



Texas Two Step

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A blast of cold from the airport's air conditioning had smacked Olivia's sweat-dampened neck when she'd blown into the baggage claim area. Chills snaked down her spine and she shivered, unsure if the shiver was due to the shot of cold air or the anticipation of seeing Mitch again.

Arching up on her tiptoes, she scanned the crowd. Years had passed since she'd seen him, but she remembered every inch of his six-foot-four-inch body.

Sometimes at night, if she closed her eyes and concentrated, she could still feel his naked body spooned around hers. Hot chest flesh and chiseled abdominal muscles pressing against her back. Strong thighs cupping her legs. A muscular arm wrapped tightly around her waist, making her feel secure.

She forced her shoulders down and locked her jaw. She didn't—couldn't—allow her thoughts to wander into those memories. They were too painful, like having a tooth filled without Novocain.

Her gaze met his blue-eyed stare and her gut tightened in response. Her lungs seized, making breathing almost impossible. She gritted her teeth, angry at herself for being unable to calm her racing heart.

Sometimes life wasn't fair. This was one of those times.

Mitch sported a natural tan, not the sprayed-on kind many Dallas wanna-be cowboys boasted. Sexy stubble dotted his cheeks, one that made her ache to run the palm of her hand along his chin. His long dark hair, tied at the nape of his neck, begged to be freed. Her fingers twitched, ready to slide through his silky strands as they'd done many times before. Of course, she'd have to remove his ever-present Stetson before she ruffled his hair. Olivia doubted there was a woman in the world who wouldn't enjoy taking the hat off this cowboy's head. Hell, even the wrinkles in his shirt and jeans looked sexy. In short, Mitch looked as though he had been ripped off the cover of a western romance.

She, on the other hand, looked like someone who'd been yanked from a *Sweating with the Oldies* video. Self-consciously, she touched her hair, tucking a stray piece behind her ear. Not only wasn't life fair, sometimes it outright sucked.

The smile on his face slipped as their gazes met. For a moment they just stared at each other, then his lips pulled into a toe-curling grin and she sighed. He lifted his chin in acknowledgement and strolled toward her, a carry-on in one hand and a garment bag in the other. Olivia's stomach flipped and her heart dove into a roller-coaster freefall.

Thick thigh muscles bulged through his jeans as he walked. A white oxford shirt stretched taut across broad shoulders. Brown cowboy boots clacked on the tile with each step.

A number of female heads turned as Mitch walked past. She wasn't the only one who noticed this Texas cowboy.

"Livie." Mitch dropped both pieces of luggage and grasped her hands. His weren't the soft, manicured hands of a counterfeit cowboy. His were the callused, weathered hands of a working rancher.

The roughness of his skin against her palm produced erotic images of what those thick, rough fingers felt like on other places of her body. The region between her thighs tightened to a throb.

He pulled her close and kissed her cheek. Stubby bristle on his jaw scraped her skin. Pressing her nose against his face during the kiss, she savored the unique mixture of woody cologne and Mitch's raw masculine scent, a scent she'd long ago stored in her memory. Behind her navel, her gut tugged. The kiss was chaste, but that meant nothing to her heart, which ramped up to a dangerous gallop, or to her insides quivering in anticipation.

"You look...amazing." He stepped back, his gaze lazily moving down, then back up her body.

Still the flirt. He hadn't changed a bit, except to become more handsome, if that were even possible.

"You're a liar, Mitch Landry, but thank you anyway." Her fingers twitched to tighten the grasp. Instead, she dropped his hands. His touch was more than she could bear and yet still everything she wanted. She nodded at the pieces of luggage riding around on the conveyer belt. "What are we looking for?" she asked in an attempt to get control of both the situation and herself.

"Stay here. I'll grab it." In a moment, he returned with a rolling suitcase.

"I had to park a mile off." She snagged his carry-on and whipped toward the exit. "Wait here. I'll get the car and pick you up."

"Don't be ridiculous. How far out are you?"

With a roll of her eyes and a shake of her head, she said, "Last row, last spot."

He chuckled. "I don't miss the big city and all its headaches."

Did his statement mean he didn't miss her either? Was she one of the headaches he associated with Dallas? Was the memory of their love a *something* he wanted to forget?

Apparently—or at least it seemed to her—Mitch had moved on with his life and left their love in the past. She hated to admit a small part of her wanted him to still want her, to regret the way they'd left things. Part of her wanted him to fall at her feet, begging for forgiveness.

That wasn't going to happen. She slammed the door to her heart. Time for her to relegate Mitch to her past and move on, much as it seemed he had.

“This way then,” Olivia said with a toss of her head toward the exit.

Outside, the Texas heat sucked the cold airport air from her lungs. The strong odor of hot asphalt scented the air. People tugging rolling bags and crying children hurried past them, eager to get out of the broiling sun.

She forced herself to project a relaxed composure, one she didn’t feel in his presence. “How have you been, Mitch?”

Good. Her voice sounded calm, cool and collected, nothing like the tempest swirling inside.

He dipped his head and arched one eyebrow. “So, we’re going to pretend that nothing happened six years ago? Just two old friends meeting up after a long absence?”

She gave a shrug she prayed he’d interpret as nonchalance, when in reality her reaction to seeing him again was anything but. They stood on the curb and waited as a line of cars passed, then stepped down into a crosswalk and made their way to the parking area. Her walk was brisk, but with his long legs, Mitch had no trouble keeping up.

“Livie. Stop for a minute.”

She took a couple of more steps before she paused and turned toward him. “What?”

“I wanted to say I’m sorry.” He draped the carrying bag over the arm pulling the luggage and lightly brushed his fingertips along her cheek. “Sorry for all the stupid things I said six years ago. Sorry for being such a horse’s ass. You were special and I did care about you. And I’m really sorry I didn’t tell you that a long time ago.”

He gave her a smile that shot a pang into her stomach. “Tell me you’re not still angry at the actions of the immature jerk I was back then.”

As she flinched away from his caress, she fought unwelcomed tears blurring her vision. She’d believed she’d cried all she could over Mitch years ago. But her skin burned where he touched as if she’d been hit with a hot branding iron. “Of course not,” she lied. “That’s all in the past. Never give it a thought.”

