

SAILOR'S SEARCH

SOUTH DAKOTA DREAMS BOOK 4



MEGAN MCCOY

BLUSHING BOOKS

©2018 by Blushing Books® and Megan McCoy
All rights reserved.

No part of the book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published by Blushing Books®,
a subsidiary of
ABCD Graphics and Design
977 Seminole Trail #233
Charlottesville, VA 22901
The trademark Blushing Books®
is registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office.

Megan McCoy
Sailor's Search

EBook ISBN: 978-1-61258-548-2
Print ISBN: 978-1-61258-592-5

Cover Art by ABCD Graphics & Design

This book is intended for adults only. Spanking and other sexual activities represented in this book are fantasies only, intended for adults. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual spanking activity or the spanking of minors.

CHAPTER 1



Sailor Gilbert shivered as she drove into Blizzard, South Dakota. She wasn't sure why. She'd spent the summer working in the Black Hills as a tour guide and it got cold up there occasionally, even in July when you hiked high enough. It wasn't even cold here. Just pleasant. Perfect August weather. Her first goal in this perfectly weathered town was to find the bed and breakfast where she'd just gotten hired to work, at least temporarily. The owners, Mr. and Mrs. Williams said they were needing some help for the next few months while she had a double knee replacement.

That had been the in she'd needed to get to town.

Yeah, she could have come to town anytime she wanted. There weren't gates or anything around it, but, there was that job thing she needed. Still paying off her mom's medical bills meant very little extra cash. She couldn't not work. She'd been working her way over to South Dakota patiently for well over a year now, and finally made it. Sailor knew a few months here, with a job, was what she needed. Today was, as the old saying went, the first day of the rest of her life. Whether it would be a good rest of her life or just a stop along the way, remained to be seen. But right now, she needed to find this bed and breakfast which wasn't happily nestled on some street corner in

town, but out about five miles in the gorgeous hills north of town. Sailor liked that. She craved woods and quiet and time to find all she was seeking, or at least it was what she needed to head back into civilization slowly after her summer under the sky.

Turning into the long lane, her mouth opened in almost awe. This place was bigger and much more gorgeous than she thought it would be. At least a two or three acre lawn, blooming with late summer flowers, and Sailor felt certain that she spied an herb garden over on one side. A huge porch wrapped around the front of the Victorian styled mansion, and there were several cozy seating areas on the wrap around covered porch. Sitting there to watch the sunset over the hills would be magnificent, she knew. No wonder this inn was so popular with groups and tourists, she could imagine the attraction.

Sailor parked on one side of the drive and leaving everything in her car, walked up to the house and saw the note 'ring and walk in' so she started to do that, but then something caught her eye.

Just around a slight corner, a small dark-haired boy sat in one of the porch swings, with the obligatory electronic device firmly in his hand while seeming to ignore the large basket of green beans in obvious need of snapping beside him. "Hello," she greeted him, and he looked up at her with huge dark eyes.

"Oh, I thought you were Grandma," he said. "She's coming to help me in a minute." Sailor figured that his grandma must be Mrs. Williams, her new boss.

"Well, if she's on her way here, how about I help you for a minute?" she asked and settled beside him on the swing. She was a few minutes early, and hadn't done beans on a porch swing, well, ever, but why not? She could use some down time before her final interview that she'd been assured was just a formality. They had done the rest on the phone and on face chat. The Williamses had said she had the job, but she'd feel better about it once the form was filled out.

He shrugged and put down his device. "Who are you?" he asked with the unabashed curiosity only little kids had.

"My name is Sailor, who are you?" She grabbed a bean.

"Tyler Montgomery," he said. "My grandma and granddad live her. I'm staying with them until my mom comes to get me later." He wrinkled his small nose at her. "Sailor isn't a name, it's a job."

Sailor smiled. "I know. But it's the name I was given, so what can I do?" She knew she didn't look like a Sailor. Whatever that looked like, but enough people told her she didn't look like a Sailor, she had to figure that was true. She was medium height, had dark hair like her half Native American mother, very muscular, somewhat practical, though she did have a bit of a temper she tried very hard to control, and was constantly seeking something. Oddly, she didn't know what it was, but she knew she'd know it when she saw it. It was the driving force in her life right now, and she hoped that in this town, she would find it.

"Change it?" he suggested.

"That's interesting," she said as they worked together on the beans. He knew what he was doing, she noticed. "What should I change it to? Have any ideas?"

"Granddad's dog is named Sophie," he said. "That's a good name."

"Maybe he would get us confused," she said, smiling. "What if he called Sophie and he was looking for me and the dog came?"

"Why would he be calling you?" Tyler asked her.

"Good point," she said, and then stood up as the door opened and an older couple came out. Recognizing them from the video chats, she walked over and held out her hand. "Mr. Williams, Mrs. Williams, I'm Sailor Gilbert, and you have a lovely place and a quite intelligent grandson. Nice to finally meet you."

"Call us Violet and Virgil." The tall man shook her hand and smiled at her. "We're glad you could make it."

"Welcome to Eagle's Inn." The woman shook her hand, and

Sailor noticed the wrinkles of pain on her face. She knew those signs, having nursed her mother through her last years.

"I'm so glad to be here," she said, and realized she was. She felt comfortable here, and relaxed which was odd on a quasi-interview.

"Let's just sit out here a few minutes," Violet said, and sat next to Tyler. "I see you got started on the beans," she said to him. "Thank you."

"Sailor was helping me," he said. "She has a funny name, but doesn't want to change it."

"Then how about we let her keep it?" Virgil said, smiling at the boy.

"I guess," he said. "But I want to name the next cat you get."

"Deal," Violet said and started snapping beans as they talked. Sailor sat down in one oversized rocker while Virgil sat in the other. She could only imagine how relaxing this was for their guests.

"As we told you," he said, "Violet has surgery done this week, and will be down for a while. I am pretty capable, but need a general person to be where I can't. Help with the cooking and serving, we have a cleaning crew who comes in, but general picking up and things in between times. We serve breakfast every morning, lunch on specific days, and put out a small snack in the afternoons when it's check-in time. Violet and I do most of the cooking, but we've hired someone to come out for the duration. We just need someone to jump in and not have to be told what to do, but do what needs done."

"Sounds like things are mostly covered," Sailor said. "I can cook, clean and snap beans. I'm pretty good with people and a self-starter. Once I realize how things go around here, I'll be able to jump in, and do things with minimal supervision." She was going to like it here, and she already liked this couple. "I'll do a great job for you."

"Good, your last two bosses gave you glowing references," Violet added. "I have no doubts you'll live up to them."

"Then let's get you settled in your room, and you can have the rest of the day to explore the town if you want to. Figure out where the stores are and things, because that will be part of your job, running the errands." Virgil stood up.

"We need cat food," Tyler reminded them. "Buster ate it all this morning."

"Buster needs to be eating mice in the barn," his granddad told him.

Sailor laughed, "I can pick up cat food this afternoon."

"Come on, I'll show you your room," he said.

A few hours later, after unloading her car and getting settled into her wonderful room, which seemed more of a studio apartment than a room, she was back in her little car and heading into town. Sighing, she noticed she was almost out of gas. She'd have to stop at the first place she saw and reminded herself she was now living out in the country and would have to make sure her car was filled up. Her car hadn't been driven most of the summer, but for a once a month trip to town between camping trips for needed supplies. This job would be different, and she would be needing it more often. It probably needed an oil change, too, and maybe new tires. There went her first paycheck and she hadn't even started work.

Stopping at the first place she saw inside the city limits, she pulled up to the pump and started filling her tank, frowning at the price of gas. It was going to cost her over fifty bucks to fill her tank, but what choice did she have? A few minutes later, as she stared in horror at the empty passenger seat, the realization she'd left her purse in her room back at the bed and breakfast swept over her.



KEVIN STRONG PULLED into the small convenience store at the edge of town. Someone pumped close to fifty dollars' worth of gas and claimed they forgot their wallet. At least they'd come in, instead of

trying to do a drive off. They always got caught via the security cameras and it was hard to believe people didn't know that by now. He walked into the almost deserted store and noticed the most breathtaking woman he'd ever seen standing beside the counter visibly distressed. Pulling his eyes from her and addressing the manager, he said, "What's going on, Bernie?"

Motioning with his head, Bernie said, "This one says she left her money at home and didn't notice until she pumped the gas. Then she says she's staying at the bed and breakfast."

"I said I'm working there," the woman said, impatiently. "I told you, there is no need for cops. Just let me go get my purse and I'll come right back." She looked up at Kevin with huge green eyes and he tried not to gasp. What was wrong with him? She wasn't a perfect, tall, well-built, blonde like his brother's wife, he had always thought that was his type, but this woman was small, dark, and her bare legs had well-toned muscles. A runner? Hiker? He liked it, whatever it was. Why? He liked blondes, he reminded himself, then said, screw it.

Bernie shook his head. "Out of state plates on her car," he told Kevin. Kevin nodded, understanding. She could be on the interstate on the other side of town and be gone in minutes.

"You working for Virgil and Violet?" he asked her.

The upset woman nodded, "I'm helping out while Violet has knee surgery. I just got to town, unpacked my car, and came into town to run a few errands and get gas. I must have left my purse on the bed in my room. I can just go get it and be back in half an hour."

Bernie still shook his head. "Not letting you leave without my money."

Kevin debated. He could follow her back to the Williams' place, or— "How about this, Bernie. You keep her keys and car, and I'll drive her out there and back? We can get this settled pretty quick. If her story checks out, you get your money. If it doesn't, she goes to jail."

The brunette gasped, in what sounded like horror. "I have cash in my purse!" she insisted again. "And a credit card! I can pay!"

Bernie nodded. "I'm sure you can. That's okay. I'll just take your keys," he told her.

Her hands shook, Kevin noticed as she got them out of her pocket. "I need my room key off," she said and fumbled at it, but her fingers trembled so badly, he took them away from her gently.

"This one?" he asked, and she nodded, her green eyes filling with tears. He took it off and handed it to her and tried to smile sympathetically. Poor kid. She looked mid-twenties and must be stressed out. Welcome to Blizzard.

"What's your name?" he asked her.

"Sailor," she said and clutched her room key as if it were a lifeline.

"Where's your car, Miss Sailor?" he asked, wondering if it were a nickname or her real name.

She pointed directly in front of the door. "I moved it there when I realized I didn't have any cash on me. I wasn't trying to steal. I've never had the police called on me before."

"That's good," he reassured her in his best cop voice. "Okay, Bernie, we'll be back in a bit with your money. Come on, Miss Sailor, let's go." They walked to his car and he opened the passenger door for her. "Here you go."

"At least you aren't putting me in the back seat like a criminal," she said, with an adorable quaver in her voice.

Getting in his side, he motioned to her seat belt and said, "You aren't a criminal, are you?"

"No!" she said again, sounding so worried he felt badly for her. Honestly, he could have paid her bill and let her go along her way but if he admitted it to himself, he wanted to spend some time with her. Nothing wrong with that. How often did he get a pretty girl in his front seat? One he was intrigued by and weirdly attracted to? "But can you imagine what my bosses are going to think when I

pull up in a cop car?" She moaned. "I'm making a great first impression."

"They'll understand," he said soothingly. "I saw you have Idaho plates. How did you get here to South Dakota?"

"I was working in the Black Hills as a tourist guide this summer," she said. "I saw the ad for a general manager/jack of all trades online and it started about when my job was ending for the season, and I applied."

Kevin nodded. "Sounds like a fun job, wandering around in the hills," he said.

"It was," she said, and seemed to relax a little. "I might go back next season, after my job ends here, or I might go to Arizona. I've never been there."

"No place to call home?" he asked. He'd lived in Blizzard all his life and never once thought about leaving. He loved this town and his people.

"Not really," she confessed. "I grew up in Sandpoint, Idaho, and there were always tourists there talking about the places they'd been and the places where they were planning to go. I'd only lived there and left once," she paused as if catching herself. "As soon as I could."

"I grew up here," he said. "This is a great town, you will love it. Maybe you'll never want to leave?" Why did he say that? What was wrong with him?

Sailor threw him some sort of look and again, he wondered what her thing, her deal, was. For some reason he really wanted to find out. As a cop, he usually didn't care about back story. Just obey the law, and move on with your day. Was it her physical attractiveness? Her expressive green eyes? Her little girl lost look that belied her grown status? He didn't know but he suddenly wished the bed and breakfast was more than five very short miles away.

Too quickly, they arrived, and he got out, making sure not to unlock the door on her side, so he could walk around and let her out. They walked up to the porch together where Violet and Virgil

sat on the porch swing holding hands. Kevin wanted that. A long happy life with a woman he still adored when they were in their seventies, eighties and beyond. One he would live his life with, a woman like his brother finally found, with his first, second and last wife, Talia. It wasn't too much to ask of life, was it? He wanted a slew of little rug rats running around and driving him crazy, and a wife who jumped in his arms when he came home from work. A wife he could spoil and yes, even discipline when needed. It shouldn't be that hard. All his friends had found that already.

He'd been on dating sites a few years now and while he dated off and on, there hadn't been any kind of attraction like he had felt the instant he'd seen Sailor. Strange but true. The last thing he'd had that passed for a date was when someone had gotten drunk at a Christmas party and he'd driven her home. She kindly waited until she got out of the car to puke on his shoes as he was helping her to the door. Fun times.

"Kevin, Sailor?" Virgil asked slowly, obviously puzzled.

"We had a bit of a situation," Kevin started.

"I went to the gas station, pumped my gas, and realized that I'd left my purse at home. Officer Strong was kind enough to offer me a ride to come back and get it," Sailor said in one long breath. Kevin contemplated. Yes, that was basically the truth, leaving out the part he'd been called to come.

"Where's your car, Sailor?" Violet asked, confused.

Sailor sighed. "They're holding it hostage until I come back with the gas money."

"Do you have it?" Virgil stood up and pulled his wallet from his pocket and Kevin felt pleased to see she looked at him in horror.

"Oh, yes! I do have it. I just left my purse on the dresser, or maybe the bed, in my room when I was unpacking the car and forgot to pick it up!" She took off into the house and Kevin looked at Violet and Virgil. They were the parents of one of his sister-in-law Talia's best friends, Lily. He'd known them for years, of course, and knew they were fine people.

“Hiring more help?” he asked.

“I’m getting my knees replaced and Virgil can’t be everywhere at once,” Violet said. “I’m going to train her this week before I go in next Thursday. I’ll be out a few months, with rehab and everything, and that will be getting close to our busy season. We hope she stays for a while. We like her already.”

Kevin did, too, but wasn’t going to say that out loud. “I hope she works out for you,” he offered, looking up as Sailor came out the door.

“I hope I do, too,” Sailor smiled at them and held up her wallet. “Money to pay for gas, right here, and the money you gave me for the cat food I’m picking up.”

“You sure?” Virgil asked her. “I don’t mind spotting you some.”

Kevin saw her cheeks blush in embarrassment. “I’m certain, but thank you so much for your very kind offer. I’ll be back in a few hours. I’ll see you then.” She started walking back to his car, and Kevin shook Virgil’s hand.

“Thank you, sir. I think you got a good one in her,” he said, trying to be reassuring. As Sailor got out of earshot, he said softly, “I’ll make sure she has enough to pay the gas bill, and will make sure it gets paid either way.”

“Let me know,” Virgil said. “Violet already has a soft spot in her heart for that one.”

“Hi, Uncle Kevin!”

Kevin turned to smile at Tyler as he pounded up the stairs in the way only little boys could. “Hey, buddy, what are you doing here?”

“Just taking care of the grandparents while mom and Sam are at work,” he said, in such a laid-back manner, Kevin had to stop a laugh.

“Well, that’s a really good way to spend such a lovely day,” Kevin told him. “I have to get back to work, but I’ll see you soon. Tell your mom and Sam I said hi, okay?”

“Will do,” Tyler assured him and gave him a high five.



SAILOR WATCHED as Kevin walked back toward her. How stupid could she have been not picking up her purse? It was a small thing, but she felt it was a bad omen. That she was not going to accomplish what she set out to do in town. That things would go downhill from here and she wouldn't find what she'd been seeking. Why? Sailor tried to convince herself she was being melodramatic. "Who wouldn't think being brought to your new employer's in a police car wasn't a good omen?" she asked Kevin as he got in the car.

"Double negatives have always confused me," he said, dryly, and she almost allowed her lips to twitch a little.

"A new place, a fresh start, and it starts freshly by having the cops called on you," she said. "Maybe I should just pack up and go. Like tonight." She leaned back in her seat and sighed. Yes, she knew she was being dramatic.

"Why did you need a fresh start?" he asked, and Sailor felt a twinge of almost guilt.

"My job ended," she reminded him. "Nothing nefarious. My worst crime so far is forgetting my purse."

"So far?" he asked.

Sailor couldn't help it, she giggled. "Yes, sir, so far," she agreed. "I'll try to keep the shenanigans down to a dull roar."

"I approve of that plan," he turned down a different road.

"Aren't we going back to the gas station?" She asked, realizing they weren't heading in the right way. Walking through the woods had given her a good sense of direction.

"I thought I'd take you to get cat food first," he said.

"Don't you have to, like, do cop things?" she asked. "I can buy cat food alone. I'm a big girl, now."

"As of half an hour ago, I'm off duty from that cop thing," he said. "I know the best place in town to buy cat food, and I'll introduce you to a friend."

Sailor shook her head, and he gave her a quick stare. "I insist," he said.

Well, that gave her a bit of a thrill for some strange reason. But she smiled and said, "Okay. I guess I can trust a cop."

"You can trust this cop," he said, and patted her knee. Weirdly, she didn't mind that one bit.

"Well, Officer Kevin," she said. "Let's go buy cat food because that sounds way more exciting than anything else I have planned for today."

"Miss Sailor, I think that is a very good choice," he said. A few minutes later, they were parked on a downtown street.

They got out of the police car and walked down the street. "We'll stop here, first," he said. And opened the door for her to a florist shop. Throwing him a puzzled glance, she went inside and heard a cheery, "Welcome to Brenda's!" Looking over, she saw a small, dark-haired woman, Sailor thought she was beautiful. "Oh, Kevin!" She came out from behind the counter and gave him a huge hug. His wife? Girlfriend? Why did that thought bother her?

"Hey, Lily," Kevin hugged her back casually. "This is Sailor, she's helping your folks while your mom has surgery. I'm giving her a little tour."

"Oh, are you Tyler's mom?" Sailor asked. Okay, that was fine. She internally rolled her eyes at herself. It would have been fine if she was his wife. He was nothing to her but a ride.

"Also known as Lily," she said, opening her arms for a hug. "Thank you so much for coming to their rescue."

Sailor decided why not, and stepped in to receive her hug. Lily smelled like flowers. Naturally. Why wouldn't she, being surrounded by them all day.

"I adore Tyler and your folks," she said.

"What's not to adore?" Lily asked. "When do you start work?"

"Tomorrow morning," Sailor said. "I'm buying cat food and looking around the town tonight."

"Hang on," Lily said, whipping out her phone, texting a few

times and said, "Kevin, you off tonight?" Sailor watched him nod, puzzled.

"Okay, we're all meeting at the Roll On In at six. Work for you? Welcome to Brenda's," Lily chirped again as someone came in the door.

"See you there," Kevin said as he grabbed her hand and for some reason she let him. Weird.

"What just happened?" she asked Kevin as they went south on the sidewalk. He didn't let go of her hand, and she didn't mind it one little bit.

"We are all meeting at the bowling alley for dinner tonight," he said, as if that explained anything.

"Who is we?" she asked.

"Some friends, you, me, Lily, Sam, my brother, you know," he said.

No, she didn't know. But, hey, she would have dinner. Her stomach gave a large growl. She hadn't eaten since breakfast. Food would be good, and she didn't mind meeting new people. Sailor knew she would be here a few months and friends would be a nice thing to have on her days off. Maybe forgetting her wallet was the smartest, not the stupidest decision she'd made all day. Deciding to put that in the back of her mind, she walked down the street holding hands with this handsome guy in a uniform. He was tall, maybe six one? Well-muscled, looking hot in his uniform, and had a cop's self-confidence. She liked that. It made her feel... what? Safe? Maybe so. Whatever it was, she liked it.

"Here we are," he smiled at her and she was glad he had hold of her hand. Otherwise she might have gone weak in the knees. What was with this? She'd never felt this way before.

"Here we are where?" she asked, not wanting to take her eyes off him.

"Bindi's Barn. This is the best place in town to buy cat food," he said.

A hugely pregnant woman stood in front of them as Kevin led her inside. “Stormy,” he said. “This is Sailor.”

“I know! Lily texted me,” she said. “Hi, Sailor, I’m so glad to meet you!”

And she got another hug. This was the huggiest town, but she didn’t really mind it. It was just strange.

“I’m glad to meet you, too.” Did everyone in town know each other? So far, it seemed that way.

An adorable little dog wandered around the corner, and came up to sniff her. “That’s Bindi,” Stormy said, as Sailor bent over to pet her. “She owns this place.”

“Lucky little dog,” Sailor said.

“Don’t tell her she’s a dog! It would break her psyche!” Stormy said. “I hear we’re going out to dinner tonight. Anyone get hold of Lucas?”

“Don’t know,” Kevin said. “I’ll check later. Right now, we need cat food for Virgil’s cat and I need to get Sailor back to her car.”

“Kevin’s brother, Lucas, owns the best mechanic shop in town, if you’re having car trouble,” Stormy said. “Though I’m sure Kevin already told you that.”

Sailor didn’t bother to tell her that she wasn’t having car trouble, but said instead, “Thank you. Everyone is so friendly here! It’s going to be a fun season, I hope.”

“Season?” Lily asked.

“I travel around the country, working at National Parks and places like that, then I get wanderlust and move on after the season,” Sailor explained. “I thought a bed and breakfast at the foot of the Black Hills would be a fun change. Sleep in a real bed instead of a dorm bunk or tent.”

“I can see the appeal of that,” Stormy said. “Well, here’s the cat food aisle.” Sailor reached down to grab the big bag, and Kevin took it from her.

“I can carry that,” she said.

“So, can I,” he said.

"Well, then," she laughed. "Thank you." Why was this handsome cop being so nice to her? Was he actually taking her out to dinner tonight? Had anyone actually asked her? She wasn't certain, but decided to just kind of go with the flow. After all, that was why she was in town, wasn't it? To find what she'd been seeking? The more people she met, the sooner, she might find what she was looking for.

Kevin seemed nice, but what was the saying, "Everyone could fake sane for a few days, but the crazy always comes out." She knew that to be true. But for now, she'd go along for the ride.

Kevin tossed the cat food in the back seat of his car and opened the door for her. "I'll take you back to your car, now," he said. "But I'll plan to pick you up this evening about five thirty, and we'll have dinner with some friends."

Sailor noticed he didn't ask her, but just assumed. Once again, she didn't mind that. "Sure you don't want to meet me in town somewhere?" she asked. "That would save you a few trips to the country this evening after having worked all day."

He glanced at her. "Nope. I'll pick you up." Who was she to argue with chivalry?

"Okay," she complied. "Does dinner at the bowling alley include bowling?"

"It can, but it doesn't have to," Kevin said. "Why?"

"Just wondering what to wear. It's a girl thing," she said.

"Oh. A girl thing. I wouldn't know anything about that," he smiled just a little.

"Never been married?" she asked.

"Nope. You?"

"Nope. Nobody even serious."

"As pretty as you are?"

He sounded totally serious. "You're silly," she shook her head.

"I am many things, but silly is not one of them."

Sailor didn't quite know what to make of that. "Never?" she teased. "Not even when you get chocolate milk with a straw?"

"What?" Baffled was better than serious, she decided.

"You know. Chocolate milk with a straw just begs to be bubbled in."

"Bubbled in?"

"Now, you are being silly," she told him. "You know, blowing bubbles in your chocolate milk."

"Oh, well, yeah, but I haven't done that since I was maybe six," he pulled into the convenience store.

"The technology hasn't changed any," she said, making sure she had her purse.

"I don't suppose it has. I'll walk in with you, and make sure Bernie doesn't give you any grief," he said.

"I appreciate that," she told him. "I'm not a fan of grief."

"Few people are."

A few minutes later, the cat food was in the back of her car, and he was pulling out of the gas station parking lot while she sat in her car, keys in her hand and put the key to her room back on her keychain. Her hands were much less shaky now than they were when she was trying to take it off. After she got it done, she'd head to the nearest chain store and get some needed things and probably just go back to the B&B to unpack and get ready to go tonight. There would be weeks to explore the town. Violet had told her that other than the occasional special guest, like a business person who would book for a month, they were closed Monday after check-out time, all day Tuesday and Wednesday, so those would be her days off. She never minded working weekends, which were the busiest times in her lines of work, but she was glad to get two days off in a row. That didn't happen often.

Tomorrow was Thursday and there would be a writers group coming in Thursday evening and staying until Sunday afternoon. All the rooms would be full, and she'd be having a trial by fire. Often women were the hardest to please, so she'd have to be on her toes. But tonight, she had some kind of sort of maybe date thing to go to. Or just a casual meeting with some new friends.

Either way, she was looking forward to spending more time with Kevin.

Arriving back at the B&B she saw Tyler coming toward her, and asked him, "Hi there, do you know where I should put the cat food?"

"I do," he said importantly. "Come this way." Grabbing the bag from the car, she followed him around the back of the house to a small little shed. "It goes in here." Opening the door, she stepped into a well-organized storage shed, full of what seemed to be seasonal decor. Of course, a B&B would decorate seasonally. Camps usually didn't bother that much, other than maybe on their posted newsletter. That would be fun. When was the last time she'd helped set up a Christmas tree? Did they decorate in August like the stores? Probably not. That was okay. Sailor just realized that she had a place to be at both Thanksgiving and Christmas this year, if everything went well. This year she hoped it would be extra special, even if she had to work both days and she expected to do just that. Holiday work went with the territory, and that was okay. It wasn't like she had to be anywhere to see anyone.

"Want to see the garden?" Tyler asked.

"Sure," she said, and after making sure the door was latched, followed him around the side of the shed where there was a gorgeous well-tended vegetable garden. She knew about trees and leaves and even what kind of wild animals left which kind of paw print or poop, but she'd never tried to keep a plant alive. This garden was huge, and full of a few things she could recognize. Green beans, tomatoes, some vines that she assumed were melon or maybe cucumbers? Then many she didn't have a clue about.

"This is great," she told Tyler. "What do you do with it all?"

"Feed people," he said, and pulled a weed from the ground. At least she assumed it was a weed.

"The people who stay here?"

"Yup, and us. I help Grandma when she comes out. I've done it all my life," he said and started walking back to the house.

“Are you here a lot?” Was she to be his live-in babysitter, Sailor wondered. That wasn’t in her job description.

“Sometimes,” he said, and took off running. Okay, so he was done with her apparently. Sailor went in the back door, and headed to her room. There would be enough time for more exploring and finding out things tomorrow. Right now, she needed to unpack.

Looking around the cozy little room, she felt very lucky to be here. She had a large bed, a small fridge and microwave, her own bathroom, TV and rocker recliner. This was much plusher than the one-bedroom apartment she’d grown up in, and definitely better than the tent she’d spent most of the summer in, and her own bathroom, after sharing a communal one or sponge baths? Princesses didn’t live much better than she was right now. She almost didn’t want to leave tonight, but stretch out on that bed and turn on the TV and do princessy things. Like nap? Feel for a pea? How would she know?

Her stomach growled and reminded her that she hadn’t eaten today and hoped the bowling alley had some decent bar food. Surprisingly, many of them did. All she could do was hope this was one, or hit the local drive through fast food place on the way home. Fast food had been her staple food for years. Well, that and campfire food. She could make a great meal over a campfire, or at least all the tourists told her she did, and believing them was easy.

Her wardrobe wasn’t much. Mostly denim shorts, jeans, boots, sneakers, t-shirts and sweatshirts. She did have what she called her interview blouse though, and decided to wear that with her ‘nice’ jeans tonight. She left her hair down and applied some mascara and eyeliner and that was all. Hopefully, it would be a fun night.

She went out to the front porch to chat with Virgil and Violet while she waited for Kevin to come back. It was still silly he had to drive out this way, but hey, she didn’t get chauffeured often, so she was just going to let him do it if he wanted. Her new employers seemed to like him, and he knew people in town and was a cop. If

she wasn't safe with him, well, then, the world was a sad and sorry place.

Kevin Strong was an obviously alpha male, but she liked that. Being strong all day every day, and the leader that everyone relied on to keep them safe and bring them home alive out in the woods or on the river where most of them had never been before was both exhilarating, but exhausting both mentally and physically. She liked the idea of relying on someone else for a change, even if it was a ride to a bowling alley.

"Are you excited about your date tonight?" Violet asked her as she sat down in the comfortable rocker next to the porch swing.

Sailor looked at her, shocked. "I'm not going on a date." How had she known?

"Isn't Kevin coming to pick you up?" Violet asked, while doing some kind of needlework. Knitting? Crochet? What was the difference? Sailor had no clue. No one she knew did handcrafts, though she'd heard the term during some campfire session.

"Yes, he's coming," she agreed. "But one, how did you know that and two, it's not a date, just a group of us going out. And I have my purse." She showed her.

"Well, take a twenty out of your purse and put it in your bra in case you and your purse get separated again," Violet said, and Sailor laughed.

"Yes, ma'am," she said, and fished a bill out of her wallet. Folding it up, she stuck it down her shirt. "Did you do this on dates?"

"Well, back when I was dating Virgil it was a five, but yes, I did. My mom always made me fish it out when I came home to make sure it was still there, and there was no hanky-panky going on," Violet said, with a twinkle in her eye. "She didn't know how often that bill was put down somewhere safe during the night, and then picked back up again."

"Are you telling stories?" Virgil asked, walking up and settling down beside her.

"No, I'm telling facts," Violet leaned over and kissed him. Sailor shook her head. Who would have thought?

She looked down the drive and saw a pickup truck coming down the lane and stood up. That had to be him, didn't it?

Yup, it was. He swung out of his truck, and if it were possible at all looked even sexier in his jeans and dark green polo shirt with the sleeves pushed up, than he did in his uniform. How could that be? Yum.

"Hi," she said as he walked up the porch steps. That was so brilliant! He was going to be in awe of her linguistics.

"You look nice," he said. "Hello, Violet, Virgil. I'll have her home in time for work tomorrow."

Sailor threw him a horrified look, and the three of them laughed.

"We will see you in the morning, Sailor. Work starts at ten," Virgil said.

"I'll be here long before then!" she said almost huffily, suddenly feeling tense, but not willing to give up her night out. "Night." Okay. That was polite. She stalked down the porch and into the truck, without waiting for him to open the door. Pleased she even managed to find a hand hold and pull herself up, she fastened her seatbelt and glared at him as he got in.

"That was mortifying," she informed him.

"What was?" he asked as if he were seriously confused.

"Implying I was sleeping with you tonight!" How dense was he? Didn't cops have to take an IQ test?

"It was just a joke, no one took it seriously but you," he said, and started the truck, but didn't move it and turned in his seat to look in her eyes. Fine. He had fine eyes. More than fine. She could sink into those eyes. Deep dark blue.

Sailor took a deep breath, but said, "They might be your friends, but they are my bosses. Bosses I just met today for the first time."

To his credit, he looked a little chagrined and she felt better. "Yeah, I didn't think of that," he admitted.

Sailor liked having the upper hand and smiled at him, generously. "I forgive you for embarrassing me. This time."

"Very kind of you, m'lady," he said, grandly. "So, do you bowl?"

"I have in the not so recent past, but not saying I'm good at it. You?"

"Anything with beer and balls is good for me," he said, which made her giggle. Apparently, she'd forgiven him. Why be mad?

"Do you do team sports?"

"I try, but with my schedule it makes it hard. We recently hired a couple new people, yay, for higher taxes!" He shot her a grin that made her heart race. "So, it's settled down a little, but being a cop means someone is working 24/7 and no snow days off."

"When's the first snow around here?"

"Depends. Anytime between now and first of November," he said, pulling into the parking lot.

Sailor felt a thrill of nerves for some reason. She wasn't shy and new people were fun and interesting, and if she didn't like them, well, she just moved on. Literally and figuratively, until she found what she was seeking. Maybe it would be here in Blizzard and maybe not.

They walked over to a large table in the corner, where a group of people already sat, looking over at them curiously. Sailor figured that Kevin didn't bring a girl around often, so she was a novelty. Or maybe he brought a new girl every time and they were just checking out the latest one. She had no clue.

There was Stormy, and Lily, with men she didn't know, and, her breath caught. Talia.