



# *You Can Run.....*

*book two of the thompson  
family trilogy*

*By Gloria  
Antypowich*

**You can run.....**  
**(Book Two of the Thompson Family trilogy.)**

**By**

**Gloria Antypowich**

**Copyright March 2012**  
**by [Gloria Antypowich](#)**  
**Published by**  
**Gloria Antypowich**

This book is a work of fiction. The names, characters, places, business establishments, organizations, brands and events are either the product of the author's imagination, or are used fictitiously. Any similarity to dialogs, actual events, names or persons living or dead are purely coincidental.

## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my blue eyed granddaughters: Lydia and Annie. I love you both and am so happy that you have come into my life. I will save signed copies of my books to give you when you are old enough to read about the “naughty” things your grandma writes!

Hello to “Karma”; Jason and Sarah’s little toy Havanese puppy who gets honourable mention in this book

Thank you to Lydia, my oldest blue eyed teen, for the "eyes" on the cover.

Thank you to Christie Moses at Kris-T Lee Photography for creating our eBook cover.

## Table of Contents

[Front Cover](#)

[Copyrights](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Hearts At Risk Summary](#)

[Visit the Author online](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

[Chapter Eleven](#)

[Chapter Twelve](#)

[Chapter Thirteen](#)

[Chapter Fourteen](#)

[Chapter Fifteen](#)

[Chapter Sixteen](#)

[Chapter Seventeen](#)

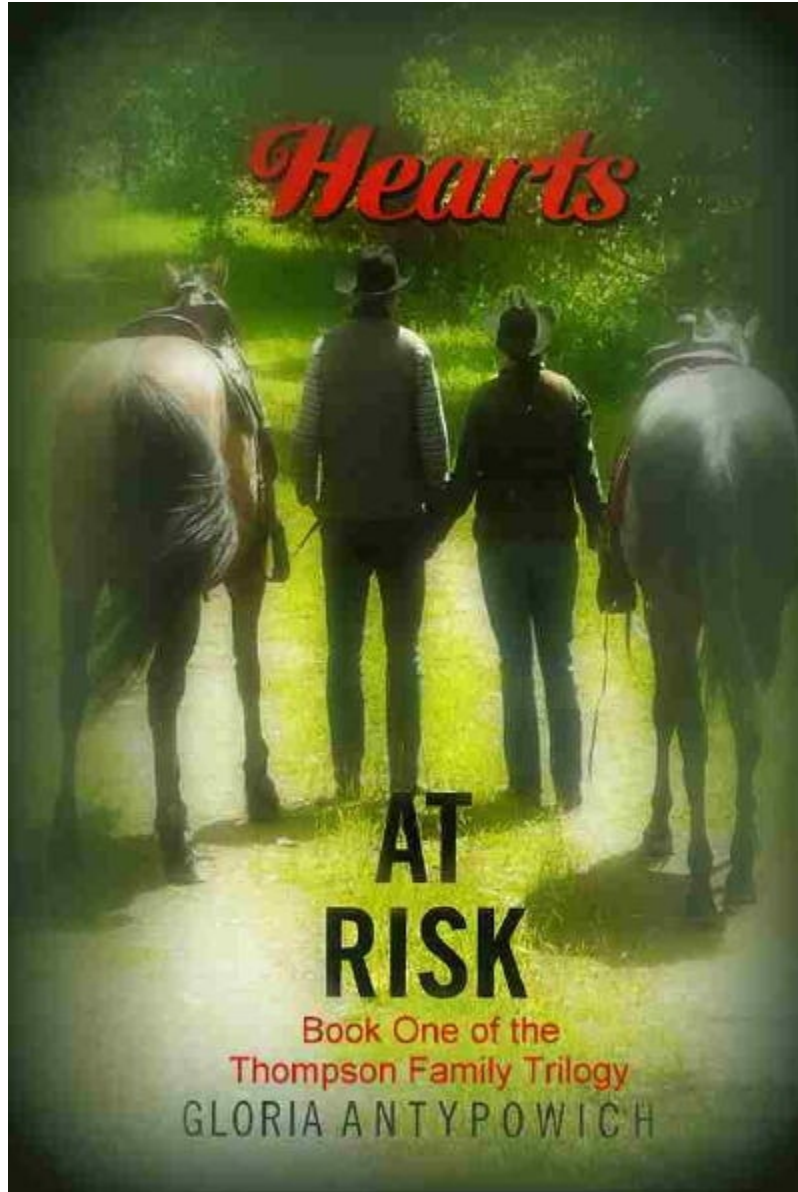
[Chapter Eighteen](#)

[Chapter Nineteen](#)

[Chapter Twenty](#)

[Chapter Twenty-one](#)

[Chapter Twenty-two](#)  
[Chapter Twenty-three](#)  
[Authors Notes](#)



*Book Summary* for Hearts At Risk:  
the first book in the Thompson family trilogy.

Veterinarian, Frankie Lamonte, has left her stress filled life in Alberta to become a ranch hand in the Cypress Hills in southern Saskatchewan, Canada. There she finds the solitude she seeks. But that peace is shattered when Colt Thompson enters the picture. Misunderstandings and mistrust make them clash constantly, but the chemistry between them is sizzling and undeniable.

However, Frankie is not interested in romance; her long time love, Martin Cole, has recently taught her a painful truth about trust and love and romantic dreams. Colt has his own scars. For eight long years he has harbored his pain and anger, vowing he will never be vulnerable to love again. He goes to unexpected lengths to assure that Frankie will never be a part of his life. Will either one of them find happiness? *Hearts At Risk* tells all.

HEARTS AS RISK was published by Smashwords in 2011

It is the first book in the Thompson Family trilogy.

*Hearts At Risk* by Gloria Antypowich, is available at Amazon.com by following <http://tinyurl.com/89h5eun> in Kindle format. It is also available in soft cover on Amazon. *Hearts At Risk* is also available at Smashwords in a variety of ebook formats by following [www.smashwords.com/books/](http://www.smashwords.com/books/)

**“you can run....”** (Book Two of the Thompson Family trilogy.)

is a sequel to my first novel, *Hearts At Risk*. It is the second book in the Trilogy of the Thompson family at Thompson Land and Cattle Company in Saskatchewan, Canada.

**Shauna Lee Holt**, Colt Thompson’s former fiancée, has taken center stage in

**“you can run....”**

Shauna Lee Holt is an intelligent, successful, outgoing business woman; a workaholic who owns *Swift Current Accounting and Bookkeeping Services* in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, Canada.

But her professional persona is not reflected in her personal life which is lonely, closed and sterile. She has no intimate relationships: no family and no friends. Life has taught her that intimacy and commitment bring loss and pain: but she still craves companionship and human touch. She assuages her loneliness with the “company” that she brings home on the weekends; men who live for the moment and want no lingering ties.

Then Brad Johnson comes into Shauna Lee’s life. He is not like the men she is used to. He sees beyond the surface. He wants what she is certain she cannot give him; love and intimacy.

She has secrets; deeply hidden, painful secrets. She clings desperately to the safety of anonymity: she is afraid to let anyone breach the walls of the facade she has built. She is living a lie to protect herself. She can run....

But can she hide?

**“you can run....”** continues to follow the lives of Colt and Frankie Thompson as their lives intertwine with Brad and Shauna Lee. Frankie and Colt seem to have everything. Their family grows; their relationship deepens. After the birth of their twins and three years of marriage they are still discovering new things about each other; however, during the journey they have to face the fact that even wonderfully happy relationships are sometimes subject painful adjustments that come with the ebbs and flows of life.

This is a story of second chances and unconditional love; a tale of secrets, lies, tormented lives, rage and murder.

I hope you enjoy following Frankie and Colt’s life and Shauna Lee and Brad’s new story in this sequel.

**You can visit me at <http://gloriaantypowich.com/>:  
Gloria Antypowich – Romance and Love Stories**

Or

Email me at: [gloria@heartsatrisk.com](mailto:gloria@heartsatrisk.com)

Contact me on twitter: my handle is @glantypowich

Follow me on face book at <http://www.facebook.com/gantypowich>

When you have finished reading **you can run....** please twitter a message saying you have read it. A book review would be greatly appreciated too.

Thank you and enjoy the read!

[Back to Contents](#)



## CHAPTER ONE

Shauna Lee Holt stared unseeingly out the window in her office. A knot of frustration formed in her gut. She sighed as she looked back at her desk, her eyes resting on the folder in front of her. *Thompson Land and Cattle Company*. She flicked a loose staple with her long, brightly coloured finger nail. Then she absently tapped the keys on her computer key board.

C O L T T H O M P S O N—the name popped up on her screen. She stared at the door he had just walked out of. “*Damn!*” she breathed. “*Why did I let him go so easily?*”

But she knew why. When he had asked her to marry him four years ago, neither one of them had professed to be in love. No unrealistic, romantic notions. They were mature adults...friends, companions. He was the only son of a moneyed, respected family in the area. He was good looking and treated her like someone special when they went out: a great dinner companion, someone to go to high profile events with. They had even gone to Mexico once, even though he was totally out of his element there. And he was great in bed.

“*Yeah—he was great in bed*” she thought, as she pushed her chair back and stood up. She scooped up the file on her desk and carried it down the hall to the junior accountant that the client had been assigned too.

Then she walked back to her office and grabbed her jacket. Stopping at the reception desk she told Christina, that she was leaving early. As she pushed through the door, she took out her cell phone and quickly dialed a familiar number. She smiled when the deep masculine voice answered. She knew he had read his call display when he said, “Hi sexy, how about dinner tonight?”

“Why did it take you so long to ask? I’m available, willing and ready!”

Josh Kendall laughed. “Okay sweet cheeks! But if you’re available, willing and ready, I’m definitely going to need some nourishment first. If you’re not fussy about where we eat, we could just grab a bite at the new restaurant near the Best Western. Then we could head on over to your place.”

She gave a throaty laugh. “That works for me; I’ll meet you there.”

Shauna Lee pulled up in front of the restaurant and parked. She surveyed the lot, but didn’t see Josh’s car. She hesitated for a minute, running her fingers through her blonde hair which was cut in a stylish bob. Then she looked in the review mirror. The big blue eyes, which were her most notable feature, reflected back at her. They were wide and luxuriously fringed with sweeping dark lashes that she had inherited from her mother.

A quick glance showed that her mascara and subtle application of eye shadow were still in place. She took a slim stick out of her purse and applied fresh lipstick. Josh still hadn’t shown up so she decided to go inside and get a table for them. She could order a glass of wine for herself.

She picked a table, midway down the dining room, against the wall. After ordering a glass of wine at the bar, she carried it to the table. She smoothed her stylish dress as she sat down and stretched her legs in front of her, admiring her high heeled shoes. She sipped her wine as she looked around the room.

People were coming and going. She watched them idly. Suddenly, she heard a familiar laugh. It was Colt!

She sat up, alert. He came into the dining room with another man; someone she didn’t recognise. Her heart leapt. What was he doing there? She thought he would have been back in

his happy home by now. He had left her office an hour and a half ago. He hadn't said anything about staying in town.

She watched him intently, willing him to look at her. At one time he would have instantly been aware of her, but today he sat down at a table, absorbed in conversation with his companion.

Irrationally, she felt slighted. If she went to the restroom, she could walk right by his table. She got up and walked by, tossing her hair and swaying her hips. He didn't notice her. Neither did his companion.

She went into the restroom, fluffed her hair and retouched her lipstick. Then she sashayed out and up to his table. She feigned surprise when she stopped by them. "Colt," she purred. "You didn't mention that you would be in town tonight."

He looked up at her, surprised. "Shawna Lee! I didn't expect to see you here." He didn't ask her to join them or give her any indication that she was welcome.

"I thought you'd be home by now."

He motioned to his companion. "Brad is giving a presentation at the agriculture seminar tonight at the Best Western. We stopped here for a bite to eat before we wander over there. Have you two met?"

Both of them shook their heads, so Colt introduced them. "Shauna Lee Holt, this is Brad Johnson. Brad has set up shop here in Swift Current: Windspeer Green Energy Wind Turbines. He's giving a presentation about small wind energy generated turbines at the seminar tonight."

He looked at his companion. "Shauna Lee owns Swift Current Accounting and Bookkeeping Services. Her firm has managed our accounting for years."

She looked at Colt's companion: tall, well toned, dark brown hair, grey eyes. Actually he was a good looking guy: long legs encased in blue jeans, a soft shirt, a western cut denim jacket, cowboy boots and a Stetson that sat on the table: a real country boy.

She gave him an intimate smile and she didn't miss the spark of interest that flashed in his eyes. "How nice to meet you, Brad. Are you new to the area?"

"Yes. I'm from British Columbia; Dawson Creek, to be exact."

"If you need someone to show you around, I'm free and over twenty one." She flashed him a smile as reached into her purse for a business card and handed it to him. "My number is on the card."

"If you need accounting services, my firm is the best." She winked. "And, I'm good company too, aren't I Colt?"

Colt had been watching the exchange with amusement. Her question startled him. What the hell was she up too? "Oh...yeah...I guess you are."

"Colt" she chided him. "You guess? Have you forgotten already?"

Just then Josh Kendall walked in. He sauntered up to them.

"What's this Sweet Cheeks? I'm late, so you're checking out the competition already?" He winked at Brad. "She's mine for tonight, so you're out of luck this time buddy." He slid his hand familiarly around her waist, letting it rest on her hip, with his fingers trailing down toward her pelvic bone. "Sorry I'm late babe, but I got hung up at the last minute."

She felt heat rise in her face. *I'll get even with you for that remark Josh Kendall*, she fumed as she turned away; *you're out of luck this time buddy!...as if I'm up for grabs*. Josh tightened his arm around her waist and suggestively rubbed against her. She was suddenly embarrassed and wondered what Colt and his friend had thought.

Brad looked at Colt and raised an eyebrow. Colt just shrugged and said nothing. They resumed their former conversation.

Shauna Lee suddenly lost her appetite. She had initiated the evening; it had been a knee jerk reaction to Colt's indifference to her. Josh was primed and ready for a night of sex, but his words

rankled. *He made me sound like a prostitute...or a common whore.* Anger surged through her; she would show him who was out of luck!

She set her wine glass on the table. “Josh, I’m sorry. Suddenly I don’t feel very good. I think I’m going to have to pass on tonight. I’m just not up to it.”

He looked at her in surprise. “What do you mean you’re not up to it? You’re always up to it.” Then he laughed. “Are you playing hard to get?”

He reached across the table to caress her hand. He raised an eyebrow as she pulled away. “Come on sweet cheeks. We both know that you are never hard to get. In fact I’ll bet you’re hot and wet already and I’m ready to go.” He reached for her hand.

“I’m serious Josh.” She stood up, avoiding his touch. “I shouldn’t have called you. I’m going home now: alone.”

“The fuck you are! You think you can tease me and get away with it? I’ll be at your door right behind you.” He grabbed her arm, trying to pull her with him.

“Josh Kendall,” she raised her voice and heads turned. “Take your hands off me. I said NO.”

His face turned red as he let go of her arm. He swore as he turned and went to pay his bill. Then he strode outside angrily.

Shauna Lee finished her glass of wine. She looked out the window and saw that Josh was still standing outside, waiting for her. *Damn him!* She cringed when she saw Colt look at her and decided to escape to the restroom. She avoided his table on her way.

Ten minutes later she decided it would be safe to leave, certain that Josh would have left by then. Colt and Brad Thompson were paying at the till when she slipped out the door. She had just started toward her car when Josh stepped around the corner of the building.

“Thought you’d ditched me eh? Not so easy babe.” He grabbed her arm. “What the hell’s gotten into you? I don’t appreciate being embarrassed in public.”

“And I don’t like having you talk about me like I’m a common whore.”

“Funny, you never seemed to mind acting like one before. What’s got you so high and mighty now?”

“You bastard!” She slapped his face.

Colt and Brad witnessed the interaction as they came outside. Colt quickly realized that the situation could get ugly. In an instant he made a decision and stepped into the angry tableau.

“All right you two; it’s time for both of you to dial this back and cool off.” He looked at Josh. “It’s none of my business, but whatever is going on between you two, she quite plainly said *No* when you were inside. You’d better take off now. Both of you need time to rethink things.”

Josh’s face flushed. “Damn right it’s none of your business. And aren’t you one to talk! How many years did she screw the balls off you?” He laughed harshly.

“Why aren’t you home with that wife of yours instead of here defending her? Don’t tell me you’ve still got the hots for our Shauna Lee.”

“That’s enough!” Colt spoke with steely calm. He reached into his pocket, took out his cell phone and flipped it open. He pushed a bottom and waited while it rang. Then he spoke. “I’m calling to report a potential problem in the parking lot at The Steakhouse on George Street. I’d appreciate it if you would send someone down here to diffuse this situation before it gets out of hand.”

He waited for a couple of seconds. “My name is Colt Thompson. Yes I’ll wait here to fill you in and I’ll give you a statement.”

His hard, green eyes pinned Josh as he closed the phone and put it back in his pocket. “Don’t ever make light of my love and loyalty to my wife. Shauna Lee is my business associate, and I still view her as a friend; *that’s it: period.*

But I won’t stand by and watch you or anyone else force himself on any woman. The fact that she and I had a relationship in the past makes no difference now; *that is in the past.*”

They heard a siren blip twice and the flash of red and blue lights could be seen coming down the street. Josh swore violently as he turned to his truck. "You'll pay for calling the cops on me. I know people in high places."

He laughed. "Hell, I know a guy at the cop shop that's screwin' her too. Good luck bitch!" He slid into his truck, started the engine, flipping Colt off as he eased past the patrol car that was pulling into the parking lot.

Shauna Lee covered her face; she wished she could disappear. She had been insulted by Josh's attitude; his lack of respect for her. But now she was humiliated. Colt had come to her rescue, but he hadn't defended her honour. In fact he had left no doubt about where she fit in his life. There were no lingering feelings of attraction there. What a fool she was; and now she had to go through all of this hassle with the police.

Two officers stepped out of the patrol car. Colt stepped toward the one nearest to him. He extended his hand. "Colt Thompson, sir. I made the call." He introduced Shauna Lee and then briefly sketched out what had happened.

Brad Johnson stood back, not wanting to get involved. He was grateful that Colt had not drawn him into the situation, even though they were together. He was surprised by this steely calm side of Colt Thompson. Clearly he was a man who didn't stand for much bull shit. He thought about the way he had made that call, knowing it would involve him in an awkward situation.

His eyes moved to the woman standing by Colt. She was clearly someone out of his past; he had left no doubt about that. She was good looking. It sounded like she was pretty hot too. Josh Kendal was probably ten years younger than her, and he had left little doubt that their relationship was all about sex. She was definitely trouble; the kind of woman a smart man would steer clear of.

Colt walked over to Brad. "Sorry about this mess. Go ahead; you need to get set up. I'll get there as soon as I get finished here." Brad nodded and walked across the street to the Best Western.

Twenty minutes later Colt came into the small meeting room, followed by a subdued Shauna Lee. Brad had saved a seat at the front for him. He looked at Colt with dismay when he ushered Shauna Lee into it. "The place is pretty full. I'll find a spot against the wall at the back," Colt said softly as he stepped away.

Brad scarcely looked at Shauna Lee, but he couldn't miss the tension in her body as she sat next to him. Shauna Lee shifted uncomfortably in her seat, and he couldn't help but notice the way the slim skirt of her dress rode up on her thigh, or the curve of her ankles, and the slender length of her legs. She was petite and delicate looking.

He had set up his laptop and slide presenter when he had first gotten there, so all he had to do now was turn it on and start his power point presentation. He fidgeted, waiting for his turn; wanting to get up and move away from her.

He had been an onlooker, but he couldn't totally push aside all that had happened; like the way she had smiled at him when Colt had introduced them. He had recognized the invitation. Then she had baited Colt. That had thrown him. Colt's cool, disinterested response had piqued his interest; but then Josh Kendall had shown up and the whole picture had deteriorated after that.

Brad gave his presentation about the innovation of wind energy and its potential for use in agriculture. He didn't miss the change in Shauna Lee's demeanour as he spoke. She became alert with unfeigned interest. She watched the slides and listened to the questions from the audience and paid attention to his answers.

The seminar broke for coffee after he finished and everyone started circulating around the room. He fielded several questions about his company's wind energy program. Eventually he

noticed Shauna Lee standing at the edge of the group listening and talking with the others. He noticed the professionalism in her manner as she conversed with the people and the respect that she was greeted with. She was all business; there was no coquette there now.

He had to wonder; who was the real Shauna Lee Holt?

After the meeting Colt joined Brad and helped him pack up his presentation. He looked directly at Brad when they were finished. "I need to ask a favour of you."

"OK"

"The cop said that Shauna Lee shouldn't go home immediately. He wanted to have a talk with Josh and tell him to back off, but he wasn't sure if Josh would show up at her place before he tracked him down.

"I suggested she come here with me. I told him that I'd make sure she got home all right after the meeting. I hate to ask you, but would you come with me? I'd rather not go there on my own. You understand?"

Brad sensed the tension in Colt. "Yeah—I guess I can."

"It won't take long. She doesn't live too far from here. I just want to make sure that she gets in the house all right: then I'll bring you right back here to your pickup and I'll head home to my wife and kids.

\*\*\*

Shauna Lee sank onto the couch in her living room. Colt had been the perfect gentleman. He'd followed her home in his truck, walked her to the door, made sure she'd gotten safely inside, waited until he'd heard the sound of her turning the dead bolt and then he'd hurried back to his truck and left.

She couldn't ignore the emptiness in her gut. What the hell was wrong with her? She couldn't get Colt out of her mind. It was insane. He was married and nauseatingly happy with the family he never thought he'd have until Frankie came along.

Shauna Lee sighed heavily. She and Colt had seen each other on and off over a four year period before he had proposed to her. Truthfully she had never seen him exclusively, although she had never actually admitted that to him.

She had been surprised when he'd suggested they should get married, but to her amazement he had been persistent. He had even agreed to live in Swift Current and commute to the farm, because his parents had been living there and had no thought of moving.

At first she had hesitated. He loved kids and she had known he would probably want them. That was the last thing she wanted. And in spite of all his finer points, he worked too damn hard. He was a farmer and a rancher at heart and she'd had *zero* interest in that lifestyle. She had already spent too many years on a farm and she had smelled enough cow shit and breathed enough grain dust to last her a life time.

Colt had wanted to announce their engagement at the annual barbeque for his birthday. By the time she had agreed, the ring she had picked out could not be resized in time; but the announcement had been made anyway.

At first he had been almost feverish about getting married, wanting it to happen quickly. She finally had gotten into the idea of planning the wedding, when she started to notice sadness in him. His excitement had faded and she had known something was wrong. She hadn't been in love with him, but she did love him as a friend. He was probably the only person she had gotten close to since her life had fallen apart twenty years previously.

He had come to her just before Christmas, anguish plain in his demeanour. She had tried to talk to him, to find out what was going on. His pain was obvious and when she had tried to distract him by making love he hadn't wanted to. He had left early that night.

He had come back to the office the next day and asked her if they could go to her place. Once they arrived there he had sat on the couch, hanging his head and wringing his hands. When she had firmly told him he had to tell her what was going on, his shoulders had begun to shake.

He had sobbed as he told her he couldn't marry her. He was in love with Frankie and he was miserable without her. He had apologised over and over for asking her to marry him.

Shauna Lee sat, remembering the whole scene. She hadn't been upset, then. Marriage had been his idea, not hers. Relationships had never worked for her; not even childhood ones. Marriage certainly hadn't been on her "to do" list.

Colt had always sworn he would never fall in love again. If he cared that much about Frankie, she had decided she wouldn't stand in his way: there were other guys.

And over the past three years there had been several. She had thrived on the variety. What did they say? It was the spice of life? But gradually, as she had observed the warm, loving, attentive man Colt had become with his family and his adoration for Frankie, or *Fran* as he lovingly called her, a little voice in the back of her mind had begun to tell her that could have been her life. She had been a fool to give him up so easily. She should have fought to keep him. He couldn't have truly forgotten how good they were together. She could win him back.

She winced. She had made several subtle advances to him throughout the past year, but he was so involved in his own happiness he hadn't even seemed to notice.

And tonight...She cringed remembering how he had made it very plain to Josh that she was part of his *past*.

She stood up and walked into her bedroom. She threw her purse on the chair, stripped out of her clothes and went into the bathroom. She turned on the shower and let uncomfortably warm water sluice over her, feeling the burn, wanting to wash away the humiliation that Josh's words had left with her.

She stepped out on the mat and gave herself a brisk rubdown, then quickly blew her hair dry. She didn't look too closely at her reflection in the mirror, unwilling to meet her own eyes.

As she turned to step back into her bedroom she muttered *Screw him*, as she flipped the switch to turn off the bathroom light. Her eyes lit on the bed. She laughed with irony. "That's exactly what he planned to be doing; right there on that bed, just like we've done how many times before?"

She felt a flush of disgust. She wasn't certain how many times they had wrinkled the sheets there.

She sat on the edge of the bed, thinking. He'd been a voracious sexual companion. She hadn't asked for love. But he didn't respect her. *What do you mean, you're not up to it. You're always up to it.* His words played a loop in her mind. *We both know you're never hard to get.*

She cringed remembering his response when she had told him she didn't like having him talk about her like she was a common whore. *Funny, you never seemed to mind acting like one before. What's got you so high and mighty now?*

Anger washed through her, followed by embarrassment. *Hell, I know a guy at the cop shop that's screwin' her too.* Cripes...he had to have meant Jim Wiley. She had been with him a couple of times. Had they compared notes? Revulsion washed over her.

She buried her face in her hands. "How did I get to this place?" she groaned.

She turned back the sheets and shut off the light on her night table. She lay down, pulling them up under her chin. She tried to force the tension out of her body and relax, but her mind would not shut off. She could hear Josh's voice saying "*She's mine for tonight, so you're out of luck this time buddy.*"

What had Colt and his friend thought? Not that it mattered; but damn it, it did matter to her. She turned the light back on, then went to her dresser and pulled out a pair of cotton pyjamas.

She didn't usually wear anything to bed, but tonight she felt naked and she needed something; as if the pyjamas would cover her humiliation.

She went to the bathroom. She opened the medicine chest and took a sleeping pill, then after a hesitation, swallowed a second one to ensure the oblivion of sleep; a respite from the devil that beleaguered her mind.

[Back to Contents](#)

## CHAPTER TWO

Frankie Thompson tiptoed into the nursery to peek at the three year old twins who were sleeping soundly in their beds. Selene's dark curls were tousled on her pillow. Her 'blankey' was clutched tightly in her fingers, tucked up under her chin and pulled up against her cheek.

She was a combination of both her mother and father. She had Colt's dark curly hair, and Frankie's dark brown eyes. Her cupid bow lips were parted softly and a slurp of drool ran out of the corner of her mouth and onto the pillow. She was a wisp of a child; pixie like, but determined and feisty.

Sam was curled up in the other bed, his back to her, moonlight spilling softly over his sheets. She could hear the slurping sounds he made as he sucked his thumb. He was as sturdy as a linebacker; quiet and unexcitable. He had inherited his mother's auburn hair with the same fiery glints, but his eyes were calm blue ponds like those of his namesake; her grandfather, Frank Samuel Lamonte.

Her hand moved to the subtle roundness of her tummy. "I hope you have your daddy's green eyes," she whispered as she turned and eased out of the room silently, closing the door gently behind her as she went.

She went down stairs and into the living room and walked over to the bay window. Pushing aside the ruffle of the gauzy white Pracilla curtain, she looked out past the veranda, her eyes travelling down the tree lined driveway that lead up to the farm yard from the gravel road.

She glanced at her watch, noting that it was 9:30. Colt should be getting home any moment. He had gone to Swift Current earlier in the day. He'd had an earlier appointment at Swift Current Accounting and Bookkeeping Services and then later in the evening he was attending a meeting that the District Agriculturist was hosting at the Best Western Hotel.

Restless, she wandered over and turned on the electric fire place, then sank into a deep arm chair and watched the artificial flames flicker in the darkness.

She sighed contentedly. Four years ago she had never imagined she could be so happy. She smiled. *Colt*, she thought. *It's amusing to think about how we fought against our love.* She closed her eyes remembering. The clashes; the way they had wanted each other, but were too afraid to take the risk because neither of them wanted to get their heart broken again.

Colt had been so determined, that he had become engaged to Shauna Lee. He had imagined that getting engaged to her would give him protection from his true feelings. For him, Shauna Lee had been safe; a friend, not a love. She couldn't have hurt his heart. But eventually his love had overcome his fear and he'd gone to Shauna Lee with the truth.

Frankie groaned. *And Shauna Lee was so gracious, releasing Colt from the engagement without a fuss so he could feel free to come to me. I can't ever imagine letting Colt go. How did she do it?*

She reached out and picked up the wedding album from the end table. As she slowly turned the pages, her fingers brushed the pictures. Once Colt had found her, he had been relentless in his insistence that they have a real wedding. She and her mom had gone to Red Deer and found a wedding gown of simple design with an empire waistline that skimmed over her bulging midriff.

Colt had been handsome in his tux. Her childhood friend, Becky Freemont, had been her bridesmaid and Ollie, the ranch foreman, had been Colt's best man.



Ollie had been so proud, he had even shaved his beard off and cut his hair, revealing a much younger looking man than she had believed him to be. “A handsome man,” she thought touching a photo of Colt and him.

The wedding had been small: the only guests had been their parents, Becky and her husband, Russ, and Ollie. They had said their vows in the church she had attended from childhood; in front of the pastor she had known all of her life. There were flowers and candles and a photographer who took pictures from positions and angles that were incredibly flattering in spite of her burgeoning belly.

There had been no honeymoon. They had stayed in Alberta, living in her apartment in Stettler until the end of January. Then they had returned to Saskatchewan, to live here on the farm at Cantaur.

Colt’s mom and dad had decided to move into an apartment in Regina, leaving the farm house available for Colt and Frankie. Everything had fallen into place so quickly it had hardly seemed real. Colt had been delighted that his dad had chosen to step out of the business, knowing it was best for his health. And it had quickly solved the housing crisis for Colt and her.

They had barely gotten settled into the house, before the twins had made their appearance two weeks early! Chaos had reined for a while. Fortunately she had lots of support. Colt had been such a proud, hands-on dad. She smiled, remembering the love that had flowed out of him. The man who had vowed he would never fall in love again, had fallen hook, line and sinker!

She closed the photo album and stared at the flickering light in the fireplace. A few minutes later she heard the crunch of tires on the driveway.

Colt bounded up the steps onto the veranda and was opening the screen door as Frankie opened the inside one to meet him.

“You had a long meeting!” she said with a smile, as she clasped his hand and pulled him inside. She shut the door behind him as he pulled her into a warm embrace.

“Yeah, it was an interesting evening. Not just the meeting!” He released her, took off his hat off and hung it on the rack, and then turned to her.

“What else happened?”

“Oh, Shauna Lee...” He shook his head. She was at the restaurant where Brad and I went for an early supper before the meeting. She came by and said hello and made a hit on Brad right off the bat!” He grinned and shook his head. “That girl never changes. Then Josh Kendall came in. I don’t know if you know him.”

Frankie shook her head.

“Well, he’s a young high roller that works in the oil business. He’s got an office in town. I guess they had arranged to meet there. When he got there she was talking to us. He got real territorial and let Brad know that she was his for the night.

“I think she was a little embarrassed by the way he said it. She got pretty red. Any way, they went to a table and I have no idea what happened but obviously the evening didn’t go the way it was planned to. They got into a disagreement and she told him ‘no’ loud enough for the whole restaurant to hear. He was pissed off. He paid his bill and stormed out.

“She stayed at the table until he went outside. She waited a few minutes and then she went to the restroom. I think she was giving him time to get out of there. She must have slipped outside while Brad and I were paying for our meal.

“When we went outside Josh was still there and they were going at it again. She slapped his face and he grabbed her. It was getting ugly. I thought I could diffuse the situation if I just stepped in and got them both to back off.”

He looked at her sheepishly. “It didn’t work. He just got uglier and made her sound like the town tramp. Then he got personal about it with me; bringing up the fact that she and I had been together in the past and suggesting that I still had a thing for her.

“The asshole! I set him straight on that score, but his attitude really put me off. I called the cops. Then he was really torqued. He threw some more insults at Shauna Lee and sped out of the parking lot just as the cop car arrived.

“Colt!”

“He won’t be a problem. He was embarrassed as much as anything. I suspect he was planning to spend the night at her place; but she had plainly told him ‘no’ and he was trying to force her into a situation against her will. Anyway, when the cops came I told them what I’d seen and they talked to Shauna Lee.”

“Where was Brad when all this happened?”

“He just stood back and watched the whole damn mess unfold. After I called the cops, I told him to go set up for the meeting and I’d meet him over at the meeting room when I was finished. He left right away. I’m sure he was relieved not to be drawn into the situation.”

“I wonder what he thought.”

“He didn’t comment. But after Shauna Lee talked to the police, they said she should wait for a while before she went home so they had a chance to track Josh down and warn him to leave her alone.

“I ended up taking her to the meeting with me. After it was over I asked Brad to come with me and we followed her as she drove home. I made sure she got into the house and heard her turn the dead bolt. Then I took Brad back to his truck and came home. That’s why I’m so late.”

He put his arm around her and pulled her back into his embrace, kissing her deeply. “I love you,” he whispered. “I am so glad you came into my life.”

She nibbled on his bottom lip. “Let’s go to bed.” They turned off the lights as they moved through the house and up the stairs, stopping at the nursery to check on the twins.

“Little angels,” Colt whispered as he looked at them, smiling.

“Well they look like angels when they are sleeping,” she whispered with a chuckle. “But sometimes the halo needs a little polishing when they are awake!”

He led her into the bedroom, where he began to unbutton her blouse as he kissed the corner of her lips. His fingers gently brushed her skin as they slid down to undo the tiny clasp between her breasts, releasing her bra. His mouth followed the same path, dropping little kisses all the way down her throat, across her shoulder to where the bra strap had lain, then down along her breast, coming to rest on her full nipple.

She moaned and pushed against him. Three years of marriage and the birth of the twins had not dimmed the fire that his touch stirred in her. The flames leapt hungrily as they helped each other get rid of the rest of their clothes. They tumbled on the bed and lost themselves in ageless ritual of sexual fulfillment.

Exhausted and satiated they dozed, Frankie lying in the circle of Colt’s arm, her cheek against his chest. An hour later they stirred, and moved to pull back the sheets and get into bed. Colt was quiet.

“What are you thinking?” Frankie whispered.

“Oh...about life; you and me; how wonderful our life is...the twins, and in a few months our new baby arriving.” He reached over and rested his hand on her belly. “I am so lucky to have all of you in my life. When I think about where I was stuck before, in my anger and bitterness; and all I would have missed, it gives me the chills.”

“That goes for me too, Colt. When you told me what happened with Shauna Lee tonight, I had to feel sorry for her. I wonder if she’ll ever find what we have.”

“You know, I’m not sure what she’s doing now. But if any of the crap Josh was rattling off is true, I’m concerned for her. He gave the impression that she is pretty promiscuous. When I was with her, she was definite about not wanting to get into a real relationship. We spent a lot of time together over the four years when we were seeing each other, but when I asked her to marry me,

she wasn't very keen on it. If I hadn't been so desperate to 'save myself from you' and hadn't been so insistent, I doubt if she would agreed."

"What is she running from, Colt? Obviously, it's not sex because she seems to want that. So what has hurt her so much?"

Colt sighed. "I know her dad was an alcoholic. Shawna Lee had a brother quite a bit younger than her and she worshiped him. He died in an accident on the farm when he was three or four."

Frankie groaned. "It makes me sick to think of that. How could any of them deal with it?"

"I think that is part of her problem. It was like the straw that broke the camel's back. From what she told me, her dad just buried himself deeper in the bottle. Her mother slid into depression. Shawna Lee was thirteen, or somewhere around that age when it happened. She really had no support at home.

"She moved in with a local guy when she was really young. I don't know if they ever actually got married. He was a farmer and from what she told me, the guy was a damn poor one. Eventually he took off and left her and she had to make a life for herself. But she's got guts; she pulled herself together, finished her education and got her CA."

"I feel sorry for her. I wish she could meet someone special; like you. Someone she would truly be happy with."

"I doubt if she'll meet that kind of guy doing what she seems to be doing now."

"Do you think it would help if you talked to her, Colt?"

He frowned. "I'd really have to think about that. It bothered me to hear the insinuations that Josh made tonight. That's why I asked Brad to go with me when I followed her to her place. I don't want to do anything that could be misinterpreted. I don't want to put us at risk."

Frankie snuggled close. "I'm not worried about that. We are solid."

\*\*\*

The phone rang at six thirty the next morning. Frankie was pouring coffee for them when Colt answered it. The conversation was brief.

"That was Ollie. He is wondering when we going to move the cows and calves in off the lease."

"I want to go with you this year. I'd enjoy a few days in the saddle again!"

Colt frowned. "Will that be OK? You know; for the baby and all?"

"Colt, I'm not sick! I'm pregnant. That's the oldest condition in the world and I'm as strong as a horse!" Her smile was radiant. "I was riding out there when I was carrying the twins and it didn't hurt me. I've missed being on the round up for the past three years, but I really couldn't go with the twins being so small.

"They are old enough now to leave with your mom if she'll look after them. It would be great if your mom and dad would come out to the ranch and watch them there. Then we could give them a kiss goodnight and tuck them in. What do you think?" Excitement sparkled in her eyes.

Colt thought for a moment. "Well, Ollie would sure be happy to have you there. He still swears you are the best ranch hand he has ever had." He reached out and took her hand, pulling her onto his lap. He nuzzled the curve of her neck. "And I'd love to have you out there with me. We made some wonderful memories there."

She turned her face to settle her lips on his. Their kiss deepened and she could feel him harden as she rested against him. He shifted and turned her to face him, his hand moving to her breast. Fire leapt in her groin.

"Do we have time?" he whispered. She nodded and he swept her up in his arms and carried her up to their bedroom. They both tore their clothes off and fell onto the unmade bed that they had left little more than an hour earlier.

Fifteen minutes later they lay together, panting and sweaty. Colt ran his fingers through the tips of her hair. "Wowee. That was good!" He curled his arm, drawing her tight against him and

nibbled at the corner of her lips. "You're still so hot woman! I don't think I'll ever get enough of you."

"And you're still so horny!" she said with a laugh. "We'd better get up and have breakfast now. The coffee will be cold and the twins should wake up in half an hour. Quickie time is over!"

He sighed. "You're right. I'll call mom and see if they will come out to the ranch and watch the kids, while you make breakfast."

Colt came back to the kitchen with a frown on his face. "Mom can't come; she and dad have already made plans. But she suggested someone that one of her friends knows. This woman's husband died ten years ago. Her family was grown up and she was an elementary teacher. She retired and the last couple of years she's been a nanny for this Mrs. Chapman's daughter. Mom says she comes highly recommended. We could check her out. What do you think?"

"I don't know. We don't know her and the twins don't know her. I'm not sure if..."

"We could meet her and see how we feel about her. If it feels right, we can bring her out here and see how it works with her and the kids. I've been thinking for awhile...I'd like to get someone who could help you out.

"You handle it all so well, but sometimes I'm just blown away by what all you do. I see how much work the twins are, and now with you being pregnant again, I'd like to get someone to give you a hand."

"Colt, I don't need help..."

He laid two fingers across her lips. "There is a selfish motive in this for me too. I'd like it if you could come to a meeting with me; like last night, or go to a horse race with me when I go; and you could come out to the ranch for a day with me. You should have a bit of time for yourself. I didn't marry you to keep you barefoot and pregnant. I wanted you to be my companion as well!"

"I...well...All right, we can check her out. When are you moving cows?"

"Ollie and I decided next week will work best, so we had better get on this nanny thing right away. I want you to be on the round-up this year."

"Did your mom tell you her name?"

"She is going to call me back with her phone number. Her name is Ellie Raines."

"Does she know if she's available now..." Suddenly she heard a whimper from up stairs. "That's Selena! The kids are awake!" Frankie whirled and went flying up the stairs to the nursery. Colt shook his head slightly. She was so in tune with the twins that it amazed him.

He could hear her crooning to their daughter. Selena would be rubbing her eyes with her little fists, her face all scrunched up on the verge of tears, protesting grumpily as she shed the drowsiness of sleep. Sam would be sitting his bed, calm and wide eyed. They were as different as night and day.

The phone rang. Colt picked it up and answered it, ignoring the call display. He didn't recognise the callers' voice.

"Could I speak to Colt Thompson?" a youthful sounding female voice asked.

"Speaking."

"This is Ellie Raines. Connie Chapman talked to your mother this morning. She said you are looking for a babysitter next week."

"We could be. Of course, we need to meet you first."

"I could drop by your place anytime today."

"That would be a great idea. Do you know where we live?"

"Not exactly; Connie said you live on a farm near Cantuar, but I don't know your exact address."

Colt gave her directions to the farm and she said she would be there around eleven that morning. Then he bounded up the stairs to tell Frankie and the twins.

\*\*\*

Ellie Raines was punctual. She drove down the tree lined driveway and parked her silver coloured compact car in front of the old two story house. She noted how well kept the house and grounds were. As she stepped out of her car she looked through the tall trees that formed a dividing line between the lawn around the house and the equipment yard.

She looked with interest at the huge, modern combines parked in front of a large machine shed. Experience told her that harvesting was finished. It had been a good fall for farmers. She noted the large metal grain bins lined up. The little tell-tale piles of grain on the ground in front of each one told her that grain had been augured into them and they were probably all full.

She turned as she heard the house door open. Her eyes met a tall, good looking man with the greenest eyes she had ever seen. She decided he was probably in his late thirties or early forties. She smiled as she sized him up.

“Hi. I’m Ellie Raines. I was just looking at the combines and the grain bins. My husband and I had a mixed farm near Chitek Lake. Our kids weren’t interested in the farm and it was too much for me to handle so I sold it after he died: but I’ve always loved harvest time.”

Colt smiled as he watched her walk up the sidewalk. She was dressed in comfortable brown chino slacks and a fresh looking pink blouse. She was petite. She was probably about five foot four, pleasantly rounded and motherly looking; not fat but definitely not thin. He guessed her that she was in her early sixties. Her hair was a warm brown with golden high lights and a few threads of silver showing up in the temples. It was cut in a smart style that suited her well. Her eyes were a cool grey; warm, open and friendly. His first instinct was to like her. He reached out to shake her hand and invited her in.

“Fran,” he called. “Ellie Raines is here.”

He heard her answer from upstairs. “I’ll be right there. I’m changing Selena’s clothes. She spilled a glass of milk on herself. Will you make a fresh pot of coffee? Oh and watch where you step by the table. I didn’t get the milk all wiped up.”

Colt motioned for Ellie to follow him into the kitchen. He pulled some paper towel from the roll and turned toward the table. Ellie reached to take it from his hand. “Let me clean up the spill while you make the coffee. I’m dying for a cup.” She smiled as she took the paper towel from his hand and nimbly bent down to wipe up the spill.

Frankie and the twins came down the stairs and smiles of unfeigned delight wreathed Ellie’s face. Colt introduced her to Frankie and each child in turn. Selena ran to Ellie, open and accepting and Ellie stooped and picked her up. Frankie and Colt watched the immediate connection between them and looked at each other with understanding.

Ellie moved slowly toward Sam, speaking to him softly as she knelt down in front of him. She gently stood Selena on the floor beside her, cradling her close to her as she held her hand out to Sam. She spoke to both of the children, letting Sam make the next move. At first he clung firmly to his mother’s legs but gradually he relaxed as Ellie gained his confidence and reached out to touch her fingers.

She looked up at Colt. “Well daddy, is that cup of coffee ready?” She took both children by the hand and followed Frankie and Colt to the kitchen table. As they drank coffee, Ellie produced her credentials and references and phone numbers of people she had worked for.

She told them she was looking for full time work and asked them to phone her past employers, particularly the family where she had last worked. She was no longer needed there because the mother had been laid off, but she had been sad to leave. She said she loved working with small children.

She left, giving them time to make a decision and assuring them that she could be available immediately. That evening, after they had checked out her references and talked to her former employers, Colt phoned Ellie and confirmed that they wanted to hire her for two weeks. If the five of them worked well together, he assured her there was a good possibility that they would want her to stay on full time.

She was thrilled and agreed to be there the next day.

“Where is she going to stay?” Frankie asked.

“Well she could stay in the spare room.”

Frankie wrinkled her nose. “Not enough privacy. That cuts out early morning activities like this morning.” She grinned as she arched her eyebrow.

“We can’t have that! What else can we do? We don’t have a cottage or anywhere else to put her.”

“Could we buy a mobile home; something that’s not too big, yet enough room for her to be comfortable? Then she would have her own place to do whatever she wants to in and we’ll have our privacy too.”

“That is a good idea. We’d have to figure out how to get power and water and sewer in for it right away.”

[Back to Contents](#)

## CHAPTER THREE

Shauna Lee struggled to consciousness. Her thinking was fuzzy, still affected by the extra sleeping pill. She stretched out and rolled over onto her back, pushing the covers away from her face. She squinted against the light that streamed in through the bedroom window and then looked at the clock on her night table. "Ten o'clock. Jeeze, I simply died!"

She rolled her legs out of the bed and sat up. Her pyjamas twisted around her slender frame uncomfortably. Her head was still foggy. She rubbed her eyes and yawned, thinking that a cup of coffee would bring her back to the world of the living.

She pushed herself off the bed and wandered into the kitchen. After she set up the coffee pot, she wandered over to the front window and looked outside. Idly she watched a couple strolling down the street, hand in hand, enjoying the beautiful September morning. Another family came into sight; a husband and wife and two small children.

The little girl swung on her father's hand. The little boy was about four years old. He was running ahead, then spinning back and charging toward his mother. He stopped just beyond her reach, eluding her as she smiled and leaned forward to catch him. Then he ran back up the street again, laughing as he went.

Shauna Lee's eyes fastened on the little boy. She bit her lip as she watched him. Feelings she had buried twenty-one years ago bubbled to the surface. She shook her head, pushing them away; but she couldn't seem to tear her focus away from the child. Tears filled her eyes, blurring her vision, then escaping down her cheeks. She turned away from the window, dashing them away with back of her hand.

She stumbled to the table and sat on a chair. Sobs racked her body and she cried uncontrollably until she was exhausted and drained. Then she just sat there, staring out the kitchen window, her emotions numb.

Ben would have been twenty two now. The son she had loved with all her being; the son whose father wouldn't accept him because he had been born with a physical deformity; a deformity that had revolted him.

Shauna Lee couldn't hold on any more. She ran to the bathroom and vomited the bitter acid that roiled in her stomach. It burned her throat and lay sour in her mouth. She hadn't eaten anything since late the afternoon before. The coffee she had made sat in the thermal carafe on the counter.

She was cold and sick. She filled a glass with water and rinsed her mouth, then crawled back into bed and huddled under the sheets, willing her thoughts to still. Gradually the exhaustion of her emotions claimed her in sleep.

She woke up later in the day. Her watch said it was four thirty. Her head hurt and she knew she needed to eat. She went to the kitchen and poured herself a cup of coffee. The carafe had kept it lukewarm. She sipped it mindlessly and opened the fridge to look inside. Nothing looked appetizing. She closed the door, uncertain what she would do. She knew she needed something, but what? She looked like hell and she definitely was not going out. Pizza? She could order in. She reached for the phone, then hesitated.

In her mind, pizza was meant to be shared. Suddenly she realized that she couldn't think of anyone she could call to share one with. At one time she would have called Colt. In the years

since then...well she'd seldom had lonely weekends. Men like Josh hadn't been hard to find for company.

What the hell had happened this time? It was as if Josh had opened Pandora's Box with his crude remarks and things just kept tumbling out. She had been forced to look at her life, like Scrooge at Christmas time; but she wasn't Scrooge and it wasn't Christmas. However, as it had been for Scrooge, it was hard for her to look at her life.

She picked up the phone and ordered a pizza. She decided to have a shower while she waited for it to be delivered. She would eat it by herself while she watched TV and escape reality until she got back on track.

Shauna Lee woke up crying at four thirty on Sunday morning. She had been dreaming about the night Ben had died. The horror of it clung to her as she fought off the cloud of sleep. Dave's rage hung in the room, so real she could feel it.

She lay there thinking about that time in her life, wondering why those images had come back now. She had managed to close that part of her memory off for years, burying it so deep that she had been able to pretend that none of it had happened. She hadn't told anyone about Ben; not even Colt. What had triggered the memory, making it come to the surface yesterday?

She got up and went to the bathroom. She was still wearing her pyjamas from yesterday and they were creased and damp with sweat and tears. Glancing at the clock she noted that it was only five in the morning.

*What day is it?* she wondered. She went into the kitchen and turned on the soft light under the microwave installed above the stove. Automatically she emptied the thermal coffee carafe and set up a new pot of coffee. She poured herself a bowl of dry cereal, splashed some milk over it and added a sprinkle of sugar.

Then she sat down at the table. She ate mindlessly, purposely pushing her clamouring thoughts aside. *It has to be Sunday...it'll be another long day to get through. What am I going to do? I can't just sit here and drown in my memories.*

She sighed and got up to pour herself a cup of coffee. "Maybe I should go for a drive or something; but where?" She wandered over to the couch and turned on the TV, but there wasn't much that interested her at six in the morning.

She surfed through the channels and clicked on a program about small wind turbines. She listened with idle interest as the spokesman explained to the interviewer how the new small wind turbines were helping the environment by replacing dirty grid power with clean, free wind green energy that was economical and affordable too.

When he introduced their newest dealer, her senses sprang alert. She recognized Brad Johnson. She heard him say "years ago the landscape of western Canada was dotted with windmills that were mainly used to pump water out of the ground."

But what really caught her attention was the rich timbre of his voice and the smooth way he delivered his words with a cadence that captured her. She watched his expressions and the way he moved his hands as he talked, shifting slightly on his feet from time to time. He was confident and sincere; an earthy, unpretentious, very real person. She had been aware of that on Friday night, but now she was really struck by it.

She picked up his words again..."and eventually I can see this type of landscape recreated again with our small power-generating wind turbines popping up on farms and ranches across the country. They are highly efficient, and they require very little maintenance. And they are simple to put in place; a truck or a tractor will easily pull the assembled tower into place."

The sound of his voice washed over her. She studied his physique. He was tall; over six feet she was certain. And she'd bet he didn't get those muscles pumping iron in a gym. He probably got them from throwing bales or wrestling calves.



He was wearing blue jeans again and a western shirt that accentuated the grey of his eyes. He wasn't wearing a Stetson today, and his rich brown hair was ruffled by the breeze. Did he have cowboy boots on? She watched closely as the camera moved back. "Yes!" she murmured "And nice ones, too. He is a hunk!" She watched him dreamily, until the camera shifted away to show a wind turbine being installed.

Then reality hit her like a punch. "And...I'm sure he thinks I'm the town tramp....he probably wouldn't come near me."

Discontent washed over her as she surfed through the channels a few more times, then stood up and turned off the TV. She dropped the remote on the coffee table and glanced at her watch again, debating what she should do. *It's only eight thirty.* She sighed deeply. *This is going to be a long day. Well, I have laundry to do. That will take up some of my time.*

As she gathered her laundry from the hamper in her bedroom, she wondered what had happened to her. *Why haven't I made friends? Right now I wish I had someone to talk to—maybe a girlfriend. But I've never had a real girlfriend,* she thought as she dropped a load of whites in the washing machine.

The phone rang as she was closing the lid. She turned the machine on and ran to answer it. Glancing at the call display she hesitated, trying to recognise the name. It was from the Country Lane Inn in town.

*Who the heck?* she thought as she answered. "Hello?"

"Shauna Lee, this is Mitch here...."

"Mitch...?" There was a question in the word. *Who...?*

"Mitch Wagner; from Saskatoon."

"Oh...Mitch. I'm sorry. You caught me off guard. I was thinking about something else."

"I'm in town. I have a meeting tomorrow. Any way; I was wondering if you wanted to get together. We could go for a drive, or I think the Eliminators Car Club is having its show and shine today at Riverside Park. We could stop in there and check it out if you like."

"Hey, I'd love to get together. I'm just sort of kicking around here on my own!"

"All right, I'll drop over in an hour or so to pick you up. It'll be great to see you again!"

"I'll be waiting," she said with a smile. *Mitch, you're a wish come true. You've rescued me from myself. Thank you! Thank you!* She quickly shut off the washing machine and ran to the bedroom. She opened a dresser drawer and selected a lacy sexy set of matching panties and bra. She dashed into the bathroom and turned on the shower.

She washed her hair and lathered her body quickly and then reached for her razor and shaved her under arms and her legs. As she rinsed off, she ran her hands down her legs. *Smooth as silk,* she thought with a smile.

She blew her hair dry, applied her make-up and added a light spray of seductive perfume. Then she slipped into her bra and panties and flew to the closet to decide what to wear. After some thought, she picked out a silky, bayou blue top that closed with a crossover tie and showed a lot of cleavage. It brought out the colour of her eyes.

She picked out a pair of stretchy jeans that fit her like a glove and grabbed a long tweedy blue sweater. She riffled through her sock drawer and grabbed a pair of white ones. Then she slid her feet into a pair of running shoes and she was ready. She went into the kitchen and tossed her purse and house keys on the table. She poured herself a cup of coffee, just as the doorbell rang.

She had totally slipped into predator mode without even thinking about it. She waited a minute, and then strolled to the door. "Can't appear too eager", she mused as she opened it. She smiled coyly at the tall blonde man that stood in front of her.

"Mitch, imagine seeing you again!" She stood aside and let him step in, then closed the door behind him. She looked him over from top to bottom, then slid her arms around his neck and pulled him to her.

He smiled as he bent his head to kiss her gently. "It's been a long time," he said softly.

She nestled her head against his shoulder. "It has," she breathed on a sigh. She slipped her hand into his and led him into the living room, pulling him down onto the couch beside her. Her hand slid to rest on his thigh. "You're looking too handsome," she said, smiling into his admiring eyes.

"And you're still gorgeous! You never change. What's it been; three or four years? What's been going on in your life? I heard once that you were engaged to a farmer. That surprised me!"

"What surprised you; that I was engaged or that I was engaged to a farmer?"

He laughed and raised her hand to his lips, nibbling on her fingers. "Both. I couldn't picture you with a farmer; or for that matter one guy. You always said you'd never get married."

She gently pulled her hand away. "And I didn't."

"I heard something to that effect. That's why I decided to call you when I was in town this time."

She stood up. "So what are we going to do?"

He raised his eyebrows and looked at her quizzically.

"Hey man; I just made the bed. And we've got the whole day ahead of us." She playfully punched him in the shoulder. "Have some class! I at least expect a nice dinner and a good glass of wine," she said, laughing as she walked to the table and picked up her keys and purse.

"It's just that you're looking so hot..."

"I'm sure I heard you say something about going to the Eliminators Show and Shine." She walked to the door, and stood waiting for him. "I thought they usually had that in August."

"There was some kind of a change in schedule this year." He grinned as he pushed himself up off the couch and walked over to join her. He pushed the door closed and pulled her against him, kissing her deeply, his tongue slipping into her mouth, dancing with hers.

She could feel the bulge in his crotch as he rubbed against her and fire leapt in her groin. She moaned as he ravaged her mouth. Then he swung the door open, pushing her out in front of him.

He grabbed her hand and pushed it into his straining hardness. He groaned. "We'll do it your way for now; then we'll do it my way tonight!"

It was beautiful, warm fall day and there was a large crowd at the show. Shauna Lee really smiled for the first time in two days. She loved looking at the hotrods and old classic cars. She knew a lot of the people that were there; several of them were her clients. She stopped and chatted with them as she moved through the rows of cars with Mitch.

Mitch met someone he knew and stopped to talk business, so she kept wandering down the line. A hopped up old truck caught her eye. She wandered closer to look it over. "Sweet!" she said softly as she trailed her finger along the polished grill.

"It's well done" a deep rich voice commented from behind her. Shauna Lee jumped and whirled around, almost losing her balance. She stared into a pair of warm grey eyes that widened in surprise; Brad Johnson was standing there.

Her heart stood still momentarily. "Oh...you...I didn't hear you come up behind me." She looked so shocked, so defenceless, he couldn't help but smile. He reached out and touched her shoulder, a gesture meant to steady her.

"The grass muffles the sound. I didn't realise it was you."

She flushed. *Or you probably have gone the other way*, she thought. "Isn't this a cool old truck," she babbled, trying to hide the fact that seeing him had thrown her off balance. She slid a caressing hand along the bright red fender. "I think it says it's a 1949 model!"

"It's custom built. These guys rebuild old cars and trucks for a hobby." He touched his toe against the spokes of the chrome tire rim. "It's all rodded up; did you notice the chrome stacks behind the cab?" He rubbed his hand along the top edge of the box. "This baby never looked so good; even when it was new."

They fell into step and moved along the line to the next vehicle.

“Oh! I saw you on TV this morning.”

He looked puzzled and shook his head.

“Yes; you were being interviewed about the wind turbines.”

“Oh, I see.” He smiled and her heart missed a beat. “They recorded that last week: so you saw it this morning?”

“I don’t know what station it was on. I was channel surfing and I happened to hear a guy talking about the wind turbines. And then, there you were. Actually, it was pretty interesting. Listening to you today, and having seen your presentation the other night; I can see where there is a lot of potential, especially in the outer lying areas for farmers and ranchers.”

“The potential is incredible. And not just in the rural areas. You know hydro isn’t as expensive here as it is in other parts of the world. The manufacturer is really a forward thinking guy and most of his market is overseas now. But hydro costs will eventually go up here in Canada, too. Then people will be looking for the opportunity we offer. It’s just a matter of time.”

“I can see where a few of my clients could be interested in them; especially ranchers and farmers. So many of the smaller places have amalgamated into the larger ones; some places you travel miles without seeing an active home site.”

Brad looked at her, seeing the intelligent business woman he had gotten a glimpse of on Friday night. They stopped and inspected a bright yellow Ford Fairlane. Brad ran his hand along a front fender. “My dad owned one of these fifty years ago.”

Conversation was easy between them, and neither of them noticed that an hour had passed before Mitch caught up with them. He came up behind Shauna Lee and slid an arm over her shoulder.

“Sorry for leaving you on your own. I didn’t expect to meet him here. He is a client and I needed to talk to him”

“Not a problem. I ran into Brad. He markets small wind powered turbines. He gave a power-point presentation on them the other night at a seminar that the DA put on. They are a fascinating concept.”

She turned to Brad; she could see the speculation in his eyes. *Damn* she thought fiercely. *What must he be thinking?* “Brad Johnson, this is Mitch Wagner. I’ve known him for several years. He’s from Saskatoon and he’s in town for a meeting tomorrow so he looked me up this morning.”

The two men shook hands and made small talk for a few seconds, before Mitch reached in his pocket for his cell phone. She saw him frown as he turned away and answered. His face blanched. “I’ll be right home. No; forget about the meeting. I’ll reschedule. You just hang in there; I’m on my way.”

He turned to Shauna Lee. “I have to go home.”

“Is something wrong?” she asked with genuine concern.

“M..my son, Kyle. He was playing baseball and got nailed in the head with a bat. They’re taking him to the hospital right now.”

*Your son?* “How old is he?” she asked, her voice choked.

“Eleven...I’ve got to go.” He looked at Brad. “Look, I’m sorry to do this, but could you give Shauna Lee a lift home?”

“Don’t worry about me, Mitch. Just go...your son needs you and you should get home as soon as possible. I’ll catch a ride with someone. I know a lot of people here.”

“I’ll give her a ride home,” Brad said. “Just get on the road, man! I hope your boy is OK.”

“Thanks guys. I’m out of here.”

Shauna Lee watched him run through the cars. *That bastard! He’s married and has a family. Five hours ago he was trying to get in my pants.*

Brad touched her arm, mistaking the reason for the troubled expression on her face. “All we can do is hope that everything is all right. Getting hit in the head with a baseball bat is tough. It’s hard to say how bad it is until the doctors examine him.”

“Poor kid.” *You have no idea!*

“Look it is four o’clock. Are you in a hurry to go home?”

“Brad, you don’t have to worry about me. I’m a big girl. I’ll get myself home”

“Hey, your friend asked me...and honestly.” He chuckled as he looked her over from head to foot. “You don’t look like a very *big* girl to me. If you’re in a hurry to get home, I’ll take you straight there. If you’re relaxed about it, we could go have supper somewhere and then I’ll take you home.”

“Well...”

“Look, we both need to eat some time. Company with supper would be a nice change for me.”

“Well, when you put it that way, I have to admit you’re right. We can go anytime you like.”

“We could swing by the steakhouse and eat. Then I’ll take you home; how about it?”

She nodded. They turned and walked back to the parking lot. She felt disappointed when he didn’t reach for her hand, or curl his arm around her waist and draw her close against his side. *It would feel so good to snuggle against his shoulder.*

The restaurant was busy, but they found a table in the corner where it was a little quieter. Brad asked her what she would like to drink. She opted for red wine; he ordered a rum and coke and when their drinks came they slipped into easy conversation.

“How long have you lived in Swift Current?” Brad was looking down at his drink, swirling amber liquid over the ice as he asked.

“I’ve been here for thirteen years. After I got my CA, I came here to work for the previous owner. I worked for him for three years. He had a good cliental, and I had worked with him long enough to earn their confidence. He wanted to retire so I bought the business from him.”

She caught her bottom lip in her teeth, then sighed as she released it. “I’d worked hard through the years; in fact I did little else but work and study.” She twirled the stem of her glass between her thumb and her index finger. Then she looked up to find him watching her intently. “I had saved enough to buy the business. He did give me a break though; he was happy to have me take it over. It’s done well over the past ten years.”

“You can be proud of what you’ve accomplished. What about your family? Didn’t you have support from them?”

“I don’t have any family.” She decided she needed to shift the conversation away herself. “Now tell me about you? The other night you said you were from B.C.?”

“Yes, from Dawson Creek.”

“Where is that?”

“More northern; if you drew a line from North Battleford across to Dawson Creek, you would find that they are pretty close in latitude. I took the Wind Turbine Maintenance Program at Northern Lights College there. That got my toe in the door. Experience got me here.”

The waitress came to take their food order and Brad ordered another drink for each of them, checking with her to make sure that it was all right.

“So were you born there?”

“Yeah. My dad owns a bulk station in town; he handles diesel and gas and oil and grease. Mom’s retired now, but she was a teacher.”

“Brothers or sisters?”

“The perfect family; there are two of each of us.”

She smiled. “So what did you do for fun—Hockey? Football?”

“Truth? Neither one; but I like to watch both. I’m a Saskatchewan Rough Rider fan now, but it’s hard for me if they are playing the B.C. Lions. I still cheer for the Vancouver Canucks when

they play hockey. But I like junior league hockey as much as I do NHL. They are young and full of piss and vinegar. They usually put on a good game. Are you a hockey fan?"

Shauna Lee shrugged. "Not really, but I can't say for sure. I've never actually checked it out. I've seen games on TV in the bar, but I wasn't actually concentrating on them. But tell me more; what do you do for R&R. Somehow, I don't think you're a couch potato!"

He grinned. "No; I'm an outdoors guy. I like to hike in the mountains. And Dad and I hunted from the time I was a kid; we used to pack in with horses. We would go a way back into the mountains where you seldom saw anyone else. I rode bareback too; high school rodeo stuff."

Her eyes sparkled. "Wow! A real cowboy! Sexy!"

"Don't get carried away there. I wasn't big time or anything like that. But I loved to ride; I still do. Give me a horse and turn me loose and I'll be happy for days."

"You are Colt's kind of guy; cows and horses."

"I like Colt. I think we have a lot in common."

"So," she said leaning across the table toward him. "Are there any women in your life?"

He raised an eyebrow. "Are you always so direct?"

"Well, you're a good looking man; I'm just curious."

"How many guys are there in your life?"

She blushed. "Touché"

The waitress brought their meals and they ate in silence.

When he was finished, Brad put his utensils onto the plate and pushed it aside. "Are you ready for coffee?"

"I am stuffed. You could take me home and stop for a coffee. It would give me half an hour to digest the steak."

He looked at her for a long moment. She heart accelerated, wondering what he was thinking. "If you'd like to do that we could," he said soberly.

"Sure; let's go. I might even offer you some dessert."

Brad paid for their meal, and then held the door open for her to step outside. His hand touched the small of her back as they walked to his truck. His touch sent a hot tightening into her belly and down into the core of her femininity. He opened the door and helped her up onto her seat in the truck. He was smiling when he got in on his side. "These trucks are so high. It's quite a stretch for a shorty like you to get your little tush up and on the seat."

"Now, a gentleman wouldn't have noticed," she said with a sexy little giggle.

"I guess not a gentleman then, because I noticed."

When they pulled up in front of her house, he got out and came around to open her door so he could help her out. Shauna Lee felt giddy with anticipation. She smiled as she opened her front door and stepped inside, standing aside to let him in.

"You can leave those beautiful boots on the mat," she spoke over her shoulder, as she moved into the kitchen and tossed her keys and her purse on the table. "Just grab a spot to sit and I'll put on the coffee."

Brad looked around the open kitchen and living room area. It was beautifully decorated, but he noted the lack of personal things; no pictures of family or friends and no books, just a top of the line TV and stereo.

He eased his long frame down on a kitchen chair. "Nice place."

"It works for me" she said with a warm smile. "Do you want a tour of the rest of the place while the coffee pot does its magic?" She smiled at him, raising an eyebrow. "There is a laundry room and a bathroom and the bedroom with a queen sized bed."

"I just got settled here. Why don't we just sit down and chat until the coffee is ready." The way he said it wasn't a rebuff. It struck her as meaning that there would be plenty of time later.

As they talked her eyes registered an unspoken invitation, her inherent sexual essence oozing out.

Brad smiled, accepting the coffee cup that she gave him, her fingers brushing his softly, lingering with promise. When their coffee cups were drained, he leaned back in his chair and looked at her, his grey eyes cool and intent.

“Shauna, I told you I’m a hunter. I have hunted cougars in the wild. That is where I like to keep them: in the wild; with me doing the stalking.”

Her face went scarlet. “Are you calling me a cougar?” she asked, indignantly.

“I’d say that description fits you pretty accurately. You’re no teeny bopper getting her first hormone flushes. If you were looking for a wedding ring you’d probably have one. You’re successful. I’m not blind; you’re so hot looking you sizzle.

“I’m not stupid either; you are on the prowl for sex. You’ve been stalking me all evening. I’m no eunuch. I could take you to that queen sized bed that you so coyly mentioned earlier and do it justice. But I seldom hunt where everyone else has been hunting.”

He stood up. “I enjoyed your company today. I enjoyed having supper with you. But I’m not into playing *this* game. I’m not willing to be another one of your boy-toys.” He walked to the door and opened it.

“I’m sure you don’t want my advice, but I’ll throw it out there anyway. Figure out who you are Shauna Lee, before it’s too late. You have got a lot more to offer than sex, but you’ll never find that out if you keep running from real intimacy.

“Bed hopping with your nothing serious, no strings attached, no risk attitude is never going get you there. One day you’ll wake up and find yourself old and alone.”

He stepped out and closed the door.

She stood immobile for a second, stunned. She grabbed his coffee cup off the table and flung it against the door. It shattered in a million pieces, but she didn’t even flinch. “Who the hell do you think you are Brad Johnson?” she raged. “A shrink? Well I don’t need one.”

She kicked the leg of the chair he’d been sitting on. “I’ve got news for you. I know just who I am and I’ve been old and alone since I was eighteen years old.”

[Back to Contents](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

## CHAPTER FOUR

**Chapters 4 - 23 are not available unless you buy  
"You can run"  
from the following link/s**

["You can run" on my Website](#)

["You can run" on Smashwords](#)

This 3 Chapter Sampler  
was created by ePrintedBooks

## Authors Notes

I have fictitiously used the city of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, Canada and all of the other towns, cities, villages, hamlets or abandoned places on the map that I mentioned in this book. I have done all my research about the area on the internet. I have *fictionally* used the names of actual businesses that I found in my internet research; (restaurants, fast food places, grocery stores, big box stores, hotels, motels, churches, airports and tourist spots etc.) in *fictious* situations in this book.

One day I would like to visit Coronach, the Big Muddy Badlands, Castle Butte and take a tour of Sam Kelly's outlaw caves. I have no idea if the area is as interesting in real life as it sounded on the internet, but it seems that there is some very fascinating history there.

The "Eliminators Show and Shine" is an actual event that I discovered on the internet. It looked like an interesting venue, so I incorporated it into the story in a fictional way. I set it at a different time of the year than it is held in real life because it worked to carry the story forward.

If you have any interest in the places in "**you can run....**" have fun exploring them on the internet. It could be a learning experience!



[Back to Contents](#)