

Satisfying Her Tastes - Excerpt

By

Keri Ford

Chapter One

“You’re pregnant, aren’t you?”

Rebecca Gabel tapped the old faded table tops and rolled her eyes at her brother. The tables looked to be the same ones that were in this diner the last time she ate here some five years ago. The very same table top she ate on as a toddler. The same tables which had been turned over and flipped upside down on more than one occasion because of a fight or two.

Her brother Mike rubbed the back of his neck. “You can say it. You’re pregnant.”

She shook her head. “Don’t be an idiot, Mike. I’m not pregnant.”

“You have an STD.”

“No.”

“Cancer?”

She raised a brow. “You sure are concerned with my body, but no. No. No. And finally, no. I didn’t come home because of any of those things.” She shrugged and stirred the sugar in her coffee. She couldn’t tell her brother why she’d come back. That would just create more questions she wouldn’t answer. “I’m just homesick and miss you.”

“Why are you here?”

She lifted a brow, fairly certain he’d already asked that question and she knew without a doubt he’d heard the answer. “Because this is where I want to be right now. Leave it alone, okay? I miss my big brother’s nagging questions.” That much was mostly true. Nagging questions and all, her brother always cared about her, no matter what happened, he was always there. She glanced up from her coffee. “Maybe I came home because I wanted to know how my brother could get married without inviting me.”

His cheeks colored and he cleared his throat. “It was a quick thing.”

“It’s not that long of a drive from Florida. Mom is still pissed at you, by the way. Tells all her friends how terrible it was you got married in a courthouse and robbed her of a real wedding.”

“She still has you to hang that hat on.”

Rebecca forced a snort in response. And just how close mom had come to getting that chance too. Rebecca shook her head, thankful she’d gotten her head on straight before it was really too late.

“Mike Gabel?”

Mike turned and Rebecca lifted her gaze to the interruption.

Damn.

No. She blinked and dragged her chin off her knees. Not just damn, but *day-um*. Tall. Tanned. Tattooed. Shaved head down to a dark shadow over his head. Black grease smeared over his white tank that just barely—oh, what the hell—that wasn’t even coming close to hiding rippling, pouring, drool worthy muscles of his chest and abs and *holy hell*, look at those thighs in those jeans.

Rebecca would have come back to little small town Apple Trail, Arkansas one hell of a long time ago if she knew this prime piece of beef had been living here. And maybe if she tried hard enough, she could squeeze *hell* in one more time.

Like how far into hell she was going by the time she finished dreaming about all the places she wanted to put her tongue on his hot body. She sucked in a freeing deep breath, one she couldn’t get in the city. In this small town, she could do more than just think her thoughts. As a matter of fact, it was expected for her to voice them. A shiver zipped through the good girl manners she’d been minding for the past few years and had her leaning forward and showing a bit of cleavage.

Damn, it was good to be home where she didn’t have to hide.

Dark and Dreamy handed Mike some legal sized documents. “I’m turned around and a little lost. The waitress said you could help me out?”

But Rebecca really wasn’t wasting much time on those papers 'cause Dark and Dreamy met her gaze, her cleavage, then his eyes eased back up toward her lips and finally settled on her eyes once again.

She winked at him and got a thrill at the color tainting his cheeks. Oh yes, while she never imagined it would happen, it was good to be home. “Hi. Rebecca Gabel. Haven’t had the pleasure of meeting you.”

He opened his mouth, but Mike lowered the papers from his gaze. “Rebecca.”

“What?” She asked, with enough innocence laced in her tone a deaf man would hear the falseness. It took just the right pitch of her voice, perfect flutter of lashes and the right shape to her lips. She’d had years perfecting her rumored bad girl image and the act slid back over her skin like a favorite worn out pair of jeans.

This was the woman Rebecca had come home to find. The wild woman who was known for sowing her oats, taking what she wanted. Only this time, Rebecca would live up to those rumors. She’d follow her flirty words through to the end. In a few weeks, all her regret for always saying and never doing would be gone and she’d return to Florida happy. She just needed to get the chances she’d missed out of her system.

By the look in Dark and Dreamy’s eyes as he glanced down her again, he was just the ticket to a little naughty, trashy, whorish—whatever you wanted to call it—fun.

Mike stood with the papers, a frown creasing his brow as he continued to read.

Rebecca followed him out of her chair and walked close. He gave her that big brother look usually meaning he wanted some privacy. But, well, she wasn’t going anywhere and instead leaned over his shoulder.

It was some sort of official looking court document. She read a few lines about property and such and glanced up to the man at seeing a name. “Grant Iverson?”

Dark and Dreamy nodded. “Yes, ma’am.”

Mike flipped through several sheets, turning them far faster than Rebecca could read from her angle, forcing her to fish the old fashioned way. She flashed a smile and flirted with her eyes. “New around here?”

“Is it that obvious?”

She laughed. “Pretty obvious.”

“I’m from Texas. I’m trying to find some property I inherited and have a look around. Graham Manor? Do you know it?”

Rebecca put her eyes back in her head. “Graham Manor? On Apple Lane?”

He nodded. “That’s the one.”

She leaned over her brother's arm, because surely this man was confused. *Nobody* owned Graham Manor. Or at least, nobody cared about it. Not in the last eighty years or so. But as she looked at the document...there was the address in clear black font.

"Is there a problem, Sherriff?" Grant Iverson did that man stand of legs shoulder width apart and arms crossed over chest thing. And Grant was big and impressive enough, he really shouldn't do that since it forced his arms to bulge out wider and made her thighs ache.

Mike was still flipping pages and stroking his fingers over a raised seal. Rebecca looked up and met his gaze. "Not a problem really, but nobody's been to Graham Manor in some eighty years. It's completely abandoned. The land, the home, everything. Iron gates have a rusted old lock still there from when Mrs. Graham packed up and left decades ago."

Grant shrugged. "Like I said, I just inherited it and want to have a look at it. I got lost coming into town and I can't find the street."

"The drive is overgrown, there's no mailbox and it's easy to miss." She pulled keys from her back pocket. "I'll take you there."

"Rebecca." Mike glanced at her, his eyes narrowed.

She waved her brother off. She rode into town early this morning and called him for a meet-up. After going through a rundown of disease, disorders, jail time and other various things, she needed some space before punching him in the nose and reminding him he was her *brother*, not her keeper.

But even so, she wrapped him in a tight hug because he did care enough to at least ask, in his own way, if she was okay. "It's fine. I don't have anything to do for the rest of the day." Or week. God, she hoped she got this choking smothering feeling out of her system before she had to be back home next week. "You probably have work to do anyway. Let's go, Grant. I can show you right now."

Mike returned the papers. "Just so you know, I'll be verifying all this, considering the circumstances with the place."

Grant didn't move. "Is there a problem with my ancestors here?"

"Ancestors?" Rebecca echoed, this time her jaw all but smacked her toes.

Grant looked between them both.

“No problem.” She tied a bandana around her head. “Sorry, it’s just, the Grahams founded Apple Trail years ago. Since they left, no one has heard of them and it’s just surprising. When people find out you’re a descendant, you’re going to be a legend around here.”

Grant’s face fell. “In that case, I’d rather keep a low profile.”

She laughed. “Oh, Babycakes, you will not be able to keep a low profile in this town.”

Mike’s eyes cut to her and then back on Grant. “I’d suggest you say you’re surveying the property and leave it at that. Otherwise, my sister’s right. The town is going to be insane with curiosity if they find out.”

Rebecca chuckled. “But then again, there’ll be a nonstop flow of casseroles, cakes, and other food stuff brought to you as welcoming gifts and excuses to be in your business.”

Grant’s eagle eyes hardened a touch more. “Surveyor it is. Thank you, Sherriff. I trust you and your sister will not reveal my business then?”

She lifted a brow. “And be forced to share you with everyone else? Never.”

She grinned and walked off with the sound of Mike cursing and making apologies.

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