
HOLDING TESS

The McKenna Brothers, Book Two

MARIELLA STARR



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Mariella Starr

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.

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Prologue

Tessa Foster's eyes snapped open when a hand hit the hospital door. She sat up, and her feet hit the floor. She'd been trying to catch a few minutes of sleep during an eighteen-hour shift in the emergency room of Dell Seton Medical Hospital. Working at the Del Seton had been a natural progression for her after completing her college and medical school at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Dell Seton was part of the university teaching hospital.

Nurse Trent stood in the open door. "Incoming, three-vehicle collision," she said in her calm voice.

"Casualties?" Tess said without looking up as she pulled on her sneakers.

"Vehicle one, four teenagers in transport, three girls, one boy. Minor fractures, not critical," Nurse Trent said in clipped, shorthand sentences. "Vehicle two, victim one, male adult, in critical condition. He has been Life-flighted to the Military Medical. Don't ask why the Life-flight doctor made that decision. I don't know. The female is incoming here. She has broken ribs and possible internal injuries. Vehicle three, two adults. Male with chest injuries, possible broken ribs.

Female with leg fractures. Three small children in seat restraints, and appeared to be unharmed. The kids were taken to Dell Children's Medical Center to be checked out. Social services have been notified. All victims are in-bound."

"Alert everyone, and get the patient information ASAP. If those parents are awake, they're going to be asking about those kids," Tessa said, over her shoulder. She was already at the door, sprinting past the nurse toward the ER ambulance intake.

This was her life. It was busy and chaotic. When she had a chance to take a deep breath, she knew it was exactly what she had wanted. Tess had been working toward her goal since she'd been twelve years old. She also knew it was time to make changes and move on.

She was going to miss Dell Seton, but it was time for her to make a change. Working full-time in an ER was her life, with no time left over for anything else. She needed more. Now, because of an unexpected financial windfall, she could take those next steps. If she could decide on what she wanted to do next.

Tess's family had imploded years ago, due to divorce and selfishness on the parts of both her father and her mother. Her parents were two immature people, who had brought children into the world and had promptly decided their personal needs, and desires were more important. Her mother was on her way to husband number five, and the majority of her relationships hadn't made it to the altar. Her father had never remarried. He did regularly have live-in girlfriends, half his age, and sometimes younger. The live-ins didn't last long enough for Tess to learn their names.

As far as she was concerned, Tess's family consisted of her and her sister Lauren, three years older. Lauren was divorced and had fivecount themfive daughters, all under the age of nine. The three youngest were identical triplets. Her

divorce had been one caused by abandonment, but she had survived it. Now her sister was stronger for it, ran a successful business, and was taking on life on her terms.

There had been a half-brother from her mother's second marriage. Jeremy had been diagnosed with severe autism. Somewhere hidden within his mind, had been a child they couldn't reach. Tess had tried. She had worked so hard to reach him, visiting him several times a week. Non-verbal, he had died four years earlier of peritonitis caused by a ruptured appendix. He had never cried, never shown any indication of pain.

Tess looked around the emergency room at the doctors and nurses who all performed miracles to preserve life. She was proud of being one of them. The latest accident victims would all live. They might hurt for a while, but there would be no amputations, paralysis, or life threatening after affects. It had been a good shift, and she didn't have that many left before her contract would expire. She wasn't going to renew it."

Micah McKenna stepped onto a three-level deck overlooking a lake and sat to enjoy his first cup of coffee of the day. He was an early riser, loved the early hours when he was at odds with the rest of the world. Well, at least the small portion of the world he claimed as his own.

While most people were sleeping, his mind was active and creative. The music, the lyrics, and now the images, they came to him in the pre-dawn hours, long before most people were awake. From the first time, as a child, when he had discovered that he could sneak out of bed and get something done, he'd been hooked.

Micah got more done before seven a.m. than most

people accomplished in a full day. His parents had shaken their heads and tried to get him to conform to more normal sleeping hours. He had never understood why. There was so much to do, and he didn't want to waste his time sleeping!

His parents had finally given up in defeat and allowed him to get on with his projects as long as he didn't wake his brothers. Micah was past the thirty-year mark now by two years. He knew his body rhythms were firmly set in place.

Micah was rarely a multitasker. He could kick himself into high gear; it just wasn't his preferred way of getting things done. He concentrated on one thing at a time and gave it his full attention. When he was finished, it was time to move on to the next task. He was a deliberate man. Study the situation, calculate the challenge, and go after the results required. He'd been accused of being an overachiever. Maybe he was, but he could live with the accusation. It was, after all, a finely tuned family trait.

After inhaling the last drops of his coffee, Micah went inside to refill his cup. Careers and interests, of which he had too many, were tidily aligned into time frames of what needed to be done first, second, and so forth.

Over the last couple of years, his life and his priorities had changed drastically. When two of his best friends and fellow musicians had died in a car accident, Micah had suddenly become a father. Juggling, a talent he'd never wanted or needed had suddenly become a way of life. It was a talent he'd discovered most parents possessed.

He and his daughter, Katie, were the only full-time residents at the McKenna Lake property. His family had vacationed there for years when he and his siblings were children. When the property had gone on the market, he and his two younger brothers had purchased it. At the time, he had no idea it would become his permanent residence.

When his long-term relationship without the ties of

marriage had imploded, his lake cabin had become a sanctuary. Now it was his permanent home. The breakup, with his ex-girlfriend, had turned into a nasty situation. It had taken almost as long as the relationship itself to sever the ties, both personal and financial, during long and drawn-out litigations.

Carla had been the one who had insisted there was no reason for marriage. She was the one who had decided they should keep their finances separate. Carla had also been the one who had deceived him. When he had objected, she'd fought a vicious and dirty battle to take him for everything he was worth and ruin his reputation. Carla Mancuso hadn't succeeded, although she had made his life hell for the last couple of years.

The McKenna lake property had been a recreational retreat before it had been purchased by the family. There was a main lodge and nearly a dozen cabins of various sizes. Most of the old cabins and buildings were rundown and neglected. Micah had claimed one of the nicer cabins. The small five-room house had met his temporary needs when he took a break from work. It hadn't fit his needs when he decided to live there permanently. The original two-bedroom, one bath log cabin was now a recording studio. He'd had the structure moved off its foundation, and had built a new home to his specifications. Now his new home was a mountain retreat, minus the mountains. Inside it was state-of-the-art with the latest technology and fixtures, as was his music studio out back.

He'd decided to build a new house right after his relationship had imploded. That had been the year before he'd become responsible for a two-year-old child. The lake house was their permanent home.

The house project had kept his mind and body busy during trying times. He'd learned a lot about the trades in

the process. His home was a masterpiece of stone, natural wood, and glass that would equal any million-dollar chalet in Aspen. Micah had visited Colorado, loved to ski, but he was a Texan. He'd traveled all over the world as part of the I-35 band. There were many beautiful places, but he was a Texan in his heart.

He'd been taking his sweet time with the construction of his new home. He hadn't been in a hurry. Then in the blink of an eye, he had become responsible for a child. He had been suddenly submerged in a different kind of adulthood.

Micah looked over to the large folder, still lying on the kitchen counter. It held copies of the legal termination of his association with Carla Mancuso. They hadn't been married, but the split had been more vicious than most divorces. Their split had never been about feelings or their relationship. It had been about money. He'd earned it. She wanted it.

He still owned the townhouse he had shared with Carla in Austin. He'd listed the property for sale several times. He had also taken it off the market because of her interference. He would sell it now.

The gut-wrenching shock and pain of what she'd done had lessened over time. Any feelings he'd had were gone. Her betrayal could never be forgotten or forgiven.

Micah picked up the envelope and took it to his office, and filed it in the back of a bottom drawer of a file cabinet. That part of his life was over, and he was done with it.

The lake property had become his retreat and his home. It was a place where he could live and not be bothered or harassed. Raised in a house full of love, noise, and chaos, Micah had learned at an early age to value quiet solitude.

Micah and his daughter were the only full-time inhabitants of the lake property. His brothers appeared now and again. His parents spent a couple weeks at the lodge in the summers.

The three older McKenna brothers, who were I-35, the band, had a nine-year difference from the oldest to the youngest. Four more children had been added to the family, adopted when they'd lost their parents in a car accident. Now, Micah had twin sisters who were almost twenty-one, a fourteen-year-old brother, and a little sister who was eleven. The McKenna family had always been tight. They were bound together by love and strong beliefs in family values.

Micah and his closest brothers had been straining against those close ties for a while. It was difficult for parents to let go when their children became adults. He enjoyed his separate-ness, yet he was a McKenna. He was still part of the band, I-35. He was invested, as were his brothers, in the music studio, headed by their father. Micah was also the CEO of a successful music production company he owned.

His position in life was that of a father, son, and brother. He was the problem solver. He was Micah.

Chapter 1

Hard Rock turned to the loudest volume on an old boom box was interrupted by the rhythmic crack of an ax splitting wood. Set-up, step back, and swing. The repetitive action was almost cathartic, but a large pile of split firewood was proof that Micah McKenna wasn't only a pretty boy, rock star. He looked strong, fit, and lean because he was a man who knew how to work with both his mind and his muscles.

He'd had a haircut recently. Shorn close to his scalp at the sides and back, it looked lighter than his medium brown. She knew those lighter blond tones weren't from bleaches. Micah spent a lot of his time outdoors.

Tess Foster preferred it longer, but he only let it grow because he hated someone, anyone messing with it. He claimed it gave him the heebie-jeebies and would shudder at the idea of sitting in a stylist's chair. She called it a phobia, but Micah shrugged it off or gave her that look that was a warning. She knew that look. He was thinking about smacking her ass. She'd been able to spot it since she was about twelve-years-old.

About twice a year, Micah would appear with his hair short and neat. It sent his agents and managers into a panic. He didn't give a damn. His jawline looked like he was using clippers on it rather than shaving. She liked the neat but scruffy look. Tess liked looking at Micah, she always had.

Tess didn't call to him. She didn't want to startle anyone swinging an ax. In loose, ill-fitting hospital green scrubs, Tess Foster looked amorphous. At five-foot-nine inches, she was anything but shapeless. Because she was slim, with somewhat delicate facial features, people tended to think she was smaller and more fragile. She delighted in ruining their preconceptions. Tess took the time to enjoy watching her friend.

Micah turned and noticed her. He grabbed his ax and locked it in a wooden box that was attached to a tree. He threw a few pieces of freshly split wood into a pile and walked over to her.

"Hey, kiddo, I didn't think they let you doctors escape, except at ungodly hours of the night, like vampires!" He swung his arm around her and nudged her toward the stairs. Then, he backed off with a look of disgust. "Whoa, I hate to tell you, Tess, but you stink!"

"I know," Tess admitted with a grin. "I was sent over to the night clinic at Columbus Hospital because they were short-staffed. I was on my way home when I was the first responder to a car accident on the interstate. It was a mess!"

Micah winced, and Tess knew what he was thinking. She put an arm around his waist and squeezed as they took the deck steps together. "It wasn't fatal. The woman driving did take a hard whack to the head. There were three little kids in the car from three to ten. The two little ones were in excellent car seats, and they weren't hurt. The older boy was about ten and small enough that he should have been in a restraining seat. He wasn't badly hurt, a broken arm that I

could diagnose. The mother was flown by Life-flight to Austin Trauma. The kids were sent by ambulance. I was able to get family information from the older boy, Tyler. He was a sweet kid. His arm was hurting, but all he could think about was his little sisters and his mother. His dad and grandparents were going to meet them at the hospital when I left the scene.

“As the first responder, I was in the dirt trying to do triage until the ambulances arrived. I’m covered with mud, blood, and thanks to the three-year-old, vomit. I thought I would stop here and see if I could get a shower and maybe borrow some clean clothes before I take this exhausted body home to sleep.”

“Sure,” Micah said, giving his friend a push toward his bedroom. “Take your stinky self to my room and jump in the shower. All I have that will fit you will be sweats.”

Tess stripped out of her sticky hospital greens and stepped into a luxurious bathroom. She had seen the bathroom before but had never had the opportunity to use it. After determining, what knob controlled what, she turned on all the massage jets and stepped into her idea of pure luxury. She grabbed a bottle of shower gel, sniffed, and smiled. It wasn’t the usual fruity, flowery smell of what she bought that was on sale at the supermarket. This shower gel smelled slightly spicy, a little musky, and definitely like Micah.

“Tess!” Micah’s voice was loud outside the bathroom door. “Throw your scrubs out, and I’ll toss them in the washer!”

Tess stepped from the shower and cracked the door enough to toss her soiled clothing onto the hardwood floor. “Can you make coffee?” she asked.

“Is the sky blue?” he answered.

“Micah!” Tess opened the door a little wider. “Don’t touch the blood or the vomit! Those clothes will need a cycle

of cold washing and a second cycle with hot water and a disinfectant if you have any. Wash your hands thoroughly with a strong soap, even if you don't touch anything nasty," she ordered authoritatively.

"Yes, ma'am," Micah drawled over his shoulder as he headed toward the laundry room.

Twenty minutes later, Tess left the bathroom wrapped in a long terrycloth robe she'd found behind the bathroom door. She slid onto one of the kitchen bar stools and watched as the man she respected above all others, finished making a grilled ham and cheese sandwich, and poured soup into a bowl.

"I thought you might be hungry."

"I'm starved," Tess admitted, and she took a healthy bite of the sandwich and spooned in the soup.

Tess cocked her head and looked around. "Where's Katie?"

"School and a sleepover tonight. There seems to be a lot of that going on as the school year ends. I think she has three or four sleepovers planned for the upcoming weeks. I'll go get her tomorrow evening."

"So, you are here, all by your lonesome?"

"I am most of the time," Micah said. "I get a lot done, and I enjoy the quiet." He pointed his finger at her sternly. "Do not try to set me up on a date again!"

"I apologized for that! Don't be hypersensitive."

"I'm not," he said, placing another half sandwich on her plate and taking the other half to eat himself. "I don't need to find a *nice girl*."

"That's a quote from your mother."

He grinned. "It is, and six aunts and countless others. I don't want anyone pushing me into dating again."

Tess's eyes crinkled with humor.

Micah gave a loud sigh. "I don't mean to jump on you,

Tess. You know I love you, but I get tired of the endless advice. I signed the final papers last week. All connections or perceived connections to Carla have been severed, personally, and professionally. Emotionally, I was done a long time ago. She's the one who has dragged the crap out for so long."

"Do you think it will end the harassment?"

"It better. It's been almost five years. She spent the first year trying to wheedle her way back into my life, and the last four tormenting me. She and those weasel lawyers were warned by the judge. They will be charged with a half-dozen criminal charges if they persist. She's claiming bankruptcy and trying to get out of paying her legal team. Carla told the judge she has a job in London, and she has received her work visa. She is supposed to be gone for a couple of years. Good luck to her."

"I pity whoever hired her," Tess exclaimed.

"Don't be nasty, she's gone, and it's over," Micah scolded.

"Nasty?" Tess queried with outrage in her voice. "A bitch like her gives all women a bad name!"

"Behave," Micah said mildly. "Summer is almost here. What's on your agenda next?"

"I'm still looking into it. My contract is over next week, and the hospital seems to be trying to squeeze every hour left in me. The Head of Administration is not pleased that I have decided not to renew my contract. I haven't decided what I want to pursue next. I wouldn't mind getting a fellowship to advance my knowledge of cardiothoracic surgery, or maybe it's time to join an established medical practice."

"I have applied for an eighteen-month fellowship working with Dr. Kirby Frost at the National Naval Hospital. He's heading a program studying abnormal brain dysfunction in children. His office contacted me, which was a real coup for me. His group has been reading the results of the papers I have published on our findings using music to

stimulate autistic children. He was impressed with our website.”

“Not *ours*, it’s your website,” Micah corrected. “My brothers and I haven’t had anything to do with your results.”

“The three of you write the songs and the music,” Tess protested. “The parents get the results! It’s big, Micah. Really big!”

“All we do is write little rhymes about getting dressed and combing hair and set them to music.”

“The parents have been getting positive results, so don’t belittle your part of it!” Tess insisted. “Sully’s not around to help much anymore. You have come through every time I have asked for anything, even if you had to pawn it off on Coyote. I know parents would genuflect to you if they knew who was writing those little *rhymes* as you call them. We could never reach Jeremy, but part of me wants to keep learning and trying to help other children. Another part of me is telling me that joining a practice makes more sense. I would, at last, have time to have a life outside of medicine.”

“So, I’m in flux. I may be going to the Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland. I have the first interview scheduled for next month. There will be a series of interviews. Dr. Frost is known for taking his time in interviewing and hiring.”

“What happens if you don’t get the fellowship?”

“There are others. Dr. Dennison is in charge of a research program at Goldsbury Children. I’m considering the idea of joining a practice. However, most of my ER experience would go to waste in a mainstream clinic.”

Micah shook his head. “Your experience could never be a waste. Like today, you were driving and boom something happens. You probably saved lives. You do every day.”

“Maybe I need something different,” Tess said with a sigh.

“This doesn’t sound like you. You have planned every

single class, and study program since you entered college at sixteen.”

Tess finished her sandwich, took her mug of coffee, and moved over into the living room. She flopped on the couch, propping her bare feet on a trunk that served as a coffee table.

“I’m tired,” Tess said finally. “I’m especially tired of working in a ‘for profit’ environment. I know hospitals have to make a profit, but I’m sick of my decisions being second-guessed by accountants.

“I haven’t had a life for the past twelve years. I’ve been busy with full-time school and part-time jobs. I haven’t had a date in two years! Every time I make one, an emergency comes in that I can’t leave. I love being a doctor, but I can’t continue at this pace. If I want a life, I have to remove myself from the ER department.”

Micah looked at her with a furrow between his eyes. “What’s going on?” he asked, sitting beside her and offering her an open bag of chocolate cookies.

Tess smiled as she snagged a cookie and took a bite. “Exhaustion, and a big wake up call. I fell asleep at the wheel.”

“What!”

Tess nodded. “I must have been partially cognitive. I managed to pull off the road, so I didn’t crash or hurt anyone else. I was awakened two hours later by someone knocking on my window. They thought I’d had a medical emergency. It’s time to take a break.”

“When was the last time you had a vacation?” Micah asked.

Tess shook her head. “No time, and even if I had the time, there was no money. I’m good at running an ER department. It’s a specialty very few can handle. It has paid

the bills and paid down a lot of my student loans, but it's time for a change."

Micah looked away, and his jaw stiffened. "This really pisses me off. Why didn't you say something? I could have helped!"

"Micah, unless a medical student comes from a wealthy family, the average debt coming out of training is in the three-hundred-thousand range. My student debt was less than that, and you have helped many times. I know you'll deny it, but it's a fact!" Tess exclaimed. "It is what it is!"

"You'll get the fellowship if it's what you want," Micah said, taking a deep breath to release his frustration. "You've had offers before, and if they don't hire you, it is their loss. Doctors are like celebrities, most of them start believing their press, and that leads to having God-like egos."

"Watch it, big guy. I am a doctor," Tess reminded him with a poke in the ribs.

"I know, and I'm, well, whatever I am. Neither of us is tripping over our egos, I hope. I try to overlook that you are the most stubborn person I've ever met. I still love you," Micah said, grinning.

Tess leaned over and laid her head on his shoulder. "I know, and I overlook that you are sometimes the biggest macho dork I have ever known."

"Hey, that is a politically incorrect pronoun and a highly insensitive insult. Besides my brother, Coyote still holds the title for dork," he teased.

Tess smiled and gave another tired sigh. "You are still my Micah."

Tessa grabbed the remote, looking over the program guide on a huge widescreen television over a fireplace that doubled as a mirror when not in use. She didn't find anything interesting, and she turned it off. She tucked into Micah, and they sat together, enjoying his fantastic lake

view. They didn't need words to feel comfortable with each other.

Micah looked down, enjoyed the view for a few seconds, and raised his eyes upward. "Uh, Tess."

"Hmm," Tess mumbled.

"Not that I don't enjoy a peek, but the robe is coming apart," Micah said.

Tess looked down and realized that she was exposing one of her breasts. She looked into Micah's face.

"Enjoying it?"

Micah smirked, ready to make a joke when he realized that Tess's eyes weren't smiling but intense and sultry with an invitation. He lowered his head and kissed her, first hesitantly, and when she responded hungrily, his mouth matched hers. One taste of her, and he wanted to savor and feel again.

They surfaced, and Micah stroked a gentle hand over her cheek and drew her against him. "Do you want this, Tess? Can we do this?"

Tess's fingers tugged at his shirt. "Yes, and yes."

He took possession of her mouth again. Even as she melted against him, he hesitated until she unzipped his jeans and freed him. She stroked him, and it was a flashpoint. A fever ignited that shattered his hesitancy as he touched, kissed, needed, and took what was offered. He needed so badly that he throbbed, but Micah held back, and Tess made the decision for him.

She straddled Micah, lowering herself over him, enveloping him in the wet heat of an identical passion. She rode him and rode him until she was gripped with sensations that swamped her as her body shuddered, tightened, and finally broke from release.

He pushed her to lay on the couch, and he drove into her with long slow strokes, igniting the fever again as he kissed and stroked and suckled.

Tess's legs wrapped around his waist. He thrust harder, faster, and finally pitched forward as he spilled his release and held onto that moment, wanting it to last longer.

Micah could feel his heart pounding, and he took several deep breaths to calm down. His first coherent thought was, "What the hell have I done!" His second was... "Hold on, we are adults, it was consensual." Then it was... "Dear God! I just had sex with Tess!"

Tess's reaction was a deep breath of pure satisfaction. Finally, finally, she'd had her way with Micah. She'd been in love with him half her life. He had never noticed her as anything beyond being another kid that he felt responsible for watching over. She wasn't surprised when he pushed away from her.

With a shove, Micah rose in a sitting position. Tess had somehow been relieved of the borrowed robe, and she was perfectly comfortable although she was naked. She smiled when he grabbed a throw pillow and laid it over his naked lap.

"Jesus, Tess, I didn't even get my pants and boots off!"

She watched him in amusement. "You're blushing."

Micah knew he was, but he shook his head in denial. "Men, don't blush."

"If that's true, I need to take your blood pressure because you might be headed for a stroke."

Micah took a deep breath because he thought having a stroke might be a real possibility. His jeans were pooled around his ankles, and he was sitting bare-assed naked on his couch. He was sitting beside a gloriously naked woman, but it was Tess! She'd been his brother Sully's best friend since he'd been a teenager. Oh yeah, and they had just had sex! Fantastic, hurried sex, and it had been over way too soon.

"Tess, what did we just do?"

She turned to him, and this time she wasn't smiling as

her eyes searched his. “Micah, if you apologize for what just happened, I will smack you so hard you will land into tomorrow.”

He pushed the throw pillow away and yanked her over into his lap again. He laid a kiss on her, a long, hungry one. He distanced himself a few inches as he stroked her naked breasts. “I wasn’t going to apologize. I was going to suggest that if we are going to do this... let’s move it into the bedroom.”

Tess pushed back, looked into his eyes again for a long moment, then stood and offered him her hand. Micah took it and made a grab for his jeans with the other tugging them to his knees. Tess started laughing, and so did he. With a final tug of both hands, Micah dragged his jeans onto his hips and hooked the button. He lifted her, and she wrapped her legs around his waist as he carried her to his bedroom.

Hours later, Micah stretched and pulled Tess against his body. “Tired?”

“Exhausted,” Tess mumbled, but she opened her eyes. “It was so worth it. I feel like that little boy in *Oliver Twist*... May I have more, please?”

He chuckled. “Yes, you can, but being a doctor, you know more about the male body than I do. After that marathon, I need to refuel and to rest a while before having another go. Besides, I’m hungry.”

“Me, too,” Tess agreed. “Plus, I should be going.”

“Stay,” he said, placing an arm over her to hold her in place.

Tess turned over and looked him straight in the eyes. “Should I?”

“Yes. We have started something. I don’t know where it will go, but I am not willing to let go of it. How’s your schedule for the next twenty-four hours?”

“Twenty,” Tess corrected, looking at her watch. “I have a

twelve-hour shift starting at one tomorrow. I'll need an hour or so to go home. I need to check my mail and messages, and find something clean to wear, before heading to the hospital."

Micah grinned wickedly. "Do you mind if I make a suggestion on how we spend the next nineteen hours?"

Micah waved and watched as Tess backed her little compact car from his driveway, and drove along the gravel road until she was out of sight. He gave a tug on the loose sweats he was wearing and gave a hitch to his private parts. Like every male on earth, they all did it when members of the opposite sex weren't around. Sometimes a man just had to rearrange the junk.

It had been a long time since he had made love until he was sore and exhausted. He and Tess had been on a twenty-plus hour marathon of sex, sex, and more sex in every way possible.

The only time they hadn't been having sex was when they were napping, and that was only to gain enough strength and energy to start over again. Tess had been insatiable. He shook his head and grinned because he hadn't been able to get enough of her either.

Micah McKenna had definitely jumped off the celibacy wagon! He had lost count. They'd made love on the couch, the bed, in the shower, on the bedroom floor. Hell, they'd had sex against the wall and on the kitchen counter. He would never be able to look at his house in the same way again.

When Micah's cell indicated an incoming text message, he knew by the tone that it was his younger brother. Coyote's message was short. *Need?*

Translated, it meant Coyote was heading north and wanted to know if Micah needed anything. It was a courtesy call, as the lake was sixteen miles from the nearest town with a Gas and Go convenience stop. Twenty-five miles from a grocery store. Coyote split his time between the two campuses of the University of Texas in San Antonio and Austin. He had to drive near the lake property, on his way to Austin.

Micah texted: *Usual*. His younger brother was under a standing order to pick up milk, bread, and fruit. It was a no-brainer.

Micah then looked around and headed for his bedroom. He had to get his house in order. Coyote only had one speed—fast. He would be lucky to have an hour to get rid of any and all evidence of his and Tess's sex orgy. He yanked the sheets off the bed, stopped in the bathroom for the dirty towels, and made his way to the laundry room. With one large load started, he went to his bedroom with clean linens for the bed.

He opened the bedroom windows and the double doors that led to the deck that ran the full length of his house. He sprayed an air freshener around the room. He grabbed clean clothes and headed for the shower—another place that was going to hold very fond memories. This time, he needed a lot of hot water and maybe jock cream.

When he had completed his mental list of chores, Micah grabbed his keys. He had to go get his daughter. If he wasn't there when his brother arrived, he knew Coyote would make himself at home. His brothers had the keys.