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## Chapter 1

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Quincy Waters parked her 4-Runner on the side of the dirt road. "Come on, Duke."

Quincy grabbed her camera and made sure her dog was following her as she started snapping pictures of the desolate road and pastures. As she walked along the dirt road, with Duke running beside her, she noticed some cattle grazing on the pasture to her right. As she leaned against the fence, she focused her camera in on the little calf that was sleeping next to its mother.

"Look at that, Duke, see the baby?"

Duke seemed more interested in the tall grass on the side of the road and gave her barely a glance before returning to his treat. Quincy could see more cattle grazing on the hill. The flat pasture seemed to morph into hilly terrain in the distance. If she could get closer, she knew it would make for a beautiful shot.

She looked at the no trespassing signs posted along the fence line. She looked around; there was nobody for miles. "I'm sure they won't mind us taking photos. Right, boy?"

Taking Duke's silence as agreement, Quincy climbed the wooden fence while Duke slithered underneath. When he

noticed the cows for the first time, Duke gave an eager bark but obediently didn't chase once Quincy called his name.

She walked up the pasture until she was close enough to see the calf up close. She leaned down, focusing her camera on his little pink nose. With the Texas bluebonnet flowers in the background, this was an amazing shot. She moved a little closer as the older cows watched her for a moment before turning back to their grass. Suddenly, Duke was excited by something he saw in the distance and took off barking down the pasture.

"Duke, dammit! Get back here!"

Quincy took off running after her dog. The cows, now spooked by all the noise, began to run. She realized she was in their path and, swearing at Duke, veered off to the cluster of trees. She leaned against one to protect her from the stampede of cattle. Once they were past, Quincy let out a breath. She pushed her hair out of her eyes and looked around the pasture for Duke but couldn't find him. She started moving in the direction of where he had run.

*Great, I'm going to be lost down here,* she thought as she trudged after him.

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Remy pulled the gate closed on the far north pasture. He checked the fence again and, confident it was finally fixed, nodded in satisfaction. He noticed the cattle coming up the south hill as if running from something. If he had to guess, it was coyotes again. They had been a real problem these last few months.

After making sure his shotgun was loaded, he climbed into his ATV and headed into the pasture. He was determined to see what had gotten the cattle so riled. Within a moment, he could see an animal running behind the cattle, weaving in and out of the herd. He took the shotgun and aimed, trying to get the

animal in his sights. Finally, he saw it. It wasn't a coyote; it was a dog!

Remy shook his head. By looking through the scope again, he could see that the dog was barking at the cattle, causing them to run faster. This was making a stampede for the newly fixed gate inevitable. As Remy moved toward the animals, he saw a woman raising her hands at the dog. Stunned for a moment, Remy watched as a woman with short blonde hair, in a pair of overalls with a camera hanging from her neck, tried to coax the dog to her. Damn fool was going to get herself trampled. He shook his head and resisted the urge to yell at her as he revved up the ATV and headed toward them.

As he approached, he could hear the woman scolding the dog and the dog happily barking back at her. The dog was oblivious to the ruckus he had caused. He turned off the ATV before he approached the woman. As he leaned down, he ruffled the dog's head and introduced himself, "Name's Remy. May I ask who you are?"

Quincy blinked up at the man. He seemed to have come from out of nowhere. With black hair curling under a ball cap and jeans that seemed painted on, his flannel shirt was opened to a white tank underneath. His cowboy boots seemed permanently scuffed with the Texas dirt. She stuck her hand out and replied, "Quincy. The monster there is Duke."

Remy scowled but took her hand in a firm grip. "Well, Ms. Quincy, this is private property. I'm sure you saw the no trespassing signs." As he talked, he looked her over. She was a tiny thing, with tattoos trailing down her right arm. Her blonde bob was tousled from running through the pasture, and she seemed completely unaware of the danger of being on private property.

Quincy nodded, withdrawing her hand, trying and failing not to feel the jolt of electricity when he touched her. "Yeah, I'm sorry about that. I'm a photographer, and your land, with this

light, was just gorgeous. I wasn't expecting Duke to cause any trouble. I'm sorry for that."

Remy continued petting Duke, who was lapping up the attention. "It seems that Duke was just being a dog. It's his owner who broke the law by coming onto private property."

Quincy frowned at him. "The law? I mean, it's just land. I didn't do anything to hurt it."

"Yes, the law. You obviously aren't from around here. What if those cattle had trampled you or a snake had bitten you? You could have died out here."

Remy moved away from Duke. Then he climbed back onto his ATV, barely glancing at Quincy as he called to Duke, who trotted right over to him. "Climb on, Quincy, I'll give you a ride back to your car."

Quincy looked at Duke. The traitor was happily following Remy's movements. Finally realizing she really was in the middle of nowhere and on his property, she climbed on the back of his ATV and said, "I'm parked just down this hill."

Remy nodded at her and gunned the engine, with Duke running beside them.

Within moments, Remy arrived at her car. Remy turned off the ATV and helped her over the fence then climbed over, himself. "Here you go. Please mind the signs from now on, darlin'."

Quincy bristled at his tone. "Again, they were just pictures. It was harmless."

Remy frowned, moving so his face was within inches of hers. "It wasn't harmless. It was a foolish thing to do. Never mind against the law; out here, people tend to shoot first. If I see you on my property again, I'm calling the police."

Without a glance back at her, he petted Duke goodbye. He then climbed onto his ATV and left, leaving a trail of dust behind him.