



New Dawning International Bookfair

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Winner Take All

\$3.99

BLURB

When Dylan Coulter rides into Sparkling Springs, he discovers the woman who runs the local saloon is worth the risk of facing the hangman. Things get ugly fast when Dylan is accused of killing the only son of the richest rancher in the area. Unwilling to leave her behind, he takes Maggie along as he tries to dodge bounty hunters and a determined Pinkerton agent who just happens to be her old flame

EXCERPT

“I’d like to get to bed some time tonight, Mr. Coulter,” Maggie interjected, and almost fainted with embarrassment over her choice of words when he turned his insolent smile on her, and the undercurrent of innuendo filled the space between them like a tangible presence.

“Far be it from me to keep a lady out of her bed,” he murmured, his eyes dancing with amusement as she glared at the three of them when they all laughed at her.

“Good night!” he snapped with ill grace and strode from the café, the solid thump of her shoes on the wooden planks testimony to her annoyance.

When Dylan caught up with her, she was waiting outside the Spur, and a glance told him that her mood had soured considerably in the brief minutes she’d been forced to wait for him. He unlocked the door, handed her the key, and tried to keep the smile off his face as he trailed her to the upper level. When the door to her rooms slammed shut with a bang that probably woke every other person in the place, he let himself laugh quietly.

Entering the clean, tidy room, Dylan loosened the leather thong that kept his gun held close to his thigh, then unbuckled his gun belt and hung it on the peg next to the door. He tossed his jacket on the bed, unbuttoned his vest and slid his tie free of his collar. Continuing his trek to the door that opened onto the balcony that ran along the entire upper floor of the saloon, he stepped outside and lit a cheroot.

He was leaning against the wall of the building, smoking in silence a short while later, when the door at the other end of the balcony opened and Maggie came out into the night. She wore a thin cotton nightgown, and her sun-kissed golden hair was loose and cascading in heavy waves down the curving length of her back. She closed her eyes and leaned forward, hands braced on the solid wooden railing. She tilted her head back and Dylan's breath caught in his throat as he let his eyes caress the delectable line of her profile as it flowed down to the much too enticing shadow between her breasts. The moon had risen and bathed the night in silvery white, turning everything it touched to shimmering frost. Maggie's lips parted and she drew in a heavy breath that he felt so acutely it was as though she'd drawn the air into his lungs as well as her own.

He flicked the butt of his cheroot into the night, pushed away from the saloon wall and walked toward her. "Beautiful night, isn't it?"

Maggie turned to stare at him, and whatever she'd been thinking about had left her dazed and dreamy-eyed. She didn't answer, and Dylan stepped closer, making her tilt her head back to hold his gaze as he let his body answer its own need rather than think about what he was doing. His fingers slid under the heavy mass of her hair and he cupped the back of her head as he bent to cover her mouth with his. Her lips parted. Whether it was to object or accept him he didn't know, but he let his tongue slip into the sweet warmth of her mouth and he deepened the kiss to an erotic, exploring caress that made him want to go on kissing her forever.

Still allowing instinct to rule good sense, Dylan pulled her closer, pressed her soft feminine curves to the lean contours of his body. He hadn't wanted a woman as desperately as he suddenly wanted Maggie. His hands began to move with the same demand as his mouth against hers. Whatever need was driving him came to an abrupt and painful halt seconds later when she pushed hard against his chest and freed herself from the intimate embrace. She was gasping and staring at him in shock, something too near fear lurking in the deepest recesses of her eyes. Dylan shivered, chilled to the bone for no apparent reason where only heartbeats before he'd been swept into an inferno.

"I'm sorry, Maggie," he offered, his voice harsh with denied need. "I am," he repeated, and quickly turned away and headed for his own room.

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