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About the Book

Can an unlikely Vegas marriage turn into something more?

When fashion designer Lauren Redstone gets drunk in Las Vegas to celebrate a successful deal, she does something very impulsive: she bumps into a tall, drawling cowboy called Grayson, sleeps with him and then marries him the same day. Sober the next morning, she flees the hotel room and tries to renage on the arrangement. But Grayson refuses to play ball, insisting she gives their unlikely coupling a chance out on his ranch where she can get to know the stranger she married. And in return, he agrees to spend an equal amount of time in her high society Californian world.

But as the couple fall for one another in these wildly different environments, it seems both Lauren's controlling father, and Grayson's jealous ex, will have much to say about the success or failure of the relationship.

A Rouge X title - red-hot romance just got steamier!

Where Have all the Cowboys Gone?

Kate Pearce



Prologue

Las Vegas

'Yee-ha!'

Lauren Redstone punched the air and smiled at her refection in the luxurious restroom of the Mandalay Bay hotel. She'd done it. She'd actually done it. Her company, Retro Girl, was going to provide the styling and props for a series of Professional Bull Rider commercials.

It was her first big break. Her first mini-roar of independence. Lauren unpinned her brown hair and let it fall around her shoulders. She'd come to Vegas to meet the PBR executives who were there for World Finals weekend. She'd travelled alone but she could still celebrate, right? She picked up her purse and headed for the noisy comfort of the bar on the far side of the casino.

It was a relief to kick off her high-heeled shoes and relax. How long was it since she'd sat back and really had fun? All she'd done for the last two years was work her ass off to make her business viable. She toasted herself with her glass.

Her third glass of champagne seemed to contain more bubbles than the others. She squinted at the glass. Exactly how many bubbles were there? She'd not touched a drink for months and the alcohol had gone straight to her head.

Lauren grabbed her champagne, slipped into her shoes and got unsteadily to her feet. She was starving. But this was Las Vegas. There had to be a buffet around somewhere. She was so engrossed in the loud swirling pattern of the carpet that she tripped over the outstretched toe of a black cowboy boot.

And collided with a large warm object. Before she hit the floor, a strong arm wrapped around her waist and pulled her close. Lauren stared into the amused face of a man she'd never seen before. Thanks to her, he wore the rest of his beer on his shirt.

'Are you OK, ma'am?'

Lauren simply gaped at him. He wore a brown cowboy hat and a checked denim shirt. His slow drawling speech made her feel warm and soft like toffee. She focused on his eyes which were the same blue-grey colour as his jeans.

'I'm not a ma'am.'

He grinned. 'Well, lucky old me.'

A drop of beer rolled off his chin onto his chest. Lauren caught it on her fingertip just before it disappeared below the first button on his shirt. His skin was rough and warm to the touch.

'I've made you all wet.'

His smile widened. 'There are a few things I'd like to say to that. But I reckon most of them would get my face slapped.' He settled her deeper into his lap as a waitress squeezed past the booth.

Lauren suppressed an uncharacteristic urge to giggle. Either he had a gun in his pocket or he was reacting as fiercely to her as she was to him. She felt breathless, as if all the chatter and clanging slot machines around them had ceased to exist.

'Can I buy you another beer?'

'Only if you tell me your name.'

She was almost disappointed when he moved her off his lap. 'I'm Lauren Redstone.' She held out her hand and realised she still held the empty champagne glass. He carefully removed it.

'Grayson Turner. And, just in case you're interested, I'm not married either.' He kept hold of her hand and rubbed his calloused thumb along the edge of her palm.

Lauren managed to stop staring long enough to signal a waitress. When the drinks arrived, Grayson grimaced as he pressed a wad of napkins against the front of his beer-soaked shirt.

'Let me help, it was my fault, after all.' Lauren patted a folded napkin against his stomach, noting the flex of hard muscle beneath the shirt and the subtle hitch in his breathing as he reacted to her touch.

A deep feeling of warmth settled low in Lauren's stomach. She'd heard of love at first sight, was this lust at first sight? She wanted to rip off his shirt, pull down his jeans and discover whether he really was as well endowed as the bulge in his groin indicated. What was that song her best friend Ella loved so much? Something about forget the horse, ride the cowboy? Suddenly, it made perfect sense.

She gulped down some more champagne. Was the illicit excitement of Vegas getting to her? She'd never reacted so strongly to a man before and it wasn't just alcohol coursing through her veins. It was pure unadulterated lust. She wanted to lean forwards and touch his full lower lip with the tip of her tongue just to see how he tasted.

'Lauren? Are you OK?'

'I'm fine. It's just that -' she waved helplessly in his direction '- I'm not in the habit of pouring beer over guys and it seems I've forgotten how to flirt.'

Grayson took a swig of beer and then focused his attention on her. 'You're doing fine from where I'm sitting.'

'I've just been too occupied with my business to do much socialising.' She gave him a brief airy overview of her deal with the PBR and was impressed by his intelligent remarks and obvious approval. In a few minutes of conversation he understood more about her struggle to succeed than her father ever would.

When she'd finished, he clinked his beer bottle against her glass. 'That takes guts, going into business alone. I've done it a couple of times and it isn't easy.'

His gaze remained direct, his focus entirely on her. She got her second pleasant surprise when he didn't immediately launch into a recital of his own achievements. While she smiled into his eyes her stomach rumbled. She pressed her hand to it.

'Hungry?' Grayson asked.

'I haven't eaten since lunch. That's where I was headed when I bumped into you.'

Grayson put down his beer. 'Would you like to have dinner with me?'

The bar seemed to get quieter as if everyone were holding their breath. Grayson held her gaze, his eyes steady, his demeanour relaxed. Something about his quiet patience resonated deep in Lauren's soul.

Grayson took out his wallet and left a tip for the waitress wedged under his empty beer bottle. He grinned at Lauren. 'I'd give you a business card but I don't carry them any more since horses can't read.'

Lauren choked back a smile. 'You really are a cowboy?'

He tipped back his hat. 'Hell, yes, ma'am.' He glanced around the crowded bar. 'Did you think I was one of those dime-store cowboys who never get their boots dirty?'

To cover her confusion, Lauren took out her business card and slipped it into his wallet. 'From what I've seen, most cowboys are great with animals and not so good at stringing a sentence together.'

Grayson got to his feet. 'There are always exceptions to every rule.' He tucked his wallet in the back pocket of his Wranglers and then held out his hand. 'Are you willing to risk it?'

Lauren studied his face. Part of her wanted to check for hidden cameras. The rest of her wanted a shot at experiencing her number-one fantasy – a night of passion with a real cowboy. Darn it, she was in Las Vegas. Nobody knew who she was. What better way to celebrate her independence than by living out a dream?

When they reached the bank of elevators, Grayson stopped. 'I'm going to have to change this shirt. I smell like a cheap bar.' He indicated a group of chairs in the centre of the lobby. 'Do you want to wait for me here?'

'It's OK. I'll come up and wait in your room.' Lauren couldn't believe she'd said that. She tensed and waited for his reaction. Her strange desire to stay close to him waged war with her deeply ingrained sense of caution.

He reclaimed her hand and punched a button on the elevator. By the time they reached the second level, the elevator was full. Lauren found herself backed up against the wall. Grayson shielded her with his body. Canned music burbled away and the press of bodies increased. He braced one hand above her head.

Lauren closed her eyes and inhaled his citrus aftershave. She shuddered as his lips brushed her hair. God, she wanted to lift her head and kiss him. His warm mouth grazed her temple releasing a rush of lust straight to her pussy. He moved again and the front of his damp shirt brushed her tight nipples.

She looked up, saw his intent expression and allowed his lips to meet hers. She forgot about the elevator and the crush of people as he slid his tongue inside her mouth and gently kissed her. With a sigh, she went on tiptoe to mould her body more intimately into his.

When Lauren opened her eyes, the elevator was empty. Grayson straightened and guided her into the corridor. At the door to his room, he hesitated.

'Just for the record, I don't usually invite women I've just met into my bedroom.'

'You didn't; I invited myself.'

Grayson smiled down at her. 'Well, as long as we're clear on that. Come on in.'

His suite smelt faintly of lemon and leather and was remarkably tidy. He took off his hat and ran his hand through his crow-black hair.

'Make yourself comfortable, I'll just be a minute.'

He disappeared into the bathroom. Lauren contemplated the flashy view of The Strip below. She was trembling. For the first time in her life she wanted to be reckless. Grayson seemed like a nice guy. He was obviously attracted to her. Why not take advantage of her anonymity and have the ride of her life?

Lauren took a deep breath and walked into the bathroom. The faucets were running and Grayson had finished unbuttoning his shirt. She paused to take in the glory of his muscled chest and flat stomach. He went still as she took the wet washcloth from his unresisting hand and rubbed it over his chest.

'Lauren ...'

She followed the droplets of water down his belly and traced the snap of his jeans with her fingertip. Grayson's hands closed around her waist and he lifted her onto the edge of the vanity unit. His chest rose and fell with each laboured breath.

'Are you sure this is what you want?'

'Yes, aren't you?'

Grayson moved forwards, spreading her knees with his hips, hitching her skirt up to her waist. 'Honey, I'm more sure about this than of anything I've ever done before. God help me, it just feels right.'

Lauren wrapped her arms around his neck. The harsh fabric of his well-filled jeans against the silk of her panties only increased her desire for him. He bent his head, his blue eyes locked on hers. She tensed as his mouth descended and then relaxed into the kiss. He kissed with a restraint she knew he was far from feeling judging by the urgent pressure of his cock against her pussy. The sharp edge of his belt buckle jammed into her stomach. She

struggled to insert her hand between their bodies to release it.

He groaned deep in his throat as her fingers worked on his belt and the button of his jeans. She stroked his shaft through the denim, amazed at her boldness, enthralled by his response to it. He tilted his hips, allowing her a glimpse of the crown of his huge cock as it fought its way out of his jeans.

She slid her hand inside and slowly lowered the zipper. His kisses became more urgent as she cradled his shaft. Turned on by the thickness and length, her body softened in anticipation.

'Wait.' He closed his hand over hers and drew back. 'Let me see you.'

Grayson ripped off her pantyhose and stared at the thin black scrap of satin between her legs. He licked his lips as he drew the panties down her legs. He licked her with a voracious need that soon had her pushing her pussy into his face and grabbing his hair to keep his inventive mouth locked onto her.

The slick wet sound of his lapping and the suck of his fingers as he slid them in and out echoed through the bathroom. Lauren didn't care, her attention focused on her fast-approaching orgasm. Grayson continued to circle her sex with his tongue as he searched blindly through his washbag.

Lauren took the condom out of his hand and covered his straining shaft. Without further urging, he wrapped one hand around the base of his cock and positioned it between her legs.

'Tell me you want me. Tell me it's still OK.'

His terse words almost destroyed Lauren's sexual high. He was being way too considerate for a man she never expected to see again. Dammit, but she wanted him. In answer, she pulled him close, driving his cock deep inside her wet entrance. She came almost immediately, clenching

around his thick shaft with all her strength. He kept thrusting, making her peak again. His hands were busy pushing her blouse out of his way. His hot mouth latched onto a taut nipple.

Lauren edged closer until her butt almost slid off the counter top. She wrapped her legs around his pumping hips and surrendered to the surge of his cock inside her. As her climax built for the third time she wrenched her mouth away from his, afraid she'd bite right through his luscious lower lip. She screamed her pleasure as Grayson came, his last urgent thrust made her spasm around him again.

When she could finally breathe, Lauren just stared at Grayson. She'd never come three times before in one night in her life. He smiled and tucked a strand of her hair behind her ear. He slowly eased out of her but held her close. She realised she liked the way he smelt. She wanted to nuzzle his skin, lick off the combination of sex and sweat until he was ready for her again.

'Do you still want to get dinner?'

She pointed at the phone. 'Does this hotel have room service?'

Laughing, he picked her up and headed for the bedroom.

An hour later, Lauren sat up and straddled his chest. 'We'll have to go down.'

He smiled up at her, his eyes lazy with lust, his whole body relaxed beneath hers. 'Why's that?'

'Because we have no more condoms.'

He groaned and rubbed at his eyes. 'Damn it, you're right. I wasn't expecting to meet a beautiful demanding woman like you. I only came to Vegas to watch the bull riding and do a little gambling.'

Lauren stroked his nipple. 'I could just go.' She shrieked as he sat up and dragged her hands behind her back.

He glanced down at his cock which now nestled between her breasts. 'I don't think so.' His erection grew as they stared at it. 'We're not finished yet.'

Lauren attempted to climb off him but he pushed her down into the tangled bedclothes.

'How about I make sure you want to come back upstairs with me?' He lowered his head and kissed his way down her stomach. Her hips jerked forwards as he traced her swollen sex with his tongue. She closed her eyes as he lapped at her, his strokes sure and powerful, his finger sliding inside to complete her pleasure. She grabbed the bedcovers as her tension mounted and she anticipated the flood of desire.

He raised his head and grinned at her. 'I think that will do nicely.'

She gaped at him. 'Aren't you going to finish?'

'Nope. If you want more, you'll have to stay the night with me.' He rolled off the bed and hunted for his jeans.

Lauren squeezed her thighs together in a desperate bid for release. How did he know that she craved him enough to put up with being left high and dry? She wandered into the bathroom and picked up her skirt and blouse.

Grayson glanced over at her as she located her bra. 'I ripped your hose and your panties. I'll buy you some new ones.'

It felt strange walking down the corridor with no panties on. Lauren wondered if anyone apart from Grayson could tell. He stood behind her in the elevator, one arm wrapped around her waist. For the first time in her life she allowed herself to lean back into a man's strength. Their lovemaking had only confirmed the depth of the attraction between them. She sensed she could spend a lifetime exploring Grayson's sensual potential.

Lauren waited while Grayson visited the small general store tucked away in the corner of the lobby. An elderly lady and her husband parked themselves on the seat next to Lauren's. As soon as the lady smiled at her, Lauren knew she was going to be dragged into a conversation whether she liked it or not.

'Hi, I'm Peggy. Are you here with someone special, dear?'

Lauren smiled back. 'Yes, I am thank you.'

Peggy kissed her husband's gnarled cheek. 'This is Doug. We come here every year to celebrate our wedding anniversary. We ran away together fifty years ago.'

'That's amazing. Congratulations!' Lauren studied their blissful faces and then turned towards the lobby. Grayson walked across to her with his easy long stride. Peggy followed her gaze.

'Is that your young man, dear? He looks like the steady reliable type. Are you married then?'

'Not yet,' Lauren said with a laugh. 'He hasn't asked me.'

Lauren became engrossed in studying Grayson as he approached her. What would it be like to take a chance and marry a stranger just because you thought you'd connected at a soul-deep level? Was it possible that she and Grayson would be coming back to Vegas in fifty years to celebrate their own special anniversary?

'Lauren, are you OK?' Grayson tipped his hat at the elderly couple and then crouched in front of her. She met his searching blue gaze as best she could. Peggy poked Grayson in the ribs with her walking stick.

'She'd probably feel a lot better if you made an honest woman out of her, young man. I don't hold with all this living together nonsense,' Peggy said.

Grayson took Lauren's cold hands in his. 'Are you planning a wedding, Lauren, honey?'

She waited for the masculine reaction of caged terror which usually accompanied the use of the word wedding. Grayson didn't move and his expression remained as intense as ever.

'If I was going to get married, I'd need a bridegroom wouldn't I?'

His smile died. 'You wouldn't have to look far. I'd marry you in a heartbeat.'

She stared at him intently. What if he was the one? What if he offered her a new start in life and the opportunity to leave her troubled past behind? She needed to move on. She needed to be brave. His gaze narrowed and he brought her hand to his lips.

'Marry me, Lauren, and I swear I'll be the best darned husband in the universe.'

She touched his cheek, felt the roughness of his stubble and the strength inherent in his jawline. If she could trust him with her body shouldn't she be able to trust him with her heart?

'All right then, I will.'

Lauren woke with a start as the never-ending rumble of traffic penetrated the silence in the room. With great care, she removed Grayson's arm from around her waist and scurried into the bathroom. She checked her watch. It was five in the morning. Her gaze remained riveted on the cheap gold wedding band Grayson had placed on her finger not two hours earlier.

She buried her throbbing head in her hands and silently screamed. Two hours ago she'd thought she'd found the perfect man, a man who didn't know who her father was or care less. A man who liked her for herself, not for her connections or for what she could do for him. They'd connected on a level so deep that it stunned her. Marrying Grayson had seemed the perfect opportunity to move beyond her father's reach and declare her independence.

After a deep breath, Lauren raised her head and looked in the mirror. She had to leave. She had no right to involve a good and decent man in the complicated relationship between herself and her father. Las Vegas wasn't big enough for her to hide in. And she was done with that anyway. She had a business to run, a new life to lead.

Slipping into her clothes, she took off the wedding ring and laid it carefully on the countertop. She'd left her business card in Grayson's wallet. She swallowed a sob. When he woke up and discovered she'd gone would he be secretly relieved or mad as hell? If she was lucky, perhaps he would call her and they could begin the messy business of the divorce proceedings.

Chapter One

WITH A MURMURED excuse, Lauren squeezed past the passenger on her left and headed for the bathroom. In the enclosed space, the hum of the aircraft increased to a dull roar. She peered into the mirror and, despite the yellowish tinge the lights cast on her skin, she still looked much calmer than she felt. Her light-brown hair remained secure in its sophisticated knot. Only her hazel-green eyes held a hint of apprehension.

What on earth was she doing? When she'd fallen into the arms of the tall, drawling cowboy in the bar of her Las Vegas hotel, she'd never imagined that six months later she'd be on a plane heading towards his ranch in Oregon.

Lauren washed her hands with the sliver of airline soap and inhaled the citrus fragrance. She closed her eyes and recalled the breathless moment when she had landed in Grayson Turner's lap. The scent of his aftershave, even when combined with the smell of the beer she accidentally tossed over him, had intoxicated her. He had held her like a precious object; his touch was at once familiar and so reassuring that she'd felt completely safe.

Lauren winced as the soap slipped through her fingers.

Their marriage in a tacky wedding chapel decorated with white plastic flowers, flooded with piped music and officiated over by a pastor dressed in drag still seemed surreal. But she'd kissed Grayson and promised to love him forever. That was all too real.

Lauren's eyes snapped open. After six months of furtive emails, she'd agreed to meet him. She wanted a divorce but Grayson obviously wasn't prepared to go without a fight. Wearily she wondered if he'd found out her family had money. Her father always maintained that everyone had a price.

Lauren propped open her old leather purse and withdrew the file of printed emails. Grayson's instructions were simple. She was to meet him at the airport and he'd take her back to his ranch for the weekend. Lauren swallowed hard. A weekend in which she'd promised to allow him to convince her to remain married.

She pictured Grayson Turner. Six foot two in his bare feet, short black hair, faded-blue-jean-coloured eyes. A 35-year-old graduate of agricultural college and a rancher by trade. He was a formidable sight to a five-foot six-inch female even if she did run her own business.

And he wanted her badly. His emails made that clear. So clear that Lauren stopped reading them at work and kept them to drool over in the quiet of her big lonely bed.

A cabin assistant knocked on the door and reminded Lauren they were about to land. She made her way back to her seat and gathered her belongings. She hadn't brought much with her, only an overnight bag.

Her throat tightened and she fingered the long strand of pearls around her neck. Her pale-pink blouse and short black A-line skirt had withstood the journey well. Both came from a garage sale and had been made fifty years ago. Would she stand out as a city girl amongst the more rural citizens of Oregon or would her retro-look make her the height of fashion? Lauren suppressed a choke of laughter. Would Grayson even recognise her after six months apart?

She fastened her seat belt and tried to relax as the plane bumped down onto the runway. Still unable to stop thinking of the man who'd made her break all her rules, she lingered until the other passengers disembarked. Momentarily blinded by the bright glare of the Friday afternoon sunlight, she stepped onto the busy concourse.

At the rear of the arrival hall, Grayson Turner leant against a wall, his brown Stetson tipped slightly forwards, concealing his expression and his vivid eyes. He wore blue jeans and a rust-coloured shirt, his jacket hung over his shoulder. After a deep breath, Lauren took a firm grip on her bag and walked across to him. In his tan cowboy boots he seemed at least seven-foot tall. She had to crane her neck to see him properly.

He straightened up. 'You came then.' To her dismay, he sounded almost disappointed.

'I said I would.' Lauren kept her answer short. She'd learnt the benefits of brevity at her father's knee in a male-orientated business world, which expected females to gush. At 29 she considered herself a fitting adversary for most men.

He smiled and picked up her carpet bag. 'I was getting worried. I thought you'd run out on me.' He held out his hand and she took it, relishing his firm grasp, aware of how insubstantial her fingers looked wrapped in his. The remembered scent of his aftershave wound around her.

'I wouldn't do that to you.'

He glanced down, his eyes considering. 'No, I didn't think you were the type to turn tail.' He steered her away from the exit doors and towards a small coffee shop. Before she could protest, he said, 'I thought we should straighten a few things out before we go. If things don't work out, it's a hell of a long drive back from the ranch.'

Lauren allowed herself to be ushered into the shop. She sat down at a vacant table and waited until Grayson returned with two plastic cups. He held one out to her. 'I got you green tea. I seem to remember you said that was all you ever normally drank.'

Lauren smiled her thanks, surprised he'd remembered. If only she'd kept to tea in Las Vegas, she thought glumly, and not started on champagne, she wouldn't be in this embarrassing situation now.

'What exactly do you want to discuss, Grayson?'

He angled his hat back so that she could see his face. His skin was tanned, faint laughter lines around his eyes and mouth only added to his allure. 'I want to make sure that we agree on what's going to happen over the next two weekends.'

Lauren sighed. 'We've been over this a thousand times. I've agreed to stay with you for a weekend on your ranch and in return, next weekend, you get to stay with me at my apartment in San Francisco. During this time we will try and see if we can make our so-called marriage work. Do I have this right?'

Grayson smiled into her eyes and she tensed. 'Not bad, darlin' but you've forgotten one thing.'

Lauren concentrated on his long fingers, which were wrapped around his coffee cup. His calloused hands were large, yet capable of being so gentle, especially when he touched a woman's body – her body. 'Are you talking about sex?'

Grayson grinned. 'Yes, ma'am. You agreed to allow me to use all my powers of persuasion on you this weekend.'

Lauren lifted her chin and stared right back at him. 'And you agreed to allow me to persuade you to get a divorce when you come to San Francisco. You don't really know me at all and I just don't want to be married, Grayson, not to you or to anyone.'

He reached out and took her hand. 'I know how I feel. But are you still willing to try?'

Lauren shrugged. 'If it's the only way to get rid of you.'

His fingers tightened over hers. 'I've already told you. I believe in marriage and I want to see if we can make this one work.'

Lauren laughed. 'Really? And when did you come up with that old-fashioned notion? After you found out that my family is wealthy?'

She tried to pull away but he was too strong. He slowly relaxed his grip and shook his head, his smile lingering on his lips. 'You city folks are all the same. Greedy, greedy, greedy. I'm not asking for much, just a chance to get to know you. The only mistake you make is in thinking the rest of us are just like you.'

He sat back and took a slug of coffee. 'If you recall, Lauren, I was ready to jump into bed with you five seconds after you landed in my lap. Hell, what did you think you were sitting on? A baseball bat?'

Lauren knew what he'd wanted. She'd been shocked and aroused to discover she wanted the same thing. He seemed to have reached inside her and flicked on a switch of intense sexual awareness she hadn't known she possessed.

'I don't want your money, Lauren. I want you,' Grayson said. 'And if I'm the first man who's ever seen you that way, you should be praying I'll hang around, not trying to kick me in the teeth. This weekend is not just about sex. It's a chance for us to get to know each other better.'

He slipped his hand inside his denim jacket and brought out an envelope. 'I reckoned you'd kick up a fuss so I went to see my lawyer and got him to draw up some papers.'

He spread them out on the table in front of her. 'If things don't work out, we take out of the marriage what we brought into it. I'll keep my ranch and business and you'll keep what's yours. Unless we have a child of course.' He forestalled her interruption with a wave of his hand. 'Not that that's likely, but you never know. If it does happen, all bets are off and we renegotiate, agreed?'

He pulled out a pen, signed his name and handed the pen and paper to Lauren. She read through the document with a practised eye and signed at the bottom below Grayson's flashy signature. Her relief at his businesslike manner began to relax her. So what if she wasted two weekends of her life indulging in an orgy of sex and pretending to be married? She'd never get the opportunity again and it would be something to look back on when her world returned to its hectic pace.

'There's one more thing, thinking of children,' Grayson said.

This time Lauren managed to interrupt him. 'It's all right. I'm on the pill.'

He picked up her hand and kissed her palm, the hard tip of his tongue made her shiver. 'Good,' he said, 'because I'd like to come inside you without any barriers this time. I sent you a copy of my medical records and I've seen yours. Despite my behaviour with you, I don't sleep around. I'm a prime healthy specimen.'

She nodded, her mind too caught up in his softly spoken words and the touch of his tongue to answer properly. He sucked one of her fingers into his mouth and she crossed her legs to subdue the fierce rush of warmth pooling there.

'Are you ready to go?'

Lauren opened her eyes to find his face close to hers. She hesitated for a second and his eyes narrowed. Refusing to be flustered, she got to her feet and allowed him to pick up her bag. As they moved towards the short-term parking lot, he caught her elbow. The hint of command in his blue eyes made her nervous and excited at the same time.

'As your body officially belongs to me now, there's something I'd like you to do. Go into the ladies' restroom and take off any underwear that might get in my way.'

When Lauren emerged from the restroom, after mentally cataloguing the many ways she intended to embarrass him on his return visit to San Francisco, Grayson strolled towards her. His eyes fixed on the gentle sway of her freed breasts beneath her long-sleeved blouse.

Could he see her hardened nipples through the thin fabric? She slowed her walk and let her hips swing with each step. She glanced at his jeans where a huge bulge was clearly visible. He followed her gaze and slowly ran his thumb down the straining zipper.

Grayson swore quietly and held out his hand. 'We've got almost a hundred miles to drive, Lauren. I'm not sure if we'll make it before I have to pull over and bury myself inside you, but I'll sure as hell try.'

To Lauren's surprise, Grayson's black pick-up truck had big comfortable leather seats. She relaxed as he stowed her bag and walked around to the driver's side. He was silent as he manoeuvred the big vehicle through the maze of the airport and out onto the freeway. Lauren let her head fall back and closed her eyes.

Gray let out his breath and stole a glance at the woman beside him. When he'd thought she wasn't on the plane, he'd felt like a horse had kicked him in the gut. It had taken him six months to lure her back and he'd thought he'd blown it. She'd looked so calm and in control in her high-heeled black shoes and slicked-back hair. He'd wanted to feed her champagne until she turned into the relaxed laughing woman he'd met in Las Vegas.

He'd gone to Vegas to watch the Professional Bull Rider finals. He hadn't expected to fall in love. Who did? Especially not with a woman who epitomised everything he'd come to despise in life, everything he'd rejected. Living in the city and climbing the slippery corporate ladder was no longer his idea of fun. But something about Lauren captured his attention from the moment she landed in his lap. When his arms tightened around her, he'd not wanted to let go.

She'd told him about her retro design company with such pride he'd been charmed. She'd even bought him a drink to make up for the one she'd spilled all over his chest. After a drink and some intense conversation, he'd invited her out to dinner and she accepted.