after removing his boots, climbed up to sit and keep watch over her.

Her temperature didn't get much higher during the rest of the night, but she did move around some as if she was uncomfortable or in pain. He tried to soothe her by stroking her head and holding her hand. Finally she calmed down and was quiet again.

Around five the next morning, Caleb woke Jeff up. He couldn't tell there was much difference, but he wanted to check her ankle to see if it had opened up or started draining during the night.

"Any change?" Jeff asked.

"Not really. She moved around some for a little while like she was uncomfortable, but she wouldn't wake up. Her temperature never seemed to get much higher."

"I'm worried. I want to get in touch with the doctor."

Caleb agreed. "Let's check her ankle to see what it looks like so we can give him an accurate picture then decide when to call. It's only five right

now.”

Jeff eased off the bed and pulled back the covers so they could get to her leg. The towel was still where they’d left it, and the gauze they’d wrapped around it looked clean.

“I don’t see anything on it, do you?” he asked.

Caleb shook his head. “Nope. Let’s unwrap it and see.”

They carefully unrolled the gauze until they got to the original bandage. Jeff gently pulled it back to find that the colored bumps had enlarged and started draining a yellowish liquid.

“Careful, don’t touch any of it. We don’t know if it’s poisonous or not, Jeff.”

“Hand me a new bandage. We can still use the gauze to wrap it since there’s nothing on it yet.” Jeff used the packaging for the new bandage to wrap up the dirty bandage then rewrapped her ankle.

“Okay, let’s try to get some water down her, and then I’m going to take an hour nap. Wake me up by seven thirty so we can contact the doctor.”

Jeff managed to get Beverly to swallow almost a half a glass of water before she stopped swallowing. Caleb had to believe that was a good sign. Surely she wouldn’t be able to swallow if she was in danger of dying.

After several minutes of lying down, he didn’t think he was going to be able to sleep any despite how long he had been awake. Finally, his eyes closed and his mind settled down and slept. The last thought that crossed his mind was that he had begun to fall in love with her and now he might lose her.

## Chapter Fourteen

Jeff sat at the desk with Caleb as they talked to the doctor about Beverly's wound. He was worried sick about her but managed to see the humor in the fact that the doctor's name was Jeff Davis.

"Just call me Doc, guys. It will save some confusion," the other man said.

"What can we do for her while we wait for her to wake up?" Caleb asked.

"There's not much you can do. Keep her hydrated since she's running fever. If she doesn't wake up by tonight, try and feed her some soup to keep her strength up. At this point, we don't have anything that will help."

"What about antibiotics?" Jeff asked.

"I honestly don't think they do any good. In fact, what we've noticed over time is that once someone has been bitten or scratched by one of the animals that are indigenous to the planet, they carry a type of antigen in their blood that seems to fight off most common illnesses. We're still researching but so far, that is what has proven to be true."

"So she's going to have some strange cell in her blood now?" Caleb asked, his voice louder now.

"Yes, but once you start eating the food that is grown on Alpha, you'll have something similar in your bloodstream as well. We don't know what it means in the long run, but so far it hasn't been detrimental to anyone."

"Fuck!" Caleb kicked the desk.

Jeff didn't like it any more than Caleb did. They were basically living experiments it sounded like to him. No one knew anything. They had landed on the damn planet without a clue as to what to expect despite the supposed education they received while they'd been on board the shuttle all those months.

"When she wakes up, find out if she was bitten or scratched. It will help me keep track of how being bitten differs from being scratched. So far, the venom seems to be in their saliva. It's a lot like an acid."

"So you don't have any long-term experience with this crap," Caleb grumbled.

“No. Just a couple of years, and so far the effects haven’t emerged outside of the possibility that it keeps you from getting sick easily.”

“Okay. Thanks, Doc. We’ll be in touch.” Caleb signed off and braced his head on his hands against the desk.

It was obvious to Jeff that Caleb was not just exhausted but worried about their wife. He felt bad for thinking earlier that Caleb wasn’t taking it as seriously as he should have been. His partner just kept things inside more than he did. If Jeff hadn’t been so worried, it would have dawned on him that, with Caleb’s tendency to be controlled and calm no matter what, he wouldn’t show his feelings concerning Beverly’s condition as openly.

Now, however, Caleb was worn out and unable to hold it in check. Jeff stood up and clapped the other man on the shoulder.

“Come on, Caleb. You need to rest. I’ll watch Beverly and wake you up in a few hours.”

“I need to go check on the horses. Then I’ll lie down for a while.”

“I’ll handle the horses. You go on upstairs and rest. I’ll be up as soon as I finish with them.” Jeff followed the other man out of the office and watched him climb the stairs.

He made a pot of coffee and waited for it to finish. After drinking a half of a cup, he grabbed a rifle and headed to the barn. The horses greeted him with whinnies. They appeared to be doing well. He cleaned out their stalls and fed them, making sure to brush each of them for a few minutes.

On the way back to the house, he thought about the garden. Beverly had talked about how important it was to keep it watered but not wet. He checked the ground in several places and decided it needed to be watered. After setting up the water system, he went back inside and poured another cup of coffee to take outside with him while he monitored the water system.

He kept an eye out for any movement just in case one of those damn muskies or dorries showed up. He didn’t think they could get in the backyard with the fence, but maybe they could climb or dig under. They needed to talk to some of the older families who had been there longer. He would suggest that to Caleb when he got back up.

Jeff finished moving the water system around and put it up. With one last look around the yard, he carried his cup back inside and refilled it. He knew he should eat something, but he wasn’t hungry. Instead, he walked around downstairs wondering if something had gotten in the house

somehow. Surely they would have seen or heard the thing if it had. The damn muskies were supposedly as big as a small cat. There was no way they would miss seeing something like that moving around in the house.

He thought about the cellar. What if she'd been down there for some reason and one had managed to get inside? He grabbed his gun once again and opened the pantry door to get to the cellar door. Flipping the light switch at the top of the steps, he carefully walked down and looked all around the room from the vantage point of the next to the last step.

Nothing.

"Fuck. This is really getting on my nerves."

He stepped down and looked around the area making sure to move things from against the wall to see if there was anything hiding. Nothing moved or jumped out at him while he was down there.

Satisfied that there was nothing down there, Jeff climbed the steps and closed up the cellar then the pantry. He started to return the rifle to its spot by the back door but decided to carry it upstairs with him instead. Just in case they needed it.

He found Caleb sound asleep next to Beverly. He had one of her hands in one of his lying against his chest. He felt guilty again at having been angry with himself for not appearing to care enough about her condition. The other man just carried his a different way. He and Caleb weren't alike at all.

Beverly no longer felt hot to the touch. Her skin was cool but pale. He held her head up while he coaxed her to drink more water. She didn't wake up, but she seemed to be able to follow some commands like swallow. He tried something different.

"Beverly, baby. Squeeze my finger." He placed his finger in the palm of her hand.

Nothing happened. He tried again.

"Baby, squeeze my finger. Let me know you can hear me. I'm worried about you."

Her hand remained open, but he could have sworn he felt her hand tremble. He rubbed her palm then left his finger there again.

"Come on, Beverly. Move your hand for me. Let me know you're in there. You've got me and Caleb worried sick."

Slowly, her hand closed over his finger. She didn't squeeze it, but she did close her hand. Jeff grinned and pulled her hand to his mouth so he could kiss her palm and then each of her fingers.

"That was great, baby. I'm proud of you. Now rest and save your strength to get well. We need you to wake up and tell us what happened to your ankle, baby."

Her hand jerked in his hand, but she didn't make a sound or move her head. He wasn't sure if she was reacting to what he'd said or if her hand had just jerked on its own. It didn't matter. He'd gotten his answer. She could hear him and follow directions. He was convinced it wouldn't be long before she would wake up now. Patience. They just needed patience.

\* \* \* \*

Beverly's ankle was burning. She wanted to rub it, but she couldn't seem to move. She tried to open her eyes, but they proved to be as heavy as lead. She wasn't sure she had ever felt this bad before. Maybe when she'd had appendicitis as a child, but she wasn't even sure about then. What was wrong with her?

She tried to listen to see if she could hear Jeff or Caleb talking anywhere, but there was a buzzing in her ears that was annoying as hell. It evidently drowned out all other sound.

She drifted for a few minutes or maybe it was hours, she couldn't tell, but she tried to move again and managed to move her head and neck some. Her eyelids still felt like they weighed a ton, but she kept working to open them. She wasn't giving up.

Somewhere she heard a voice, but with the damned buzzing she couldn't tell whose it was. She tried to call out, but her mouth seemed to belong to another person. It wasn't following directions. For that matter, nothing was following directions. Had she died?

The buzzing began to fade somewhat and she could hear both Jeff and Caleb talking somewhere close by. If she could hear them then she couldn't be dead, right? Beverly wasn't sure of anything anymore. All she knew was that she was aggravated that she couldn't move and scared at what that meant.

When the buzzing had all but disappeared, she worked at opening her eyes and moving her mouth. She desperately wanted someone to know she was there. Even as she managed to crack her eyelids, it registered that the voices had stopped. She'd been too late. They were gone.

A sliver of light burned her eyes when she tried to look through the thin opening. After a few seconds with tears blurring her already dim vision, Beverly managed to get them open a little more and found that she was alone in their bed. It registered with her that her right ankle stung. Why was that? Had she hurt herself? Frustration left even more tears in her eyes as her breathing sped up.

If she didn't get hold of herself, she'd hyperventilate and pass out. She didn't want to do that now that she had finally managed to open her eyes. Surely the guys would come back to check on her soon. If she just wasn't so tired.

*Face it, I'm sick for some reason, and I'm always grumpy when I'm sick.*

A sound outside the room jerked her attention toward the door. She struggled to keep her eyes open as Jeff walked through the door. He didn't look at her right away. Instead, he walked over to the bedside table and set a glass of water down. She tried to make a sound to let him know she was awake and so damn thirsty.

Without looking at her, he disappeared into the bathroom. Her eyes remained glued to that door waiting for him to emerge again and notice that she was awake. It was taking all her strength to keep her eyes open. Why hadn't he looked at her? Didn't he care enough to check to see if she was even breathing? Pain slammed through her chest with the thought that he and Caleb might be relieved if she died and they could find another wife. She already knew that she wasn't their first choice.

Jeff walked out of the bathroom carrying a towel and something else. He still didn't seem to notice she had her eyes open. They were open, weren't they? She could see him, so they had to be open. Why was this happening to her?

He dropped the towel and other things at the foot of the bed before bending over to pull back the covers. His eyes met hers and widened with shock. For a few seconds they just stared at each other.

"Beverly! Thank God you're awake!"

His relieved smile melted away some of the pain and worry that had settled in her heart. He reached out and touched her cheek then turned away and ran out the door yelling for Caleb.

Beverly sighed and closed her eyes. So much for a sip of water.

“Caleb! She’s awake. Get your ass up here, now!”

Her eyes flew open when he jostled the bed with his return. She tried to speak, but her throat still wasn’t exactly cooperating. At least she managed to swallow around the dryness that plagued her. When he bent down and kissed her gently on the lips, Beverly tried to at least moan. It came out as a cracked whine. She pushed her tongue out of her mouth to try and lick her lips, but it only poked out and sat there. God, she must look like a crazy idiot.

“What is it, baby?” Jeff leaned over presenting her with his ear.

“Beverly?” Caleb’s face came into view when he shoved Jeff aside. “Can you hear me, honey?”

She couldn’t tell him that he didn’t have to yell, but she managed to blink her eyes once in a slow blink. For a minute she was worried she wouldn’t be able to open her eyes back up. That would have taken the cake. Finally awake only to fall asleep once she had their attention.

“I think she’s thirsty. She stuck her tongue out a couple of times.” Jeff reached across Caleb and grabbed something off the table.

The coveted glass of water came into view. She tried to widen her eyes to let them know it was exactly what she wanted. Caleb lifted her shoulders so that she was sitting up to some degree while Jeff held the glass of water to her lips. The first few drops ran down her chin and neck, but finally, she got the hang of it and swallowed the most delicious thing she had ever tasted. Who would have thought water actually had a taste.

When she couldn’t drink any more, they pulled the glass away, lowered her back to the bed, and dried her off. She felt so much better, but she was also tired again. Her eyelids started getting heavy.

“Can you say anything, baby?” Jeff asked, squeezing her hand.

He’d moved to the other side of the bed so that both he and Caleb could sit next to her and hold a hand apiece. They both looked as tired as she felt, and neither man seemed to have shaved lately. How long had she been sick?

“W—what happened?” she finally managed to get out even as her eyes closed.

“Honey, we don’t really know, but we think something scratched or bit you. Do you remember?” Caleb asked.

She could tell she was beginning to drift again. They sounded so far away. She licked her lips, thankful that she could do that now. She shook her head, or at least she thought she did.

“I think she’s sleeping again.” That sounded like Jeff’s voice.

Beverly struggled to say something. What? She couldn’t remember what she was going to say.

“That’s okay. She needs to rest. Now that she’s woken up once. She’ll do it again and stay awake longer next time.” She was positive that was Caleb’s deep voice.

The ringing was back. The stinging in her ankle hadn’t lessened any despite the fact that she was drifting away. She’d tell them about it when she woke up again. Right now, she just wanted to rest.

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## Chapter Fifteen

The constant stinging in her ankle was driving her crazy. Beverly groaned and opened her eyes to find Caleb sitting on the bed next to her with his eyes closed. She stared up at him then reached out to touch him. Her hand fell halfway there, but it got his attention.

“Hey there, honey. How are you feeling?”

She tried to moisten her lips, but once again her mouth felt like dry sandpaper. She did manage to rasp out a sound that didn’t come anywhere close to being *better*.

He blinked at her then jumped up and grabbed the glass of water. This time when he helped her up and held the glass to her lips she managed to start drinking right away. It was more sipping, but soon she was almost gulping the lukewarm water. She bet cold water would be even better.

“There you go.” He lowered her back to the bed and returned the glass to the bedside table. “Are you hungry? I can heat up some soup for you. Jeff’s outside tending to the horses, but he’ll be in soon.”

She tried to smile but wasn’t sure she had managed the feat by the puzzled expression on Caleb’s face. No doubt he thought she was brain damaged by now. Maybe she was. And why was her ankle stinging so badly? She struggled to move it to relieve some of the pressure she felt there.

“What is it, Bev? Is something hurting? What can I do?”

The desperation in Caleb’s voice was shocking to her. The man never sounded like that. He always appeared to have everything under control. Nothing bothered him. She wondered if there was something seriously wrong with her. She searched back, trying to remember, but all she could drag into focus was getting the garden planted and meeting their neighbors. Had they watered her garden?

“Garden?” she grunted out.

“Don’t worry about that. You concentrate on getting better. You’ve scared us to death.”

“Water.”

“You want some more to drink?” He reached for the glass.

Beverly shook her head. “Garden.”

His brow wrinkled with confusion. Finally it seemed to dawn on him what she was saying. He set the glass back on the table and squeezed her hand between both of his.

“The garden is fine. We’ve been watering it. The plants pushed through the ground yesterday. Damndest thing I’ve ever seen. It’s too early for them to be up. Jeff has been keeping your diary up for you, too.”

She smiled, or at least she thought she did. This time it seemed to have worked since Caleb smiled back at her.

“There you go. That’s my Beverly. You rest now. I’m going to warm up some soup. Jeff should be back in by then, and he can help you eat. He doesn’t make as big of a mess as I do.” He grimaced as if thinking about it.

Beverly nodded as best she could and closed her eyes again to rest. She was tired, but she didn’t want to go back to sleep yet. She wanted to see Jeff, and she was hungry. How long had she been out? If the plants had come up, it had to have been at least seven or eight days, right? But he’d said they were up too soon. How soon was too soon?

It all eluded her as she remembered that she hadn’t told Caleb that her ankle was bothering her. She’d tell them when they returned with her soup. Noises from downstairs helped keep her focused enough that she didn’t drift off too far. Still, when someone returned to the room sometime later, it took a great deal of effort to open her eyes again.

“Beverly? Wake up, baby. I’ve got your soup here for you.” Jeff’s voice penetrated the comfortable fog in her head.

The bed dipped on one side then the other. They both must be there with her, she thought. After a couple of seconds, she opened her eyes and found both men sitting next to her with smiles on their faces. Nothing looked so good to her than that. She returned the smile. Her stomach growled a long serenade on how empty it was. Both men laughed.

“Let’s get you sitting up so Jeff can feed you.” Caleb lifted her up and situated several pillows behind her for support.

“It’s mostly broth, baby, but you need to eat all you can. Shouldn’t be too hot. I checked it before I brought it up,” Jeff said.

She opened her mouth and welcomed the salty liquid. The taste exploded over her tongue, and she nearly choked trying to savor it. No more of that. She needed to eat and stop playing around. Caleb had just about knocked her off the bed beating on her back when she’d coughed.

“Be careful, Bev. Don’t choke. You’ll end up with pneumonia if you get it in your lungs.”

Jeff spooned bite after bite into her mouth until she couldn’t manage anymore. She shook her head after the last one she’d taken.

“Enough.” It came out pretty clear.

“Okay. You did really well this time. You managed to eat over half. We can try some more again later.” Jeff wiped her face with a napkin then stood up with the bowl. “I’ll be right back. I’m going to put this up and get you some fresh water.”

She smiled again. Maybe it would be cold. She really wanted some cold water after that salty soup. Caleb sat next to her without saying anything. He stroked her arm and squeezed her hand every once in a while. When Jeff returned, he offered her the water without her trying to ask for it. She had been right. It was delicious after the soup.

“Let’s clean her up, Caleb. She’ll feel better after a bath,” Jeff said.

Caleb nodded. “I’ll run the water. We’ll have to keep her foot dry though.”

Why? She wanted to ask, but for a second she couldn’t make her mouth work again. Finally it cooperated.

“Why?”

“Why what, baby?” Jeff frowned at her. “Don’t you want a bath?”

“Foot. Why foot?” she asked.

“Oh.” The confusion in his expression cleared up. “You have a wound on your ankle, Beverly. Do you remember how it happened?”

She concentrated and tried to remember, but nothing came to mind. Shaking her head, she sighed. Tears burned behind her eyes. What was wrong with her?

“Hey, don’t cry, baby. Everything is going to be fine. You’re on your way to getting better now. We’ll take care of you. Caleb and I will take care of everything.” He brushed her hair back from her face and kissed her forehead.

By the time they finished bathing her and drying her off, Beverly was exhausted. She wasn’t sure she’d ever been that tired before. Her ankle still stung, but at least now she knew why, or at least that it was injured somehow. She could see the white bandage around it but not much else. Neither man offered any kind of explanation, so either they didn’t have one

or they were keeping something from her. She wasn't sure their not knowing was any better than their not wanting to tell her about it.

Back in bed with fresh sheets that Jeff had managed to put on the bed while Caleb finished her bath, Beverly tried to arch her neck to see her ankle better. With the gauze wrapped around her leg like that though she wouldn't be able to see anything anyway. She'd have to get one of the guys to talk to her about it, but she would get them to tell her later. Maybe tomorrow. She was really tired.

\* \* \* \*

The men finished up their simple dinner of soup and sandwiches while talking about Beverly waking up. Jeff was glad Caleb had checked in on her when he did. He was pretty sure she had been on the verge of going back to sleep since it took a lot for her to fully emerge again. He felt sure she was on the road to recovery now. It wouldn't be long until she was up and around again. Even though she was shy and slightly reserved, her warm smiles and bubbly laughter brightened his life. He could feel her making a place in his heart for herself, and he was happy about it. Maybe one day she would feel secure enough with them to open up more.

He glanced over at Caleb as he dried the dishes and put them away. It had been a little bit of a shock to see how affected the other man had been by her condition. At first, he hadn't seemed nearly as worried as he should have been to Jeff, but later, it was obvious just how much Caleb cared about their wife. His usual composed, almost-detached way of dealing with problems hadn't lasted more than a few hours once they realized she wasn't waking up and that something had happened to her. Caleb had been unflappable in all the long months he had known the man until this.

Now, despite the fact that Beverly was improving, he still hadn't reverted all the way back to his usually constrained composure. It made him slightly more approachable to people like Beverly. He hoped he didn't return to that again. Here on Alpha, there wasn't any reason to appear to always be in control around those who would enjoy your loss of control. Here, the name of the game was survival on the most basic of levels. Maybe Caleb was finding that out.

“I’m going to let everyone know how Beverly is doing. Why don’t you go on up and keep her company if she’s awake,” Jeff suggested.

Caleb stretched and nodded. “Andrew and Danny have been real supportive. They knew exactly what was going on when we talked to them about her. If she keeps progressing like this, we should be able to divide the herd next Monday.”

“I’ll talk to them about it. Tell Beverly I’ll be up soon.”

He watched the other man climb the stairs before walking into the office and adjusting the radio to call up Sloan and his partner first. He’d get a report on what they had accomplished before calling Danny and Andrew. The other two men had started fencing in the area closest to them for the herd. Once they had everything under control with the cattle in their area, they would work on it as much as possible until they had the entire mapped out area enclosed. It would go a long way in keeping out predators and keeping the cows from wandering off.

After a few minutes, Sloan answered his call.

“Hey, Jeff. How is Beverly today?”

“She’s doing much better. She’s been awake off and on all day. She even managed to eat half a bowl of soup.”

“That’s good news. I know you and Caleb are relieved. Has she said anything about what happened?”

“Not yet. She’s still only saying a few words at a time. I’m hoping she’ll be able to talk more tomorrow. I’m anxious to find out what got her so we can do something about it. I don’t want it to happen again.” Jeff worried that she’d gone outside of the fenced-in area while they had been gone. Caleb would have a fit.

“Not to mention that it could still be around and attack one of you. Be careful and keep your eyes open.” Sloan’s worry carried over in his voice.

“We will. How are you doing with the fence?”

They talked for several more minutes about the fence and when they thought they would be able to get their cattle to their land. He could tell the other man was just as eager to get started as he was. He missed being in the saddle and out on the range. The sights and sounds might be different here, but basically it had to be the same.

When he called up Danny and Andrew, Jeff could tell they were stressed about something. He hoped the problem wasn’t because they were

trying to handle too many cows.

“How’s Beverly, Jeff?” Danny asked.

“She’s doing a lot better.” Jeff filled him in on her progress before continuing to tell him how the others were doing with the fence project.

“Sounds like everything is working out fine now. I’m really glad your wife is doing so well. It will take some time, but she’ll be right as rain in no time.”

“Thanks, Danny. I’m really sorry we’ve stuck you with everything right now.”

“Hey. She comes first, and we had the same situation ourselves, so don’t let it worry you. The cows are fine. They’ve been strangely calm these last few days.”

Jeff still felt as if there was something bothering the other man. He didn’t know him that well. Not like he knew Sloan and Denton. Having spent most of the six months on the shuttle around them, they were fairly close friends now.

“Is something else going on, Danny? You sound stressed. If it’s not the cattle, what is it?” Jeff finally asked.

Silence echoed from the speakers except for a little static over the radio. He worried that he’d either lost contact with him or the other man was upset that he’d pried into their business. He wasn’t really trying to be nosey. He was concerned. Everyone had to stick together out there. It was too dangerous to remain isolated from everyone else in the area. They all had similar needs, and after the incident with Beverly, they obviously needed to share information on a regular basis.

Finally, Danny spoke again. “It’s kind of a long story, and...it’s complicated as well.”

Jeff started to tell him that he had plenty of time, but that if it was too personal, he understood. Danny started talking again before he could tell him.

“We’ve got a little girl who is eighteen months old. She wasn’t up when you and Caleb came to get the horses last week.”

“I knew you had a child, but I didn’t know how old she was. How is she doing?” Jeff was almost afraid to ask.

“Great! She’s a wonder.” Danny hesitated for a few seconds. “The thing is, she and all of the other children who have been born so far are...

different.”

Jeff felt his blood turn to ice in his veins. “What do you mean, different?”

“They’re more, um, advanced. They seem to be growing at an accelerated rate compared to how the children grew and matured on Earth.”

“Is anyone looking into it?” Jeff had to work at keeping his voice steady.

Here was another piece of information that no one had bothered to fill them in on when they were on their way there. They had to have known about it. Just like they had to have known about the fucking acid some of the damn creatures had in their mouths and blood. The more he thought about it, the angrier he became. It took all his concentration to remain calm over the radio. Danny needed to talk. He needed someone to confide in other than his partner.

“Yeah, Doc is working on it with a couple of scientists who are in the city. I’m not sure, but I think one of them is his and Scott’s wife. Anyway, they’re trying to figure out why and what it means in the long run. Right now, she’s healthy as a horse, but we just don’t know what to expect and it’s...” Danny trailed off.

“Scary. I can imagine. Is there anything else other than how fast she’s growing?”

“She has that damn cell or antigen or whatever in her bloodstream that we all have now. More than likely it’s coming from the food since most people haven’t been exposed to the creature’s blood or saliva. Doc thinks theirs is a little different than ours is though. And there’s more of it.”

Jeff leaned his head in his hands then keyed the mike again. “Well don’t go borrowing trouble. It sounds like she’s doing well and since they think the stuff in our blood helps fight illness, she should be healthier than we are. That’s a plus, right?”

“Right. You’re right. It’s just hard to watch the changes happen so fast. I can’t even enjoy how she is before she’s changing again.” Danny sighed over the mike. “Anyway. I’m real glad to hear that Beverly is doing so much better. Go take care of her and we’ll talk again later.”

“Danny. We’re here. If you need anything or just to talk, we’re here.”

“Thanks, man. I appreciate that. Night. Out.”

Jeff cut off the mike and reset the radio to the emergency channel before sitting back in the chair and closing his eyes. He'd tell Caleb about it when they weren't around Beverly, but she didn't need to hear this right now. It would scare her to death. Hell, it was scaring him to death. What did it mean for them? Their children when they eventually had them.

"Fuck!" What if Beverly was already pregnant? It was possible.

What would her illness do to a baby if there was one? He rubbed the heel of his hands over his eyes then stood up. There was nothing he could do about any of it. Letting himself get anxious wasn't helping him, and it wouldn't help Beverly when she picked up on it. The best thing he could do right now was put it out of his mind. Somehow.

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## Chapter Sixteen

Beverly readjusted her pillow as she settled on the couch. She'd finally succeeded in convincing the two party poopers to let her sit up on the couch. She was tired of the bed and wanted to be doing something. They refused to believe her when she told them that she was as good as new now. Jeff had argued that she'd been unconscious for nearly three days and unable to talk for another twenty-four hours.

"Well, I can talk now, and I don't like being treated like an invalid."

"I can hear you!" Caleb yelled from the office where he was working.

Jeff was out tending to the horses and the garden. She wanted to see her garden. She'd been the one to plant it, and now it was growing without her. That fact alone was enough to rouse her temper, which was something she hadn't really remembered having much trouble with before.

"I'm bored, Caleb. Let me cook something for dinner."

"No. Sit still or I'll move you back upstairs."

She stuck her tongue out at him, glaring toward the office. She knew she was pouting, could feel her lips protruding like a child, but she couldn't help it. They were babying her to the point of nausea. The first couple of days after she had woken up, it was nice to have so much attention and feel special to them, but now, she was ready to strangle them.

With a sigh, she pulled her leg up closer so she could see her ankle and the strange green and mostly yellow skin there. The area was raised, but not like the guys said it had been at first. Still, the discoloration was weird and a little scary since she'd never heard of anything like it before.

It didn't hurt or burn anymore, and the stinging sensation she'd had when she first woke had mostly disappeared. She'd felt it more so when she was walking on it than at any other time. If she stayed off her feet, it didn't bother her. The thing was, she was tired of staying off her feet. She wanted to do something other than flip through books and stare at the fireplace. Surely there was something she could do to pass the time.

When they had first asked her about the bumps, she hadn't known what they were talking about. Then she realized they were talking about where she'd hit her ankle when she was exercising that morning. Once they'd gotten past the fact that she was working out when they thought she was

already in great shape, Caleb had pointed out that if she had been exercising the way she'd told them, then the injury would have been on her left ankle and not her right.

She'd blown up at their insinuation that she'd lied to them. They covered their tracks pretty damn fast and assured her they hadn't. They were just pointing out that there was a problem with what she'd told them. Yeah, she had to admit, they were right. There was no way she could have hit her outer ankle on the coffee table lying in the direction she had been. That meant something had bitten or scratched her at some point while she'd been waiting on them to return that day. She wished she could remember that day clearer.

"You're awfully quiet out there." Caleb's voice pulled her out of her thoughts. She frowned.

"I'm thinking," she called back.

"Now that scares me," he shouted back.

She rolled her eyes and stretched out on the couch after moving her pillow from behind her back. She actually enjoyed the added attention she was getting from her guys. They spent more time with her both individually and together. Now if she could just get them to make love to her she would feel like everything was back to normal.

Beverly made a face. They didn't think it was a good idea for her to get overexerted so soon after she'd been sick. She was fine. In fact, she'd never felt better. They were being overprotective. Plus, there was something that they were keeping from her. She narrowed her eyes. She was sure of it. They denied it, but sometimes she caught them looking at each other with *that* look.

"Whatever it is, I'm going to find out."

"Did you say something, honey?" Caleb called out.

"No." She grimaced.

The longer she lay on the couch, the sleepier she became. When her hand fell off the edge of the couch, she frowned but didn't move it back to the cushion. Her mind drifted as she thought about the garden and wishing she could have watched it grow. Then she thought about how different Caleb seemed lately, or was it her? She wasn't as uncomfortable around him as she had been at first. What was up with that?

It felt good to feel more relaxed with Caleb. Why had she been so uptight around him in the first place?

*Because I doubted he could care about me. I'm not what he's used to.*

She snorted at that. No one could look as worried as he had that first time she'd woken up with him next to her and not care about her. He felt something. It might not be an all-consuming love, but it was special. She'd take that.

Her fingers brushed the floor, and she remembered that her arm had fallen. She needed to move it before something got it.

*You never know what sort of monster is hiding under the bed at night, or the couch for that matter.*

Now why had she thought about that? She hadn't worried about something being under her bed at night since she'd been a young child.

Then it all came rushing back to her. She jerked her hand up and pushed to a sitting position all at the same time. For a moment, she couldn't breathe as she remembered the noises and thinking there might be something under the couch. Was it still under there? Panic poured over her like a glass of ice water. Had it been in the house all this time and no one had seen it?

"Caleb?" It came out as a whisper.

She tried again. "Caleb!"

"Did you call me, honey?"

"Please come here." Her voice sounded a little stronger that time.

God, what was she going to tell him? Would he think she was crazy? Why hadn't she remembered this sooner? What if one of them had gotten hurt because she hadn't said anything?

"Hey. You're white as a sheet. I knew you were overdoing it. Let's get you back upstairs."

"No!" she shouted.

She swallowed at the startled look on Caleb's face. If they were going to believe her, she had to sound rational and not insane. She bit her lower lip and tried again.

"I think I remember what happened."

Caleb sat on the couch and held her hands in his. Her hands were so cold. She was thankful he seemed to be listening to her after she'd yelled at him.

"Go on. What happened, Bev?"

“I was doing my exercises on the floor in here while I waited on you and Jeff to get back from picking up the horses. I remember thinking I heard something moving around, but when I looked, there was nothing there. I just ignored it and kept doing my exercises.” She paused trying to remember what happened first, hitting her ankle or hearing the noises.

“Go on.” Caleb didn’t take his eyes off her face.

“I don’t remember if I hit my ankle before or after I heard the noises, but at some point I bumped my left ankle on the edge of the coffee table. I remember thinking *ouch*, but I just kept doing the leg lifts. Then when I had finished, I was so worn out, I just lay there on the floor between the coffee table and the couch trying to catch my breath.”

Beverly could remember thinking she’d just close her eyes for a few seconds then get up and take a shower. She had time before they got back.

“I must have dozed off because something startled me and my ankle was burning. It didn’t even dawn on me that it was the opposite ankle to the one I’d hit. I jumped up and took a shower.”

“We haven’t seen or heard anything since we’ve been here. Are you sure it didn’t happen outside?” Caleb asked.

“I promise. It didn’t happen out there, and I never went anywhere except the fenced-in backyard area.”

He shook his head and sighed. “Okay. Let’s get you upstairs. I want to check under everything down here but not with you exposed in case I scare it out.” He picked her up and carried her toward the stairs.

“Put me down here. I can climb the stairs. I wasn’t too excited about walking down on the floor, but I can see the stairs.” She glared at his smirk.

“Let me carry you up, Bev. It will be faster. You’re already tired.”

She sighed and leaned her head against his chest in resignation. He wasn’t going to be talked out of it. She knew that look. His muscles bunched beneath her hands as he climbed the stairs and carried her to their bedroom. When he settled her on the bed, she didn’t let go the hold she had around his neck.

“What is it?” he asked.

“I want a kiss, Caleb.” She held her head back so she could see into his eyes.

He smiled and leaned down to brush his lips across hers. As kisses went, it wasn’t what she was used to with them. Growling, Beverly pulled

him down and nipped his lower lip before plunging her tongue into his mouth when he yelped. He tasted of warm summer days that went on forever. She felt him relax into the kiss and take over. This was what she expected in his kiss.

When he finally pulled back, she opened her eyes to see him watching her with a puzzled expression on his face. When she would have asked him what was wrong, he straightened up.

“Stay up here. I’ll be back after I look around some. If you need something, just call out. I should be able to hear you.” He headed toward the door.

“Wait! I remember something else.”

He turned back around. “What?”

“I remember thinking I heard something down in the cellar when I was getting the seeds and tools together to bring upstairs. I even thought I saw something brownish out of the corner of my eye, but there was nothing there when I looked around.”

Caleb frowned. “You should have told us, Beverly. From now on, you talk to us about anything you *think* you hear or see no matter what. Got it?”

“I will. I was just afraid you’d think I was crazy or ditzy.”

He shook his head and turned back toward the door. Once he’d left and she could no longer hear his steps on the stairs, Beverly let out a heartfelt sigh. He was angry with her again. Not that she’d only just now remembered everything, but that she hadn’t told them about any of it to begin with. Truth was, in the world they were now on, she should have. Nothing was silly when there were creatures out there that they knew nothing about.

\* \* \* \*

“What’s going on?” Jeff walked into the kitchen to find Caleb poking around in the laundry room with the rifle in his hands.

Looking up, he stood up again and sighed. “Beverly remembers some of what happened. She thought she saw something brownish in color down in the cellar when she was getting her seeds and things out, but she isn’t sure. And when she was doing her exercises that day we went to get the horses, she was on the floor between the couch and the coffee table when

she heard something. Then she remembered feeling something burning on her ankle while she was down there.”

“You think something got her inside?” Jeff looked around the kitchen. “Why haven’t we seen or heard anything?”

“I don’t know, but I’m not going to take a chance it’s still here. I’m going down in the cellar next. Why don’t you check the living room? She’s upstairs now. I took her up there so I could concentrate on searching without worrying about her getting bit again.” He grinned. “Once she remembered, she didn’t want to put her feet back on the floor.”

Jeff ground his teeth. If she’d told them when she’d thought she’d seen something or heard something, it might never have happened. There was nothing they could do about it now except find whatever it was and kill it.

“Be careful down there. You know if you have to shoot anything down there it’s going to kill your ears.”

“I know. I’d rather have ringing ears for a while than for that thing to attack her or one of us.”

Jeff nodded and headed to the living room. He had brought his gun into the room with him. The first place he searched was up in the fireplace, just in case the thing had crawled up the chimney. Since there hadn’t been any fires in it yet, he didn’t have to worry about soot. That was all he needed, a face covered in black stuff.

After turning the coffee table upside down, he approached the couch with a little more caution. He listened, but he couldn’t hear anything moving anywhere unless you counted Caleb walking around in the cellar. Grabbing the back of the couch, he quickly turned it to its back. When nothing ran out from under it, he walked around and stared at the mess on the floor.

“Fuck.”

There had been something there all right. The bottom of the couch had a hole in it and some of the inside littered the floor. There were also a few partially gnawed pieces of carrots and potatoes. This wasn’t good. He poked at the bottom of the couch to see if there was still something hiding inside, but nothing moved or made a noise. Still, he didn’t trust that it wasn’t smart and playing possum.

“Caleb?” Beverly’s voice drifted down the stairs.

“It’s Jeff, baby? What do you need?”

“I was just wondering if he’d found anything? I could hear noise down there.”

“We’re looking. He’s down in the basement. Don’t come down here ’til we’ve cleared it.”

“I won’t. Be careful, Jeff.” He could hear a slight tremble in her voice.

Looking at the floor in front of him, he didn’t blame her. These things were dangerous, and one had been living in the fucking couch while they’d been going about their business unawares.

Without taking his eyes off the couch, he sat on the hearth by the fireplace and waited for Caleb to get finished down there. He wanted him in the same room with a gun while he cut the rest of the bottom of the couch open to make sure the damn thing wasn’t still in there. They would need to check the other chairs as well, but he wasn’t going to risk the thing getting away while he wasn’t looking.

He heard the creak of the steps in the pantry. Caleb was on his way back up. Must not have been anything down there since he hadn’t heard any cussing or a gunshot. When his friend appeared in the doorway, he watched the man’s eyes widen then narrow when he saw the mess on the floor where the couch had been.

“Well, fuck.”

“I already said that,” Jeff said.

“Worth saying again. I take it there’s nothing in there.”

“Don’t know for sure. I wanted you ready with the rifle while I cut the rest of the bottom to make sure. I poked around, but nothing moved or made a noise. I don’t trust that it isn’t smart and staying quiet.” Jeff pulled out the knife he carried in his boot and approached the couch.

He watched Caleb lift the rifle and aim toward the couch in a shooter’s stance. They looked each other in the eye then Caleb nodded and Jeff quickly ran the knife from one end of the bottom to the other without hitting anything in between. He ripped back the fabric covering, but other than a little more debris falling out, there was no other sign of the animal.

## Chapter Seventeen

“Crap. I guess it would have been too easy for it to have still been in there,” Caleb said.

Jeff huffed out a breath and straightened up from his crouched position. It was obvious by the way he moved that he was on edge. Caleb swallowed. That made two of them. He didn’t like not knowing things. He liked to have control over his environment, always had. Here on Alpha, he’d lost that control, though it had taken Beverly’s near death to realize it.

“Let’s check the other chairs before we clean that up. I don’t want to risk it moving while we’re distracted.” Jeff walked over to the lounge chair he used, waiting on Caleb to get into position.

“On three I’ll turn it over on its side with the bottom toward you,” he said.

Caleb nodded. He readied the rifle, aiming in the general area of the floor next to the chair.

“One, two, three.” Jeff pulled the chair over on its side and jumped back out of the way.

Nothing ran out, and there was no sign the thing had been under it. No pile of mess and the bottom didn’t have a hole chewed or torn out of it like the couch had. They both blew out a breath. Caleb moved over to stand on the other side of his chair. Once again he took aim and waited for Jeff to count and turn it on its side.

On three, Jeff jerked the chair over and something screeched and flew from under it. It happened so fast that Caleb didn’t have time to aim and shoot.

“Fuck! It ran in the kitchen.” Jeff grabbed up his gun and both of them ran into the other room.

“Be careful, Jeff. Let’s not shoot each other with it running around like this.”

Caleb heard Beverly call out, wanting to know what was wrong. He didn’t have time to tell her anything.

“Stay up there and don’t come down here!” Jeff yelled.

The creature ran from under the table into the pantry and down the cellar steps. Caleb hadn’t closed the door when he came out to see what was

going on with Jeff. Hell, if they cornered it down there, the gunshot would deafen them. They didn't both need to be deaf for any length of time.

"Stay up here, Jeff, so the noise doesn't mess up your hearing. I'll take care of it."

"I don't like you down there with that thing by yourself," he said.

They were both staring at the steps with their guns pointed that way in case the creature ran back up. As much as he didn't relish the pain it would cause, he had no choice but to do it. They didn't want it to get back into the main part of the house.

"We don't have time to argue. If it got inside from down there somewhere, it might get out the same way and we will never find it." Caleb stepped deeper into the pantry and aimed the gun down as he took the first step. "Close the door behind me. If it heads back up the stairs, either you'll shoot me aiming for it, or I'll shoot you aiming up the stairs. Stay away from the door until I open it or I call for you."

Jeff scowled but nodded his head. Caleb took another step down, and he heard the door close behind him. He hoped like hell Jeff had remembered to get away from the damn door. With each step he took deeper into the cellar, Caleb searched the area around him. Sweat slid down his back and beaded on his forehead. He hesitated to wipe it off in case the little bastard moved and he lost the shot. If he waited too long, it might roll into his eyes and blind him for a few crucial seconds.

Nothing moved around him. Before he took the next step, he quickly wiped away the sweat over his eyes and regained control of the gun. Another step and he heard something to his left. Swinging around, all he saw were the shelves filled with jars of food. He continued down, moving slowly and listening between each step he took. By the time he'd made it all the way to the bottom, his shirt was soaked.

Along the bottom of the shelves there were boxes holding empty jars and lids ready to be filled from the garden come fall. Along another wall, bins held the root vegetables they'd brought back from the city. He'd put them there himself, so he knew there was not space between them or behind them. He looked over to the right. It was mostly empty space except for the box of Beverly's garden tools and some empty cans that had held seeds. It had to be behind some of that. There just wasn't anywhere else it could be.

Caleb eased toward the box and cans, trying to be as quiet as possible. When he was close enough he could touch the box with his booted foot, he pointed the barrel of the rifle at the box and kicked it. Nothing happened there, but behind him, something squealed. He swung around, still aiming the rifle to see a cat-sized, brownish looking rat jump from the top of the shelves toward him. He stepped to one side and shot it in mid-leap. The noise was deafening like he'd expected. Pain pounded into his head, and for a second, his vision dimmed.

As soon as he was able, Caleb located the muskie and poked it with the rifle to make sure it was really dead. It didn't move, and he didn't see any sign that it was breathing. They'd guessed right, going by the pamphlet, as to what had hurt her. The brindled, brown creature was the size of a small cat and had wicked-looking claws and, from the brief glimpse he'd had when it was sailing through the air toward him, seriously sharp teeth.

He hurried up the steps and opened the door into the pantry. He couldn't hear Jeff, but his friend had heard him and hurried around the door to check on him. He tried to read his lips, but the best he could do was shake his head and hope he was telling the other man he was fine. At least the roaring had changed to a loud ringing now. He was going to have one hell of a headache.

Jeff followed him down to look at the dead animal. They used a shovel to poke at it and make doubly sure it was dead. Then Jeff scooped it up in it and carried it up through the kitchen and outside. He grabbed gloves and hurried after the other man. They needed to use gloves to be sure they didn't get anything on them. The blood and saliva was dangerous.

He caught up to his friend at the gate and opened it for him. As soon as they were far enough away from the house and barn, Jeff dropped it to the ground and took the gloves from him. He dug a hole and scooped the muskie into it before covering it up again. They turned over the dirt a few times where it had rested while they dug the hole then headed back to the house. Caleb made doubly sure he closed and secured the gate before walking back inside the kitchen. He needed to figure out how to get rid of the blood on the cellar floor.

Jeff touched his arm to get his attention. He had a tablet and pen and had written something down for him. Caleb leaned over and read it, laughing when he did.

*Good job. Beverly is freaking out upstairs. I told her everything is okay, but you need to go check on her. I'll clean up the mess downstairs.*

“Be careful of the blood. Don’t get it on you.” At least that was what Caleb thought he said. Maybe he should have written it down as well.

Jeff nodded and smiled, pushing him toward the living room and the stairs. He needed a shower and something for his head. As he climbed toward the second floor, he hoped Jeff had warned Beverly that he couldn’t hear. Well, he could hear, but only the blasted ringing noise. He wondered how long it was going to last.

When he walked into the bedroom he barely managed to keep Beverly off of him.

“Don’t touch me ’til I’ve had a shower. I want to be sure none of that creature got on me.” She frowned but seemed to understand him well enough.

When he started pulling his clothes off in the bathroom, he turned around to find her sitting on the counter watching him with a frown. Crap, had he hurt her feelings? He didn’t mean to, but he wasn’t taking a chance that something from the muskie got on her off of him. He turned on the water and adjusted the temperature before climbing in and letting the water flow over him.

He’d just soaped up his bath cloth when he thought about his clothes lying on the floor. He leaned out of the shower and pointed at them.

“Don’t touch them. They may have something on them.”

She nodded and gave him a tentative smile. He smiled back and hurried to finish washing off. When he stepped out of the shower, his clothes were gone and so was Beverly. Fear and anger rushed through his veins as grabbed a towel and rushed into the bedroom. Beverly was sitting on the bed, but his clothes were nowhere to be seen. When he opened his mouth to ask her where his clothes were, she pointed at herself and shook her head before pointing toward the door. Good, Jeff must have gotten them. He let out a breath and wondered if it sounded as loud as it felt like it did.

Caleb toweled off then dropped the towel then returned to the bathroom to find something for a headache. They had a few basic medications that were easy to create here on Alpha like mild pain pills. He found what he

was looking for then strode back into the bedroom and used Beverly's water to swallow it down. He felt her eyes on him and turned to find her patting the bed for him to get in.

As soon as he lay down, she curled up against him, laying her head on his shoulder. She felt good there, close to his heart, right where she belonged. He knew it was early yet, but his head hurt and the constant ringing in his ears was driving him crazy. He could use a nap.

\* \* \* \*

Beverly hurt for Caleb. When Jeff had called up the stairs to tell her what was going on and that Caleb wouldn't be able to hear anything for a while, she'd nearly passed out with worry. When he had finally made it to the bedroom, she wanted to throw herself at him, but Jeff had told her not to in case there was something on him. Caleb had reiterated that when he walked in the room. Actually, he'd yelled it, but she knew it was just because he couldn't hear how loud he was talking. Still, it had startled her.

When he shuffled into the bathroom, she followed and climbed up on the counter to wait for him to finish his shower. She needed to touch him. She'd been terrified when he'd been down in the cellar with the creature. Then hearing the gun go off had scared a year's growth out of her.

After drying off, he finally looked at her sitting on the bed where she'd returned when Jeff came to get his clothes. He smiled as she patted the bed, understanding that she wanted him in bed with her. As soon as he was settled, Beverly wrapped herself around him and listened to his heart beating with her head on his chest. She knew the minute he fell asleep. His breathing evened out, and the arm that had wrapped around her loosened until it dropped to the bed.

She hoped when he woke up again that the pain was gone and his hearing was back. She had no idea how long that could take. When Jeff returned, she would ask him. The idea that Caleb would have to endure more than a few hours of it really bothered her. If only she had not been so self-conscious and nervous around them that she hadn't confided in them what she had heard and thought she saw.

She spent the next twenty minutes fussing at herself until Jeff returned completely nude. Evidently he had gotten rid of his clothes when he

discarded Caleb's. He walked over to the bathroom and turned back to stare at her. One look from him settled her down. He seemed to be able to tell that she was beating herself up over it, and he wasn't going to let her do it anymore.

"Stop it. It's over now," he whispered.

She nodded and relaxed against Caleb once again. Jeff stepped into the bathroom, and a few seconds later she heard the shower going. It wasn't long before he returned still drying off with the towel. He walked around the bed and climbed in, scooting up close to her. His skin, still warm from the shower, felt delicious against her cooler body. He squeezed her shoulder and draped an arm across her waist.

"Did he take anything for pain before he got in bed?" he asked in a soft whisper.

"Yes. He fell asleep almost immediately."

"Good. Maybe he'll feel okay when he wakes up. We need to search the cellar to figure out how that thing got in so we can make sure we don't have that happen again."

Beverly couldn't help the shiver that traveled down her spine. The thought of having one of those things in the house again turned her stomach. She wasn't sure she was going to be able to walk around on the floor anytime soon. She was afraid to go back to sleep, too. It was a given that she would have nightmares about monsters under her bed and in the closet like she did as a child.

"You're thinking too hard. I can almost hear the wheels turning in that head of yours." Jeff's whispered voice sounded so damn sexy.

"Just worrying about having bad dreams now. I used to have dreams about monsters being in my closet and under my bed. Drove my dad up the wall. My brothers would tease me and play tricks on me because of it."

Jeff's soft chuckle should have made her mad, but it didn't. It warmed her instead. She had no doubt that he understood. He would check under the bed for her, and she was positive Caleb would look in the closets.

"Don't worry, baby. We'll keep you safe from the bugaboos."

Several minutes later, the only sound in the room was the wisp of air in and out of their mouths as her two men slept. She wasn't the least bit sleepy. After all, she'd slept for several days straight and had spent the last few days in bed. As much as she ached to get out of the bed and move around to

loosen up her stiff muscles, she wanted to be with them more. That and she was scared to get out of the bed now. No one had looked under their bed yet.

Funny how different she felt. Now, instead of feeling silly about wanting them to check under the bed and in the closets, it didn't bother her. They cared about her. She knew it in her heart. That, more than anything else, settled her inside. Now all she wanted to do was make them happy—keep them happy.

Thoughts of how they'd been the last two days reminded her that they still had something they were keeping from her. No doubt it was something major since it worried them how she would handle it. What could be worse than being attacked by a muskie and ending up with yellowish, bumpy skin? Since the bite or scratch or whatever it had been had made her so sick, she was sure the stuff was in her body now. Maybe that was what they were worried about revealing to her.

The other thing that was bothering her was that neither man seemed like they wanted to be intimate with her again anytime soon. The thought that they were worried that she might pass something on to them curled her insides. If they were worried about that, what did that mean for them as a family? There was no way they could live like this without touching each other, loving each other.

The more she thought about that, the more logical it sounded. Why else were they avoiding intimacy? She was well now. It was almost as if they didn't trust themselves to just kiss her because it would lead to something more personal—pleasurable.

Beverly struggled to stop thinking about it. When they woke up and Caleb's hearing was back to normal, she was going to confront them about it. The old Beverly would have ignored the situation and tried to muddle through it. The new, improved Beverly wasn't taking that crap from them. They were going to come clean or she would have their heads.

The soft, steady thump, thump, thump of Caleb's heart soothed her as she forced herself to relax. She was going to need all of her strength and wits to deal with them when they woke up again. Even though she wasn't sleepy, she could rest. Letting the rhythm of Caleb's beating heart wash over her, Beverly closed her eyes and patiently waited.

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## Chapter Eighteen

"Hey, honey." Caleb's deep voice alerted her that he was awake.

Beverly lifted her head and smiled down at him. He wasn't yelling, so maybe his hearing was back to normal again. She hoped so.

"Hey yourself. Can you hear me okay?"

"Pretty much. The ringing is still there, but I can hear around it now."

"What about your head? Do you have a headache?"

"Hmm, dull throb. Much better than it was earlier." He looked over at the bedside table. "Wow, I slept a long time. It's late."

"You needed the sleep. You could probably do with more. You guys have been functioning on so little ever since I got sick. I'm fine now though. We can all get back to normal now." She smiled at him.

Feeling naughty, she smoothed her hand over his chest before raking her nails lightly down to his bellybutton. He shivered and caught her hand with his.

"What are you doing, Bev?" he asked.

"Just touching you. I've missed you. Missed holding you, being held by you."

She felt the hitch in his breath as he tried to think what to say. She could feel him struggling with how to get out of letting her go any farther. She refused to let it hurt her. There was something going on.

"You've been sick, honey. You almost died. Let's make sure you're well."

She ignored him, spreading her hand out against his abdomen before dragging her tongue across his nipple. The swift hiss of breath settled her soul. No, he wasn't unaffected by her. He was trying to be cautious, protect her from something. She'd find out what it was one way or another.

"Beverly." His voice had dropped even lower.

"What's going on, guys?" Jeff asked, pushing up to lean over her.

"I'm trying to make Beverly understand that she's been deathly ill. It's too soon for messing around."

"I'm not messing around. I'm serious." She nipped the now-wet, flat disc of his nipple.

"Aw, hell. Beverly, stop that."

Jeff wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her over toward him. "Don't torture him, baby. He's injured."

She rolled over and climbed on top of Jeff before he could stop her. His eyes grew wide as she managed to rub her wet pussy over his aroused cock. She could tell he hadn't expected it from her. Well, they had a lot to learn about her now.

"Ah, Beverly?" Jeff clamped his hands on her waist, making it impossible for her to move and impale herself on him.

"Jeff, we're going to have to tell her. She's obviously not going to accept that she's not ready for sex right now." Caleb rolled out of bed and sat on the edge with his head down.

Beverly stilled in Jeff's hands. The sight of Caleb hanging his head in what appeared to be dejection frightened her. Maybe there really was something terribly wrong. She lowered her eyes to Jeff's face. He held her gaze for a few seconds then closed his eyes and let out a long breath.

She didn't say anything else. Beverly got off of him and climbed out of the bed, no longer worried about something under the bed. She was much more worried about whatever was hanging in the air between them as a family. Whatever it was, she knew it would change everything. Her heart sped up, stammering every few beats.

Clothes. She needed to dress. She wasn't having this conversation nude. The men watched her as she grabbed shorts and a tank top after pulling on underwear. She didn't bother with a bra. When they didn't move from where they were, she ran her hands through her hair and sat in the chair next to the bed.

"What's going on?"

They adjusted their positions so they could both face her. Neither man spoke at first. Finally Caleb drew in a deep breath and started talking. He didn't look at her as he told her about the cell or whatever it was that was probably in her bloodstream now thanks to the muskie attacking her. He explained that, more than likely, they would all have it soon anyway from eating the food grown there, just that she would probably have more of it.

"They don't know much about it right now. They think it helps protect you from a lot of sickness, but they really don't know."

She listened as he continued. She had already figured she might have something left over from the creature inside of her. Now that he said they

all would have it eventually, she wasn't sure what the problem was. Then he started talking about Rachel's little girl. The more he talked, the sicker she felt. Her own ears began to ring.

"We've talked to several different people with children, and they all say the same things. They grow faster, mature quicker, and seem really intelligent for their age."

"What aren't you saying, Caleb?" she finally asked.

"No one knows what the future will show. How long will they live? Will they grow old faster or live longer? We just don't know what to expect," he said.

She looked over at Jeff and saw pain and uncertainty in his eyes. He was always so positive and laid-back where Caleb was always in control and ready to take the lead. Now both men appeared somehow broken. It scared her even more than knowing something foreign was inside of her body. They were her rock in this strange world.

Still, there was more. She could sense it.

"And?"

Caleb and Jeff exchanged glances. She waited. Neither man seemed willing to be the one to say it out loud. Finally Jeff jerked off the bed and stalked over to the window, his back to her.

"You're pregnant." He spoke so quietly she nearly missed it.

"How do you know?" she asked staring at his back.

"Pregnancy tests are kept in the first aid boxes since we're so far out from the city," Caleb said. "We did one of the tests while you were still in and out of it. It was after we had talked to Danny and Andrew about their little girl."

Beverly just sat there. She didn't say anything. What could she say? They had already decided that her being pregnant was a bad thing. Nothing had prepared her for this. Yes, knowing that her baby would probably be different scared the bejesus out of her, but was it really that much different than if she had found out her baby would be blind or have Down's syndrome? Were they saying they couldn't love it anyway? How could they do that?

She stood up and started walking toward the door. Caleb jumped up and blocked her path.

"Where are you going?"

“Downstairs. I need something to drink.” She tried to walk around him, but he grasped her shoulder.

“It’s a mess down there. The couch is ruined.”

“I don’t have to sit in the living room. I’ll sit in the kitchen. Let go of me, Caleb.”

He removed his hand and stepped to the side. Beverly stepped out into the hall and walked downstairs to the kitchen without pausing to even look at the destruction in the living room. She poured some tea in a glass and took a few sips. Then she poured it out and set up the coffeemaker. She wanted a cup.

By the time it was ready, the guys had dressed and joined her in the kitchen. She poured some for all three of them then took her cup to the window over the kitchen sink and stared outside at the garden she hadn’t seen since she’d planted it. Even from where she stood, green growth up and down the rows was obvious. She wondered if anyone had watered it today.

“We’ll get a new couch, honey. Jeff and I will carry this one off and burn it.” Caleb wasn’t sitting at the table. He sounded as if he was right behind her.

“That’s fine. No hurry.”

“What are you thinking about, baby?” Jeff asked.

She could tell he wasn’t as close as Caleb. She was glad they weren’t trying to touch her. She had wanted it earlier, but now...

“I want to go see Rachel and her little girl.” She turned away from the window.

Caleb was closer than she had thought. If she leaned just a little bit, she would be able to rest her head on his chest. She wanted to feel his arms around her, but not like this. Jeff was only a little farther away. One step, two, and she could be in his arms.

“We’ll talk to Danny and Andrew and see when we can visit them,” Caleb said.

Beverly wanted to scream at the injustice of it all. They’d lost their home, their families, and ended up on a strange world that didn’t want them there. Now she was having a baby that would be different from them, and her husbands couldn’t accept that difference. How could she live this way? She would carry a baby that they might not even be able to love. Seeing

their eyes on her belly as it grew large and knowing how they felt about it tore pieces out of her heart.

No matter what, she would love her child. It didn't matter how different it was, she would make sure the baby never felt unloved or questioned how she felt. Still, it wouldn't make up for its fathers' feelings. No matter how they tried to hide it, a child could tell. Anger began to eat at her belly. Anger at the unfairness of it and anger at them for not being strong enough to handle this filled her. Her throat felt raw with it.

Caleb must have seen something in her eyes because he grabbed her and pulled her against his chest and wrapped his arms around her. She struggled, but he wouldn't let her go. Finally the tears fell, and she hung onto him as she sobbed. She would be mad at him later. She needed him right now. Then Jeff pressed against her back, burying his face in the side of her neck. Later she would rage at them for not being able to accept their child despite the differences. Later she would start making plans on how to take care of her baby.

\* \* \* \*

Caleb's heart ached for Beverly. He knew how much it must hurt her to learn that she was pregnant while knowing the baby would be different. He and Jeff had already worked through the anger and disbelief together. Caleb knew that Jeff would always be there for him, for them. He'd come to realize that his partner deferred to him on most things because he didn't feel like he had as much experience as Caleb did. Caleb had assured Jeff that he was just as competent.

Now they were working together to take care of their wife and their unborn child. They had struggled to keep it to themselves until Beverly was stronger. It didn't matter to them. They would love the baby no matter what. Telling her had been far more painful than what they had learned from Danny and Andrew.

He looked over Beverly's head at Jeff. His partner's eyes held the glimmer of unshed tears. He was barely keeping his in check as it was. Holding their wife as she wept her heart out hammered his ability to keep his at bay. He kissed her temple then settled his chin on her head as he struggled to swallow around the thick knot in his throat.

“Oh, baby. Don’t cry. You’re breaking my heart, Beverly.” Jeff’s voice cracked.

She pulled back from Caleb’s chest and looked up at him. The despair he saw there was more than he could fathom. It appeared bottomless. How would they be able to help her if she couldn’t accept their child’s fate? He refused to believe she wasn’t strong enough.

“I won’t let you hurt my baby.” Her words confused him.

“What? What do you mean? I would never hurt a child.” He looked over at Jeff.

Jeff shrugged. He didn’t understand what she meant either.

“Babies, children know. They can sense how you feel about them. If you can’t care about the baby so that it’s happy, then I’ll move to town with it.”

“What? No!” Caleb shouted before he could stop himself.

Jeff twirled her around to look at him. “You’re not going anywhere. You belong here, with us.”

“Not if it means my baby has to live with knowing its fathers can’t accept it.”

The tremor in her voice registered with Caleb even before her words did. This was killing her. Why did she think they wouldn’t love their child? What had they done to give her that impression?

“Beverly. Listen to me.” He turned her back toward him, holding her at arm’s length so that she could see his face, read his determination and honesty in this. “Our child will never know anything but love and devotion from me and Jeff. I will treasure him or her no matter what happens.”

Jeff stood by his side. He could feel the other man’s horror at what she had been thinking. How could she have thought that of them?

“I can’t believe you thought so little of us that you would believe we wouldn’t love our baby.” Jeff’s pain was a palpable thing, a living breathing entity that threatened to consume them both.

“Why did you keep it from me? You acted as if my being pregnant was a fate worse than death.”

Caleb loosened his grip on her arms and sighed. They’d screwed this up badly. Thinking that she would be upset over being pregnant with a baby that they knew wouldn’t be normal, they’d tried to shield her. Instead they’d

given her the perception that they were the ones who couldn't handle it. They had underestimated their wife's inner strength.

"I think we've all made the mistake of believing each other to be weak and unable to handle the situation." Caleb cupped her face in his hands and kissed her tenderly on the lips. "I'm sorry, honey."

She closed her eyes for a few seconds then opened them and smiled a watery smile. "I'm sorry, too. My heart was breaking. You both mean so much to me, but I couldn't let our baby grow up thinking it wasn't important enough to you to love."

Jeff ran his hand down the back of her head over and over. "We need to start over with this."

"I agree," Caleb said. "Let's go back upstairs. I need to hold you, honey."

His heart soared when she nodded and held his hands to her face for several more seconds before letting go of one of his hands and grabbing one of Jeff's as she headed for the stairs. As soon as they were back in the bedroom, she started stripping them of their clothes as if she couldn't wait to touch their skin.

Caleb struggled to undress her even as she vacillated between him and Jeff, touching and kissing them everywhere she could reach. Finally, they managed to strip her down to skin for their touch. He wrapped her hair in one hand and held her still while he devoured her mouth. Their tongues tangled as he touched and stroked over her teeth, lips, and everything in between. His mouth ate at hers, sucking and nipping her lips and chin. He couldn't get enough of her taste or the way she moaned.

When he pulled back some, kissing the corners of her eyes and her temples, he saw Jeff taking advantage of her hair being out of the way to devour her neck and shoulder. Caleb loved the little sounds she was making as they kissed and sucked their way around her body.

They needed to move this to the bed before they ended up on the floor. He still wasn't too comfortable with anything having to do with the floor yet. Besides, they hadn't checked under their bed to be sure nothing dangerous was there. Before he ruined his mood with thoughts of creatures, Caleb pulled Beverly away from Jeff and carried her to the bed.

"Hey!" Jeff complained.

Then he was joining them, stretched out on one side of their wife sucking on a ripe nipple. Caleb claimed the other one. Her hand in his hair, her fingers digging into his scalp soon had him pressing his rock-hard cock against her hip. He pulled at her nipple with his teeth then licked the reddened berry to soothe it. She wasn't complaining at all. Instead, she was squirming between them, trying to get closer to one then the other.

He watched as Jeff nuzzled the side of her breast then licked under it before laying openmouthed kisses down her abdomen to her belly. He had no doubt where Jeff was headed. If he hadn't been so hooked on her breast, he'd have headed that way as well. Taking advantage of the empty spot at her other breast, Caleb plucked the abandoned nipple with his fingers.

"Yes." Beverly's breath hissed out as he pinched one nipple while nipping the other one.

When she gasped and arched her back, Caleb was sure Jeff had added oral stimulation to parts down south. He chuckled against her breast. Opening his mouth, he tried to suck in all over the mounded flesh but had to be satisfied with only part of it. She groaned, and the sound went straight to his cock. Looking up, he watched her lick her lower lip then capture her tongue between her teeth as she arched her neck.

Her lips were too much of a temptation. He needed to feed from her again. Her taste ignited his blood. He licked over her lips before sucking on her bottom lip. The full bloom of the bottom half of her pout painted a picture of them wrapped around his dick as he pumped in and out of her hot, wet mouth. Next time. This time he wanted to feel her hot, wet pussy surround him. Jeff needed to hurry up and make her come. He was dying to be inside of her.

"Oh, God!" Her mouth tore from his as she called out.

"Is Jeff eating that ripe, red pussy, honey? I can't wait to bury my cock deep in your cunt." He nipped at her earlobe. One hand continued to torment her nipples with random pinches and twirls.

She had one hand latched onto Jeff's shaggy hair and the other one pulling on his scalp. Every once in a while he caught a glimpse of her eyes. They would widen in shock then darken as arousal reclaimed her.

"I want to fuck you over and over, sink my dick so deep you feel me all the way to your heart."

He knew the moment that Jeff was driving her over the edge. Her breath hitched, and her mouth opened in a silent scream before sound caught up with it. The sight of her face as pleasure rolled over her in giant, cresting waves nearly had him coming like a teenager. He covered her mouth with his and took the last of her scream in a heady kiss. He swallowed it down and waited for her to settle. Then it was his turn.

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## Chapter Nineteen

Her heart skipped beat after beat as she struggled to recover from the mind-blowing orgasm her men had driven her to. When she opened her eyes, Caleb gazed down at her with his honey-gold eyes. They seemed brighter, almost pulsing with light. His dirty words from earlier reminded her that, though she had come blissfully, they had yet to find their pleasure. And she wanted to give that to them.

“I could watch you climax for hours, Bev. You are so fucking beautiful,” Caleb said.

“I wouldn’t last through hours of it. I’d be dead inside of twenty minutes,” she teased.

“I can feel how wet you are despite Jeff trying to lick it all up.” His fingers teased her pussy lips as he dragged them through her folds.

“I want you, Caleb. I want you inside of me.”

His eyes darkened with desire. “That’s where I plan to be in the next two seconds.”

When he started to lift her leg and position his cock at her slit, she pulled away slightly. His gaze faltered.

“I want both of you, together.”

“Bev, you don’t have—”

She interrupted him. “I want you both to take me at the same time. I need both of my men in me. I need you both filling me.”

Beverly could see the struggle in his eyes. She looked over him and saw Jeff sitting to the side, a strained expression marring his natural good looks. He wanted it so bad he could taste it. She wanted to give it to him. She wanted to make them both happy. This she could do.

Caleb dropped his head to hers and drew in a deep breath. When he suddenly rolled over, carrying her with him, she squealed. His smile repaired some of the pieces of her heart that had broken away. He looked over toward Jeff and nodded.

“Make sure she’s ready, Jeff. I don’t want her to feel any pain.”

“I’ll take good care of her,” Jeff said.

Caleb lifted her with his hands at her waist, and she positioned her dripping slit above his huge cock. As he slowly let her down, it pierced her

cunt in one long, slow slide that took her breath away. In this position, there was no escaping how long he was, how much he filled her to overflowing. The tip of his dick kissed her cervix.

“So good. So fucking unbelievable.” Caleb ran his palms up her abdomen to caress her breasts.

“I’m so full. How can there be room for Jeff?”

“Don’t worry, baby. We’ll make room.” Jeff’s raspy voice stroked her nerves.

He pressed her down over Caleb’s chest with one hand and kneaded her ass with the other. She relaxed, resting her head over Caleb’s heart. His breath stirred her hair as Jeff kissed and licked her ass cheeks. Then he spread them wide and ran his tongue all around the tight pucker before something cold dribbled down her crack.

She felt him spread the lube around her anus in tiny circles. Then he pressed gently at the tight hole until the tip of one finger popped in. Slowly he slid it in and out until she was taking more and more of the single digit. When he had managed to get the finger all the way in up to the webbing, he added more lube and started pressing a second finger inside of her. She pressed against him in an effort to ease the added appendage past the tight sphincter.

“How are you doing, honey?” Caleb’s voice rumbled in her ear.

“Good. I’m good.” She could hear the breathy quality in her voice.

So far there was no pain, just some pressure and maybe a little burn. She shifted over Caleb’s body. It forced more of those two thick fingers deeper inside of her.

“Easy, baby. I don’t want to hurt you. We’re taking this slow.” Jeff pumped his fingers in and out of her ass.

“Even if it kills me,” Caleb said in a tight voice.

Beverly couldn’t help it. She laughed. Caleb groaned. The next thing she felt was more of the cold, gelatinous substance and a third finger breaching her dark passage. Now the burn kicked up a degree. She moaned but didn’t stop pushing at his fingers with her muscles to ease them deeper.

“That’s three, baby. You’re almost ready. Are you still sure you want to do this?” Jeff asked.

She knew they would stop if she asked them to no matter how hard it would be, but she didn’t want to. She wanted their cocks filling her body,

filling the holes that had formed as her heart broke. She needed this. They needed this.

“Hurry, Jeff. I need you. Stop dragging it out.”

He pumped his fingers in and out of her several more times before removing them, and then the head of his thick cock pressed against her back opening. He’d added more lube to his dick, and it slid slightly as he applied more pressure to the tiny rosette.

“Oh, God!” Beverly huffed out a breath as he slowly invaded her ass.

“Breathe, honey.” Caleb didn’t move other than to run his hands up and down her arms in a soothing motion.

“You are so fucking tight, baby. It’s like slipping my dick into a silk glove.” Jeff’s voice grew huskier.

His cock forged past the tight rings of resistance and slowly filled her until she felt Jeff’s heavy balls against her perineum. She couldn’t breathe. So full. They were both inside of her. It was too much and yet just right. The pressure had become almost painful even as the burn began to ease some. They needed to move. She needed them to fuck her.

“Fuck me! I can’t stand it.” She thought she was screaming, but in actuality, it came out almost as a whisper, as if there wasn’t enough room for her to draw in a full breath.

Jeff pulled back as Caleb pressed up, and then Caleb pulled back as Jeff pushed deeper. They rocked in and out of her in a slow, sensuous dance that had her breath sawing in and out of her lungs.

“She’s so damn tight. Perfect. I won’t last.” Jeff’s broken sentences would have been amusing if she could have laughed.

“Hot, tight, wet,” Caleb gritted out through clenched teeth. “I won’t last either.”

“Please. Please don’t stop. I need more—faster.” She tried to take over the rhythm that threatened to drive her crazy.

Caleb cursed, and the two men picked up the pace. Her body burned from the inside out. Probably due to the hot, burning blood that boiled in her veins. One man tunneled in her ass while another pulled from her cunt, never leaving her completely empty. Always one of them was with her, holding her, filling her. This was what she needed, to be part of the whole. They were a unit, a family. Together they would survive, and together they would love their child.

Over and over again they moved her between them, moved over and under her. A roaring began to fill her ears as she strained toward that peak that she could see but not quite touch. They thrust faster and deeper, harder and harder, until in a blinding flash of light, her world exploded. Stars filled her sight even as her fractured heart became whole.

First Caleb then Jeff shouted out their orgasms, filling her body with ribbons of white-hot cum, the seal that bound them together. Beverly collapsed between them. Her throat raw from gasping for breath or screaming, she wasn't sure which. The roaring had prevented her from hearing anything while she jerked over and under them.

They lay like logs for long seconds until Caleb grunted and shifted under her. "Jeff, I'm suffocating down here."

"Tough. I'm dead. Dead men can't move."

If Beverly could have, she would have laughed, but that would mean she could breathe, and that was still not a done deal. Jeff eased out of her, grumbling all the way. She started to sit up to climb off of Caleb, but he growled and held her to him.

"Wait. Jeff will be right back," he said.

"I know. I'm trying to make my getaway before he attacks again."

His chuckle did things to her. Plus, it moved his softening cock inside of her. Little aftershocks spiraled out from her womb. Caleb hissed at the tiny spasms that squeezed his newly interested dick.

"Oh, no. Don't even think about it." She laughed when he waggled his eyebrows at her.

"Don't think about what?" Jeff had returned and was cleaning her bottom with a warm, wet cloth.

"Caleb's little man is trying to wake up again," she complained.

Jeff died out laughing. "If he can rally for another round after that, I'm in awe. I think you broke me."

"It's a halfhearted attempt, believe me," Caleb said.

They helped her climb off of Caleb, and then the three of them snuggled down after pulling the covers over them. Her heart was full and solid again. While they'd been bound to each other, Beverly had felt them settle there. She held a piece of them that would forever be a part of her. They each got a part of her that would bind her to them in all things. Nothing would be

able to come between them now. She felt secure that no matter how they might argue or disagree, they would never break apart.

Whether they said it or not, they loved her and she loved them. Making them happy meant everything to her. She touched her belly and smiled. She couldn't wait to feel their child move inside of her. From what they'd said about Rachel's pregnancy, it didn't last the full nine months. There was so much to do before the baby got there. Worry and anticipation whirled around in her head.

"What are you thinking about so hard, honey?" Caleb squeezed her arm.

"Just thinking about all the work ahead of us."

"Stop worrying over it. We'll work it out, baby." Jeff kissed her shoulder.

Beverly's stomach growled as loud as a mountain lion, much to her embarrassment. Caleb and Jeff chuckled.

"Sounds like taking care of you will be our first priority." Jeff scooted to the side of the bed to get up.

"Where are you going?" she asked when cool air hit her back.

"You're hungry, and I don't think any of us has eaten anything since breakfast this morning."

Caleb kissed her on the nose. "Stay here and we'll fix something to tide us over 'til in the morning."

She grumbled when he climbed out of bed as well. They tucked her in and left her to go downstairs. Well, she was eating for two. That meant she needed to eat more, and with her having been ill, she hadn't been doing such a good job starting out. She could hear soft murmurs downstairs as they banged around in the kitchen. A smile filled her face as she relaxed into the knowledge of being pregnant and being able to feel her husbands' love inside of her. This was what she had hoped for when she had dared to hope back on Earth.

The aroma of something delicious lured her out of the light doze she'd fallen into. Her eyes popped open just as Caleb and Jeff walked through the door with plates of food in their hands. They set them down, and Jeff ran back downstairs.

"Drinks, be right back."

They ate sitting cross-legged on the bed making plans and talking about getting a new couch and burning the old one. She teased them that she couldn't be sick for a few days without them trashing her house.

Once they'd finished, Jeff carried their empty plates back to the kitchen, and then they piled up in the bed and held on to each other. She was so happy and full from her stomach to her heart that she ached to tell them that she loved them, but she didn't want to put pressure on them. Then Jeff rolled over to look down at her. He traced her lips with his finger. She could tell he wanted to say something. She smiled and poured all of her love for him into her eyes.

"Baby. You make me so happy with everything you do. I love you, Beverly, with all my heart." He bent down and kissed her, a quick brush of lips against hers.

"I love you, Jeff. You make me very happy."

Caleb nudged Jeff over and kissed her. "You're my everything, Bev. I love you so much it scares me sometimes."

Beverly touched his lips with her finger. "I love you, too, Caleb. Making you both happy makes me happy."

She squeezed her eyes shut to stop the tears when they both hugged her tightly between them. This was everything that life should be. Love and happiness completed their family, and together they completed each other.

# THE END

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marla Monroe has been writing professionally for about ten years now. Her first book with Siren was published in January of 2011. She loves to write and spends every spare minute either at the keyboard or reading another Siren author. She writes everything from sizzling hot contemporary cowboys, to science fiction ménages with the occasional bad-ass biker thrown in for good measure.

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