

He had looked at her his first day, looked at her in that special way someone look at you think find interesting, she knew it. He had to know she knew he had looked at her that way. She could tell by the way he had blushed, coloring his cheeks in a similar hue as his hair. At first he had only been a workbuddy but it was something about him and he had grown on her. He didn't speak much and when he did it was mostly a soft word to the horse he was riding. The black beast still looked like a lemon each time anyone just as glanced in his direction but somehow he looked less "lemon-y" when Ron was around. The boss was pleased with him, Shannon knew that even if her boss never said it straight out. Flattery corrupts both the receiver and the giver; she said and meant that in the end it was really only the persons own approval or disapproval over their own work that meant anything, not somebody else's. Svea Bergfalk might not look like much but there was a strong will and a glowing fiery temper under that calm somewhat innocent exterior. When she started working for the Swedish woman she had thought that she was difficult and hardheaded but as time passed she had come to know her quite well. Once you were allowed into her inner circle she wasn't that bad. That outer casing was needed in a world like theirs, perhaps even more so for a woman that looked like she couldn't add two and two together. Svea didn't speak much from where she came except for the most obvious like she was from Sweden or that she had worked with racehorses before she took part of the stud over.

At one time in the beginning Shannon had googled her boss' name just to see what would come up, she had always had a curious streak and might have chosen a different route if the horses hadn't tipped the scale to their favour. It turned out that Svea had been somewhat successful jockey but a terrible accident that might just have killed her instead ended her career permanently. The horse under her had broken down and fallen on top of her, fracturing her pelvis among other things. Then there had to be the other thing she found...the thing involving a man, a man and a horse, which also had broken down on the track, none of them had survived. It was after that she had come to America. Shannon had asked about that...once. The short glimpse of pain that had flashed in those eyes before that protective shield had come up stopped her from asking about it again. Her boss reply to the whole thing had been first a mumble in a language Shannon didn't know, where each word just seemed to float into each other. Then her boss had asked a rather odd question. She hadn't really been able to answer it. Sure she had her share of relationships, some good and some...not so good. Somehow it never had seemed quite right with any of them and when the relationships had ended...sure she had shed one or two tears over some of them, sometimes in sadness and other in anger but she had bounced back pretty well. The time she had cried the most lately was when Dainty died, it still hurted when she thought about him. After the accident Svea had been very sympathetic on why some things had been harder for her to do and given her time to come back. The question was still unanswered. Shannon just didn't know. She knew she felt something for Ron but...it felt different than with the other guys she been interested in...besides...they...they were just friends...that was all...good friends.

They had been working with the new horses this morning, her and Ron, as well as doing some of the other chores that came with working with horses. Now they had taken a well deserved break on the lawn next to one of the pastures near the newly built cottage for the staff. The weather was hot so both of them had taken their t-shirts off to cool down. She had glanced in his direction a few times. You could tell that he was a jockey in the way he looked

body wise. He was almost like a greyhound, all slim muscles without a ounce of fat. Jace was also slim but he had started to take less rides and helped Svea out instead. Shannon guessed that the burns he got in the fire were worse than he let on. Even if most were on his arm he had gotten some on his chest and the safety vest rubbed on them constantly if he had it on. Ron perhaps didn't look like much but over the short time he had been here he had grown on her. It was something special with his voice and how just a touch could get even Nut to calm down, even if it was just for a short while. Even Jace who was the one that Nut loved most of all couldn't get her that calm that fast. Would it be the same if he put his hand on...a person?

She mentally shook her head – back to the new horses, was better to think of them than boys. It was two new stallions and one filly that came all the way from Canada and then one mare from England making it four new horses in total. The English mare was the one that would take Just Rahyt's place. She didn't look anything like the dam of Little Boat, as they so fondly had nicknamed the firstborn of Sailor, being all black instead of that very red chestnut color. The mare was wellbehaved and was nothing like the Canadian filly at all. She was only two and was already a handful. Their other young fillies in the same age were wellbehaved and kept away from her teeth and hooves. Or Canadian...the filly was born in Australia and then sold as a yearling to Canada. She was a gift from that handsome long dark man, Shannon had learned. He had been here a few times and had been very nice to look at. But apparently not all liked him. She like many had gasped in surprise when Svea had clubbed him down. He had more mass than her but as the saying went, women might not hit harder, only lower. Even the big ones fall easy then. Was the filly a peace offering? Back to the stallions, Shannon wasn't sure why Svea had placed a bid on the painted one, he didn't really have a stellar record and he seemed to be all over the place. He was fun to be around though, a real clown. The other stallion however...he was a goof as well but with a different aura around him. An aura that oozed confidence and told that he knew he was good.

"Hey..." Her thoughts suddenly got interrupted by a voice near her face "...what are you thinking of? You smiled..." Shannon narrowed her eyes as she looked up and saw Ron's face very close to her own. His green eyes glittered and she felt something in her stomach flutter. He was closer than she had thought but that didn't make her uncomfortable, just happy. She smiled. "Oh, just the new horses..."