

## Second Door on the Right

### Chapter One

Rose Kincaid repacked her medical equipment in the back of her SUV before turning to Mrs. Marcum. The Texas sun had warmed up the spring day, taking away the morning chill. Rose stood for a moment, raising her face to the sun, taking pride in the accomplishment of the day.

“Thank you. You don’t know what this means. Lily has been my entire world since my husband died.” Mrs. Marcum’s words brought Rose’s attention back to the present.

“Let me know if you need anything else, but Lily is doing well and her babies are healthy.”

Rose gave the older woman a quick hug before climbing inside her vehicle. Pulling away from the small farmhouse ten miles outside of Spring Creek, Rose smiled and remembered the emergency call she’d answered two hours ago.

Lily—an overly-large pot-bellied pig—had gotten herself in the family way almost four months earlier. Mrs. Marcum routinely arranged play dates for her spoiled pig, not realizing that the visiting pig, Brutus, was an intact male. A visit to Rose’s veterinary office later confirmed Lily’s impending motherhood. Rose had promised to be by the pig’s side when the big event happened.

When the call came in, she’d tried to reassure Mrs. Marcum but ended up driving to her home to oversee the birth. Over an hour later, three little piglets were nursing at Lily’s side with their human grandmother watching with pride. Compared to other farm and ranch births, this one had been easy.

Her cell phone beeped. Checking the caller ID, she saw her brother Reed’s name pop up. He handled the business end of her veterinary practice.

Clicking the button on her phone, she answered, “Reed, what’s up?”

“How’s the pig?”

“Mother, babies, and grandma all doing well.”

He chuckled. “Glad to hear it, but it’s put you behind on your schedule.”

She dropped her head onto the headrest. Of course, it had. Reed had her days booked with little time in between appointments. She really needed to talk to him about proper scheduling. “Thanks for the reminder, baby brother.” Even at thirty years old, she enjoyed teasing that she was older, even if it was only by five minutes.

He huffed at the reminder. “The new owner of the Flying S Ranch called the office to see how soon you’ll be there. His original appointment for you to check his new mares was twenty minutes ago. One was injured during the transport. When you heading there?”

She remembered seeing the appointment on her list this morning before she left her practice. She could be there in thirty minutes or less. The Flying S Ranch had recently been bought by out-of-towners. She wondered what happened to the lively old couple who’d lived there until six months ago. She’d yet to meet the new owner.

With a sigh, she replied, “Tell him I’m on my way. I couldn’t avoid this emergency call.”

“I’m sure he’ll understand. His name is Nick Santos. He’ll be waiting.” Her brother hung up.

She dropped her cell phone into the middle console of her SUV. Running a hand through her short, spiky red hair, she checked her speedometer and increased her speed. The back roads would be bumpy and dusty but she’d shave off a few minutes. Just what she needed— being late for a new client.

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Normally a patient man, Nick Santos paced his office. First the horse trailer had arrived late from Houston. Then one of the mares had limped when she was unloaded. Now the vet hadn’t shown up. Her business partner had explained that an emergency had delayed her. Nick understood. Really, he did. Except he preferred things to work in a precise, exact order. He didn’t like accounting for deviations from his plans. Besides, he hated seeing the mare in pain.

His brother, Ethan, handled chaos better in his crazy, carefree way, but he wasn’t scheduled to arrive for another week. Ethan’s current project was purchasing a stallion for their ranch. As long as the mares were sound and healthy, the stud would be able to do his job, and the brothers’ new venture would take off.

Their grandparents had owned the small spread for as long as Nick could remember. Over the years, they had allowed the ranch to decline as they grew older. There had been no livestock at the

end. Ethan and Nick had spent their summers helping them and learning the intricacies of horse ranching. They would have plenty to do to bring the place back into a decent, notable spread.

Once the two brothers graduated college, they'd followed their father's example instead and became lawyers. The brothers were the best corporate attorneys in San Antonio. At least until a certain woman came between them. Afterward, they agreed no woman was important enough to make them choose between her and each other.

In a drastic move, they bought out their grandparents, quit their practice, and left the hustle and bustle of the big city for the dusty scrub brush of West Texas. Now they planned to build their own empire. In due time, they'd find another woman to share. Until then, the ranch and the horses were the brothers' priorities.

Hearing a vehicle approach, Nick stepped outside into the late spring Texas heat. His polo shirt clung to his chest. He needed a new wardrobe for working outside. His usual city attire would have to change.

A white SUV kicked up dust as it made its way toward the main ranch buildings. One day, he promised himself, the entire drive would be paved which would eliminate the quarter inch of dust that settled on everything.

"Here she comes."

The foreman's statement startled Nick out of his thoughts. Jesse had worked for his grandparents and agreed to stay on while the brothers wrestled the place into working order.

The SUV slowed as it approached. Grimy dust clung to the exterior. Not having dealt with this particular vet before, he'd give her the benefit of the doubt before he judged her. The horses were expensive beasts. He'd paid top dollar for quality breeding stock. This woman had better know what she was doing.

Plastering a smile on his face, he watched the dusty SUV head toward the barns and paddocks. The vet park her vehicle and gather items from the passenger seat before climbing out. His heart did a double take while the front of his jeans tightened significantly.

*Damn.* He had not expected the beauty who stepped out. What he saw was an athletic body, slim and average height. Her jeans hugged her luscious hips. Her T-shirt clung to pert breasts. He imagined his palms covering them. He knew instinctively she'd be a perfect fit, both for his palms and his cock. Not to mention sandwiched between him and Ethan.

The woman's hair and face snagged his attention next. A redhead with a small, perky nose, green eyes that reminded him of the brilliant grass in Ireland, freckles he wanted to trace, and a beautiful, bow-shaped mouth begging to be kissed. Her hair was short and spiky with a "just had the most incredible sex in my life" mussed look. A pixie with the feminine wiles of a siren.

*God, please don't let her be involved with someone.*

Her lips broke into a forced smile as she headed toward him. It was a professional look. Probably her persona with all her clients.

As she approached, the veterinarian stuck her hand out. Nick had to concentrate on her face and not the sway of her hips.

"Hi. I'm Rose Kincaid. Sorry I'm late. I had an emergency call I needed to take care of first." Her lyrical voice shot straight to his groin. He hoped she didn't glance down.

"Your partner explained the situation. I hope you saved the patient." He grasped her hand.

"Mother and babies are doing well."

"Glad to hear it."

She turned toward the horses in the paddock. "These are the mares you discussed with my brother?"

Her business partner was her brother? Nick smiled to himself. *Good.* He checked her finger for a wedding band. Nothing. That didn't always mean a person wasn't married. Some professionals didn't wear jewelry, especially in hands-on work, but it gave him hope. Nick was already laying claim on the sexy doctor.

Together they headed to the paddock. "I bought them from a breeder near Houston. I wanted to make sure they were unharmed from the trip, but one limped off the trailer and now appears to be having a problem." He pointed to a bay standing off to the side with her head hanging low and her body shuddering. "In the past twenty minutes, she's been going downhill."

Rose didn't hesitate. Moving with swift, precise steps, she hurried to the paddock but slowed her pace when she entered. He followed. As she passed the horses, she patted and spoke to each one. The vet's attitude remained calm and patient. Five of the six responded normally. The bay flinched, her skin twitching, when Rose touched her.

"Hold this." She didn't wait for his reply before stuffing the bag into his arms.

He knew she expected him to follow her directions without question. Very much in charge, she yanked her medical kit open, allowing her quick access to her equipment. Impressed with her

professional manner, he watched her perform a quick but thorough exam. No time wasted as she inspected the mare's eyes and mouth then took her temperature. Running her hands over the mare's back, Rose slowly drifted her firm but gentle strokes down to the leg the mare favored.

Nick wasn't familiar with horse injuries. His foreman was but didn't have the proper supplies. There hadn't been a horse on the property in years. "We weren't sure what to do, although we have kept her quiet."

She didn't bother glancing up. "New to horses?"

"Not exactly."

This time she did look up, an eyebrow raised in curiosity.

He shrugged. "It's been several years. I haven't been near a horse in ages."

She went back to concentrating on the animal's leg. "It's not broken. Feels like a pulled tendon. I'll wrap it for now. If it continues to bother her for more than three days, we should get an MRI or CT scan done."

Nick was amazed. "You can do that?"

She stood, reached for her bag, and pulled out several pieces of medical supplies before answering, "I can't, but I have access to a facility that can. I'll arrange it if necessary. First, though, I'll wrap it. She'll need a couple of shots—anti-inflammatories and steroids."

Nick watched as she wound a long white bandage around the animal's foreleg before covering it with a bright pink protective sleeve. Next, she loaded three syringes and emptied them into the mare's haunch.

"What's the third one?"

"A concoction of vitamins. Never hurts."

"That's it?" He hated to sound astonished, but he was. He'd had fears of a life-threatening injury or a cast at the bare minimum.

She chuckled and flashed a smile. "Not entirely. I suspect she has some travel sickness going on too. Someone should watch her closely for the next twenty-four hours. She needs to be in the shade with cool water to drink. Don't give her cold water. That'll make it worse. Overall, she should be fine."

He turned to his foreman who'd stood nearby. "Jesse, will you handle this?"

"Sure, boss." The older man nodded at Rose. "Whatever the lady needs."

Nick listened as Rose took the next several minutes to give Jesse instructions. It didn't hurt to learn something new, and Nick enjoyed listening to her voice.

Once she finished, she took another turn around the paddock, examining the remaining mares more thoroughly. He did his best to concentrate on her words but every time she moved, he found his gaze drifting to her backside.

Rose left the paddock area and strolled to her SUV. He kept pace with her, shortening his strides to match hers.

She stowed her bag inside her vehicle, then turned to him. "I'm curious if you know what happened to Selma and George, the previous owners. They were very nice people. I used to take care of their dogs."

Surprised she would mention them, Nick smiled. "They're my grandparents. They moved to San Antonio, closer to family."

Rose returned his smile. "I'm glad to hear that." She held her hand out for a quick shake. "It was a pleasure meeting you. Give me a call if she takes a turn for the worse. Otherwise, I'll stop by in a day or two when I'm in the area and check."

Not wanting their conversation to end, he tried being polite and neighborly. "Can I convince you to come in for a drink? Iced tea? Something to celebrate my new stock?"

Instead, she slid into the driver's seat with a slight laugh. The sound kicked his heartbeat up a notch. As she started the engine, she rolled the window down. He heard the air conditioner start and felt a blast of cold air burst through the opening. The May weather wasn't the only thing hot right now. "Sorry, Mr. Santos. I have other appointments before I head home today."

He enjoyed talking to this woman, not to mention her ability to raise his heart rate with a laugh. He stood next to the vehicle and rested his hands on the window frame. "How about a rain check? Dinner in town? I'd like to get to know you better."

Her face morphed from happy to serious in a split second. "I can't, Mr. Santos. I don't date my clients. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to leave for my next appointment."

Rose began to drive away, closing the window. Nick quickly stepped back to avoid getting his toes squished.

He watched her SUV disappear, a grin on his face. She couldn't fool him. She might appear cool and professional but he'd seen the side glances she had sent his way. One day he'd have Miss

Hot and Spicy in his bed. He was sure of it. He'd tell Ethan about the woman. Ethan was always up for a challenge.

He and his brother had been sharing women since college. They enjoyed introducing women to their lifestyle. Perhaps the young, hot doctor would be openminded about BDSM, and the three of them could spend some quality time together.

One could only hope.