



*A Love Like Ours*

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Becky Wade, *A Love Like Ours*  
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*For Linda Kruger, my literary agent*

*You're an amazing supporter of my work, my ally in business, and the one I count on to give me wise feedback on each and every novel. Thank you! I'm very fortunate to have you on my team and even more fortunate to have you as my friend.*



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# Prologue

Twelve-year-old Jake Porter never felt a hundred percent right unless Lyndie James was beside him.

She was his sidekick. Or maybe he was hers. She was the one with the flair and the imagination. He was the one with the even temper and the sense.

They were a pair.

Jake stood at the edge of the pond, watching Lyndie try to skip a stone. Without bouncing even once, her rock dropped straight into the afternoon sunshine sparkling on the top of the water. Another dud. Her fifth dud in a row.

“Well, shoot,” Lyndie muttered. Standing halfway up to her knees in the pond, she bent over to look for another rock.

“Hold still. I’ll get one for you.” He didn’t want her cutting her foot on a piece of glass or a sharp stone. Jake put his boots on just about as soon as he got up in the mornings. But Lyndie only wore shoes when her mom made her. He sort of wished her mom made her more often.

He handed her the two smoothest, flattest rocks he could find. Lyndie was ten. For a girl who could do almost anything else, she was getting kind of old not to be able to skip a stone.

Jake’s brother Ty approached them. “Still can’t skip one, Lyndie?” He grabbed a rock and showed her how to use her wrist. “Like this. See?”

Jake frowned at his brother, irritated. Ty was only fifteen months older than Jake, but he acted like he knew everything. It annoyed Jake, sometimes, to be the youngest of the three Porter brothers. He was only older than his sister, Dru, which didn't even count. She was just two years old.

Ty sent his rock flying and it bounced off the water four times, leaving circles. Ty had always loved for people to watch him do stuff, so he picked up another rock and did it all over again. "See that?"

"Lyndie doesn't need your help." Jake had already shown her how to skip a rock lots of times. "She just needs practice."

Ty looked at Lyndie and lifted one eyebrow. "I skipped one twenty times once."

Lyndie's eyes rounded.

Anger shot through Jake. "No, you didn't. The most I've ever seen you do is six."

"That one time, at the Millers' house?"

"No."

Ty shrugged and pushed sweat off his forehead with his wrist. "I'm getting hot."

Now that the spring weather had turned warm, the Porter brothers and Lyndie spent their weekends riding horses, exploring, and seeing what kind of orneriness they could get themselves into when their parents weren't paying attention.

"I'm going to jump in," Ty said.

"You're not supposed to," Jake warned.

"Who said?"

"Dad."

"Nah. I don't remember that."

Ty definitely remembered. Their dad had told them more than once that they weren't supposed to swim in the pond without permission or without an adult around.

Jake looked toward their older brother Bo, who was sitting against the trunk of a nearby tree reading a book about horses. Bo was sixteen. Their mom had made him come along to keep an eye on the rest of them.

Jake cleared his throat. When Bo lifted his head at the sound, Jake pointed in Ty's direction. Ty had already started climbing the hill that curved around the side of the pond.

Bo rose in one smooth motion, his book dropping to the side. "What are you doing?"

"I'm going swimming." Ty pulled off his T-shirt.

Bo started toward him. "No you're not."

Jake gave Lyndie a small smile. Tattling on Ty made having Ty for a brother a lot more fun.

Lyndie smiled at him in answer, her brown eyes dancing. A few pieces of long, white-blond hair blew in front of her face. She reached back, grabbed all of her wavy, windblown hair, and brought it over one shoulder. She wore a shirt with a faded picture of a dog on the front and jeans she'd cut off herself to make shorts. Both of her thin knees had Band-Aids on them.

"Ty!" Bo broke into a run. "Don't you jump in."

Ty yanked free his boots. "Of course I'm gonna jump in, Bo. Rolling in or crawling in would take too long."

Bo didn't have a chance of making it to Ty in time to stop him. Jake reached for Lyndie's hand and led her carefully from the water.

Two seconds later, Ty did a running cannonball off the hill. He hit the surface with a loud *ker-splash*.

Bo groaned and stuck his hands on his hips.

Ty came up smiling and laughing. He whooped and used both hands to send water high into the air.

One edge of Lyndie's lips tipped upward. "Now how am I supposed to learn to skip rocks?"

"You could go ahead and skip them right into his head," Jake suggested.

Lyndie laughed.

The sound made Jake's heart turn big and warm.

Bo and Ty started arguing about whether Ty should get out of the water now or later. Lyndie watched them with her arms crossed and Jake watched Lyndie.

He'd known her always. Their moms were best friends. Lyndie

had a younger sister named Mollie with cerebral palsy, and since Mollie couldn't play with Lyndie, Lyndie spent a lot of time at their house playing with them. Playing with *him* was a better way to put it.

He'd heard Lyndie's mom say that Lyndie trailed along behind the Porter boys. But Jake had never let her trail. He'd always stayed beside her. And he'd never minded.

He had friends at school his own age, but he didn't feel the same way about them that he did about Lyndie. He was a normal kid, but Lyndie? Lyndie was more than that. She could draw amazing pictures. She loved animals even more than he did. She was the bravest girl in Holley, Texas. And she had a really good imagination. Almost every day, she talked him into going on made-up adventures with her.

She was his favorite person.

"Did you hear that, Jake?" She stilled and turned one ear up.

"What?"

She looked hard into the area beneath a group of trees. "It sounds like chirping. Like a . . . a little bird."

Together, they moved toward the sound. Off to one side, a shrub shook, and beneath it, a black cat paused to watch them. It had something in its mouth. Before Jake could take a step in its direction, it dashed off like a streak of black chalk.

Lyndie followed the chirping and located a baby chick covered in fluffy gray and yellow feathers. A swipe of blood marked its chest.

"Oh no," Lyndie whispered, kneeling beside it. "Hi, little one. Okay. Don't be worried. Did the cat get your nest? Hi."

Jake dropped onto his knees. The chick's mother had made a ground nest of mud, grass, and sticks but the chick had spilled out of it onto the dirt. If the rest of the chick's family had been here earlier, they were all gone now.

Lyndie and Jake lived outdoors more than they lived in. They both knew they ought to leave a baby bird alone. This baby looked weak and injured, though, and Jake already knew what Lyndie was going to want to do. For years the two of them had been able to communicate without words, like two halves of a circle.

"He's hurt," she said.



“Yeah.”

“I’m going to pick him up and take him to the house. If I don’t, that cat will come back for him.”

“What are you going to do with him once you get him home?”

“Mollie will help him feel better.”

Jake didn’t see how.

“And then my mom will take him to the wildlife center,” she said.

“You think your mom will take *another* animal to the center?”

This wasn’t even close to Lyndie’s first rescue.

“She will when she sees him.” She scooped the chick into her palm. “Oh, little guy. Don’t worry. I’ve got you.” Then she pulled up the bottom of her T-shirt and used it like a hammock to carry the chick. She ran toward the horses, her legs moving fast.

Lyndie had more ideas than anyone he’d ever met. Some of them were pretty close to crazy, but when she got an idea in her head, she also got real determined about that idea. He’d learned that arguing with her was a waste of time. Keeping his mouth shut and helping her however he could worked better.

“Hey!” Bo called to them before they’d mounted up. Jake and Lyndie waited for him to draw near. “I can’t leave yet, Jake. I have to stay with Ty until I can get him out of the water.”

Jake glanced at the pond. Ty was doing the backstroke.

“I found a baby chick,” Lyndie said. Because Bo was twice her size, she had to tilt her head way back to speak to him. “I need to take him to my sister and my mom.”

“You can’t go by yourself,” Bo answered.

Lyndie’s attention moved to Jake. He saw loyalty and confidence in her face. “Jake will go with me.”

“I’ll go with her,” Jake confirmed. Of course he would.

Bo eyed them.

Next to their dad, Jake respected Bo the most. Everyone said he and Bo were a lot alike, both of them calm and responsible.

“Please, Bo,” Lyndie said.

“Okay, fine. Take her straight back to the house and keep her safe. All right, Jake?”

“All right.”

Jake cupped his palms. Like they’d done a thousand times, Lyndie placed her foot in his hands and he lifted her onto her horse’s back. He swung into his own saddle and they set off at a trot. Lyndie held the hem of her shirt protectively in one hand.

When the trees cleared and pasture opened, Lyndie’s horse moved into a gallop. Jake increased his own horse’s speed, riding close behind her and slightly to the side.

Lyndie’s pale hair spread behind her like ribbons. Her face sharpened with concentration as she leaned forward over the mare’s back. Her bare feet balanced on the stirrups. He’d never seen anything else on earth like Lyndie riding a horse. She guided the animals with willpower more than with her legs and the reins.

His dad called Lyndie a natural and that’s exactly how she looked, like God had made her to ride horses, like she wasn’t afraid even though her horse was racing toward home as fast as it could go.

Jake never could believe it, how such a small girl could make a horse run so fast. It impressed him. It worried him, too.

*Keep her safe, all right, Jake?*

That was his job, to keep her safe. And that’s what he would do. She was his favorite person.

The chick lived.

But shortly afterward, Lyndie’s family moved across the country and took her away from Texas, from the Porters, and from Jake. The Porters went on about their lives. All the Porters that is, except Jake, who missed Lyndie terribly.

Her departure from his life broke their circle of friendship into two pieces and left Jake with only half.

Lyndie would return one day.

And when she did, Jake would be the wounded one in need of rescue.



## Chapter One

It had been twenty years since Lyndie James had seen Jake Porter. Twenty years! The bulk of her life. By all accounts, Jake should not matter so much to her still. Her memories of him should not have remained so clear. But he did. And they had. And now she was about to see him again, face-to-face. After twenty years.

Lyndie steered her Jeep around a curve in the road that offered a beautiful view of Whispering Creek Ranch's Thoroughbred farm.

The towering gates and the security guard at the ranch's front entrance had been wildly impressive. The lodge-style mansion she'd glimpsed, jaw dropping. But the horsewoman within her appreciated this vista most of all.

Low green hills framed a picturesque redbrick structure. Behind it, white fences marked off paddocks and pastures that enclosed horses of varying hues.

It was mid-March, a time of year in Texas that could mean tank top weather just as easily as sweater weather. Today classified as a sweater day, complete with low and moody gray clouds and tossing wind.

The scene made her fingers itch for her paintbrush. If only she could somehow capture the rare pale green of that tree up ahead.

Such a bright, almost yellow-tinted green. The color of spring's first leaves . . .

*Whoops.* She straightened the car's trajectory before running herself off the road.

The guard had given her a map of the horse farm, which she'd clamped against the steering wheel with her thumbs. He'd told her to pass by this first barn, right? She double-checked the route he'd marked. Right. She continued along the paved road.

Jake's older brother Bo managed Whispering Creek Horses. Bo had told her that she'd find Jake at the barn that stabled the racehorses in training. Bo was the one who'd encouraged her to pursue the job opening on Jake's staff and the one who'd asked the guard to let her in.

Jake didn't know she was coming.

Which didn't seem, suddenly, like the best plan in the world. *Hi, Jake. I haven't seen you in twenty years. Do you remember me? No? Can I have a job exercising your Thoroughbreds, please? I'd really, really like a job.*

She'd purposely arrived here at the ranch late in the morning, knowing that by this hour Jake would have finished working out his Thoroughbreds. And she'd purposely come unannounced, because Bo had assured her that was her best strategy. Though he hadn't said why, she feared she knew. If she or Bo had given Jake an opportunity to prevent her visit, he'd have taken it.

The thought made her emotions twist, stupidly.

*Jake.*

Lyndie still recalled her last morning in Holley, Texas. She and Jake had been two kids shell-shocked with grief. Their sadness had been too deep for tears, even. In the final moments before she'd gotten into her parents' car, they'd simply stood facing each other, saying what could not be said.

Afterward, she'd cried into her pillow at bedtime for weeks. She'd pleaded to God through prayers. She'd written letters to Jake in her kid handwriting on lined notebook paper. For months, he'd written back. Then her letters and his replies had grown

more scarce. She was positively certain, though, that she'd been the one to write last.

She'd followed every detail of his career as a Thoroughbred racehorse trainer. One might even say that she'd followed it a mite obsessively. Lyndie knew all there was to know about his professional success and little about his personal life, except what she could glean from the occasional updates passed from Jake's mom to her mom and the Porter family Christmas card photo.

Every year since her parents had moved the family to Southern California, the Porters' annual photo would arrive and her gaze would go straight to Jake. The dark-haired, hazel-eyed twelve-year-old boy had become a star football player as a teenager, then a Marine, then an aloof adult with a scar across one side of his face. Through her mom, she knew that Jake had received the scar in Iraq, when the Humvee he'd been traveling in had been struck by an IED.

Every December she'd stared at that family photo as if she had the power to divine the state of Jake's soul based on a 4x8 glossy from Walmart. She didn't.

Since she'd returned to Texas, Jake's family had been warning her that the state of Jake's soul ranged, due to the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder he struggled against, somewhere between merely dark to downright terrifying.

Her Jeep crested a rise and the training barn popped into view. It looked as though she was about to have the opportunity to judge the state of Jake's soul for herself, a fact that made her stomach tighten with nerves.

The training barn looked like a twin of the first barn. Red-brick, white trim, a gabled metal roof. Blue pansies brightened the base of the building, and a few horses peered at her through the top halves of open Dutch doors. First class, all the way, which pleased her. Jake, her old friend, worked in a very charming setting.

She slid her Jeep into a parking place. The rearview mirror informed her that the makeup she'd put on earlier still looked okay.

The hair was a different story. Uncontainable, as usual. She made her way toward the barn.

Ordinarily, she was not the anxious type. Then again, she didn't usually come face-to-face with someone who mattered after two decades of separation. She had a sentimental streak as wide as her independent streak, and the former was entirely to blame for the fluttery feeling in her chest.

*Trust God with it, Lyndie. He's got this.*

She let herself inside the building's shed row. A middle-aged male groom stepped from a stall holding a rake. "Good afternoon." He smiled at her kindly.

"Good afternoon. I'm looking for Jake Porter."

"Sure." He propped his rake against the wall and wiped his palms on his jeans while scanning the row. "He was here just a second ago. He must have gone outside to one of the paddocks or the pasture. I'd try that direction, there." He motioned toward the doors at the far end of the row. "Would you like for me to walk you out?"

"No, thank you. I'll find him." This meeting would be difficult enough without witnesses.

Both Lyndie and her mother had been wanting to move back to Texas for years. But her father's steady and reliable job had kept her parents—and thus her younger sister, Mollie, and herself—in California.

Mollie required a great deal of care. From earliest memory, Lyndie had understood that Mollie needed her and that her parents needed her help with Mollie. Lyndie had never, and would never—for as long as Mollie lived—roam far from her sister.

When Lyndie's dad's company had transferred him to Texas a month ago, the entire James family had made the long-awaited cross-country move back to Lone Star soil. Lyndie had assumed she'd see Jake shortly after their arrival and had been bracing mentally and emotionally for the meeting ever since.

Her parents and Mollie had settled into a house, and Lyndie had moved into an apartment. The other Porters had swung by. No

Jake. When Nancy had invited the James family over for Sunday lunch three weeks ago, Jake's three siblings had been there. No Jake. When the Jameses had shared Sunday lunch with the Porters again two days ago, still no Jake. It had become clear to Lyndie that Jake was either a hermit, did not eat food, or was making an effort to avoid her.

His rejection stung, and she would've been content to let another few weeks go by before breaking the ice between them. But when Bo had informed her this past Sunday that a job on Jake's staff had come open, her timetable for ice-breaking had changed.

She no longer lived in Altadena, California. There, she could drive to Santa Anita in twenty minutes and Hollywood Park in forty. Horse trainers were as common as in-line skaters. In Holley, Texas, Whispering Creek Horses was the only game in town. And Jake the only trainer. If she wanted a position as an exercise rider, which she definitely *did*, then she knew she needed to nab the job before Jake gave it to someone else.

She pushed open the door at the far end of the barn.

She'd come to Whispering Creek Ranch to see the very best friend of her childhood, at long last.

And she'd come for the job.



Jake turned up the collar of his brown corduroy hunting jacket, then rested his forearms on the top rail of the wooden fence that enclosed the thirty-acre pasture. His careful attention catalogued numerous things about the colt within, only a handful of them visual. Call it horse sense. Or instinct. Jake understood things about these animals that most people didn't.

A few days ago he'd decided to back off training this particular colt, Desert Willow, and give him more time to recover fully from his arthroscopic knee surgery. Willow liked to complain about his sore knee, which meant Jake needed to freshen him longer before Willow would be ready to resume training. Five more days maybe—

Jake heard the crunch of a twig breaking and flinched at the unexpected noise, then cursed himself for flinching. He could already tell that the sound had been made by nothing but footsteps.

Turning, he squinted beneath the brim of his black Stetson and tried to make out who was coming toward him. A small woman with long, wavy blond hair. She wasn't on the barn staff; that he knew. He angled toward her more fully.

And then, very slowly, recognition began to slide over him. The hair on his arms rose.

It couldn't be her. Not after all this time. And yet the rational part of his brain understood that it could be. He knew she'd moved back to Holley. His mom had been nagging him to see her ever since, but he'd wanted no part of that, no part of her.

Yet here she was.

He went to stone, inside and out. Only his heart kept moving, knocking inside his chest, hard and sure. He didn't want her to look at him.

He was ugly. And she was beautiful.

He'd already lived the life and died the death of the boy she'd known. She wouldn't recognize him now, same as he no longer recognized himself.

She wore jeans tucked into black riding boots. A white shirt under a pale green sweater that hung open down to her hips. Big hoop earrings. Her scarf, which had a lot of green, pink, white, and gray on it, didn't have ends. It just rested in a loop around her neck.

She no longer looked like a Texan. She looked like a Californian to him now.

She came to a stop a few feet away and stuck her hands into the back pockets of her jeans.

He couldn't speak, and she had the grace not to say anything trite. She only took him in, her head tilted slightly, a half smile on her face, softness in her gaze.

He hadn't felt any emotion forcefully since his accident. Yet the sight of her caused bitterness to blaze through him, true and clean. *You left me behind*, he wanted to accuse. *You. Left. Me.*



It surprised him, the anger turning in his gut like a blade. She'd been a kid back then. Her father had gotten a better job in California, and so they'd moved. It hadn't been Lyndie's fault. But that's not what he was feeling, standing here all these years later. He was feeling a betrayal so strong it nearly took his breath.

"Jake," she said at last, her smile growing.

He dipped his chin. "Lyndie."

"Had you heard that my family moved back?"

"I had." Another pause opened. He felt no obligation to fill it. He'd grown used to uncomfortable silence.

Her features were even and delicate, unmistakably *her*, yet different, too. She couldn't be taller than five foot four. He'd looked down at her when she was ten, but he towered over her now.

Her skin held a light West Coast tan. She still had freckles across her nose, so faint Jake almost couldn't make them out. Her brown eyes were as perceptive as they'd once been, and her hair hadn't changed except in color. It had gone from shades of pale blond to shades of dark blond.

She looked confident and fresh and happy, and he wished like the devil she hadn't come.

"It's great to see you again," she said. "We were pretty good friends once."

"That was a long time ago."

"It was."

However long it had been, it felt like three times that to Jake.

"I heard about what happened to you in Iraq. I'm sorry."

He braced. She'd always been direct. Nonetheless, he hadn't thought she'd mention Iraq. Everyone who knew him knew that he refused to talk about the war, much less think about it. But she didn't know him, did she? She hadn't been around to know anything about him for decades.

"I've been following your career as a trainer," she said. "Congratulations on everything you've accomplished."

"Thank you."

"I can imagine all the work you must have put in."

“Can you?” He didn’t see how she could imagine anything about him.

She lifted her eyebrows at his rough tone, not with hurt, only with curiosity. “I have a decent idea of what it’s taken to achieve all that you have.” Strands of hair lifted away from her temple, carried by wind. She caught them and dashed them behind one ear. “I’ve been exercising horses since I was sixteen for Southern California trainers.”

“California trainers wouldn’t know a Thoroughbred from a donkey.”

She paused for a half second, then laughed. “Zenyatta was a California horse.”

“Born in Kentucky.”

“Trained by a Californian.”

“Who was born in Kansas.”

“California Chrome was born in California,” she pointed out.

“Trained by someone born in New York.”

Her lips set in an amused line. “I suppose you think only Texan Thoroughbreds and trainers have merit.”

“Everything’s better in Texas.”

“I thought the saying was ‘Everything’s *bigger* in Texas.’”

“That too.”

She crossed her arms loosely. “Be careful, or I might think you have a sense of humor.”

“I wouldn’t want that.”

“No,” she answered cheerfully. “I can see that you wouldn’t.”

He remembered how much he’d enjoyed making her laugh when they were kids. Now, it physically hurt him to see her smile. It reminded him of all he’d lost. “If you’ll excuse me, I need to get back to work.”

She considered him for a moment. “Sure. I don’t want to keep you. I came out today because Bo told me that you have an opening for an exercise rider.”

He frowned, vicious words filling his mind.

“If you’re willing to give me an opportunity, I’d really like a chance at the position.”

His heart set to striking again, like a hammer against a rock. “I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

She didn’t step back or break their eye contact. “Why not?”

Since they’d started talking, she’d stirred more hostility in him than he’d experienced in years. He couldn’t do this daily. He couldn’t be around her for hours at a time, the way he was with his riders.

She reached back with one hand, grabbed and twisted her hair and brought it over her shoulder. The move jarred him because she’d pulled her hair forward just that way when she was young. “Jake?”

“We knew each other when we were kids and our moms are friends,” he stated.

“And?”

“It’s not enough. I don’t hire riders for either of those reasons.”

She tipped her chin up. “I don’t expect you to hire me for those reasons. I’d like for you to hire me because I’m qualified. I’ve built a solid résumé. I’ll email it to you.”

He didn’t give a rip about her résumé.

“Bo told me that there’s a training track here on the property.”

“There is.”

“May I come out one morning this week so that you can see how I ride?”

He didn’t want her anywhere near his track. “There’s no point.” Which was true. “I already have someone else in mind for the position.” Which was a lie.

“Please?”

What was the matter with him? What was it about her that made him want to help her, the same way he’d wanted to help her at the age of twelve? “I’ll think about it. Like I said, I have someone else in mind.”

“All right.” She studied him, then walked backward a few steps. “I’ll see you later.”

He held himself still as she turned.

“Oh.” After just a few paces, she swung back toward him. Her

hair hadn't stayed over her shoulder. It never had when she was a kid, either. "Your colt?" She motioned to Desert Willow. "He had knee surgery, yes?"

Jake inclined his head.

"What are you thinking? Maybe five more days to recover?"

He furrowed his brow. How had she been able to diagnose a horse she'd hardly glanced at? "Something like that."

Her lips curved. "Bye, Jake."



*Well*, Lyndie thought as she walked back to her car, *that did not go well*. And through no fault of her own. Tall, Dark, and Brooding was not a very friendly person. Not at all.

As soon as she'd come face-to-face with Jake, the worry she'd been feeling had drained away. She'd been too fascinated by him, too busy trying to comprehend that the friend of her childhood had become the tall stranger with the cutting gaze.

Jake was huge. Well over six feet. Of the three Porter brothers, he had the leanest build. He looked like a man who pushed himself hard at the gym. And perhaps indulged himself too little. He was made of muscle, without an inch of softness anywhere. Least of all, his face.

Those eyes! Lyndie blew out her breath. His gorgeous hazel eyes were downright haunted. Tortured, even. Beneath his black Stetson, their green-brown color had all but glowed. He had a straight nose, lips both masculine and beautiful, and a hard, serious jawline that led to a square chin. All of which added up to a face that was almost hard-to-believe handsome, like something she might give to a fairy-tale prince in one of her picture books. A perfect face, except for the scar. Flat and pale, his scar carved the skin from the side of his nose across his cheek.

Despite it all—the scar and his eyes and his size and his curt demeanor—he hadn't succeeded at intimidating her. Well, not much, anyway. She'd spent her whole life living with the fear that her sister might die. She wasn't easily intimidated.

Her strides lengthened as she passed by the paddocks on her way to the parking lot. One crystallizing emotion had risen within her during her conversation with Jake: *determination*.

Lyndie had never been able to stand in the presence of suffering without experiencing an almost unbearable inner compulsion to fix it. In some cases, like Mollie's case, she could do nothing. But she sensed that she could do something for Jake.

She just didn't know what it was yet. *God? He's a tall order. You know that, right?*

Lyndie tugged her phone from her back pocket and dialed. "Bo?"  
"Hi, Lyndie. Did you find Jake?"

"I did, and he told me that he has someone else in mind for the position."

"Figures. He's stubborn."

"Very stubborn. I asked him if I could at least come out to the track and ride. He said he didn't see the point."

"Hmm." A brief pause. "He's not the only one who can invite people out to the track. When would you like to come?"

"Thursday morning? That'll give him two days to simmer down."

Bo chuckled. "Little chance of him simmering down, but Thursday's good. I'll meet you there at seven o'clock."

"I don't want you to go to any trouble."

"Are you kidding? I wouldn't miss this for the world."

"Thanks, Bo."

She wanted a job exercising Jake's horses, and she was going to go after exactly that. For her sake, and for the sake of whatever God might call her to do for Jake. She owed help to the boy she'd known. She hadn't forgotten just how kind that boy had been to her. Or just how much she'd loved him.