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There was a price to pay for her one-night stand. Five months ago Skylar Fortune had slept with the man of her dreams. Now worldly horseman Zack Manning had returned, and she was forced to tell him she was expecting his baby. Outraged at being kept in the dark, the domineering New Zealander demanded marriage. About the author Skylar pressed Send and waited for the personalized world clock to do its thing. A," she read off the screen. Christchurch, New Zealand, Saturday, 4: Scraping her fingernails along damp palms, she drew in a ragged breath and hopefully a bucket of courage. Too long had passed, about three months too long, but she could hide it no longer. Should she make a drink or go to the bathroom first? If you want to make an easy job seem mighty hard, just keep putting off doing it. A stay of execution? But the butterflies stayed with her as she rose, tugging her long shirt down over her sweats. It was easy to avoid people, living in the cottage by the stables, away from the prying eyes of the main house on the estate. After all, who ever noticed Skylar? Zack Manning opened his mouth then closed it again with an audible snap, or that might have been the sound of her knees buckling. He stared at her, the beginnings of a smile on his handsome face fading fast. Adrenaline flooded her system and she could not look away. She felt her lips move in a soundless prayer, felt the tension in her fingers, balled into fists by her sides. After an age, he lowered his gaze, straight to her midriff. Released momentarily, she sagged against the doorjamb, but her relief was short-lived. Incredulous gray eyes shot back to her face, pinning her again, and she watched his tanned face leach slowly of color. The crown of her downcast head prickled under his glare. Sighing, she moved to the side so he could enter. Skylar closed the door as he brushed past but did not turn immediately. Instead she leaned her forehead on the door, gathering her jumbled thoughts, but the truth of it was, she had no idea what to say. Zack prowled the lounge of her cozy little cottage and he looked furious. Tightly controlled, but furious. His tall rangy form bristled with tension, his mouth was set in a harsh line. Zack suddenly came to a halt and leaned forward with his large hands spread on the battered leather of her old sofa. Then she bit her lip to stop a rogue smile. Who would want her? Her face felt hot enough to fry an egg on. How excruciating, to be discussing this with him. Skylar had panicked, vaulting from her bed, pushing at him while throwing a robe on. Maya had a habit of just walking up the stairs and into her bedroom. Her shoulders jerked as she recalled the desperate whispers, how she had pushed him into her bathroom and closed the door. There was just enough time to kick his clothes under the bed and straighten the covers before a tearful Maya walked into the room. Aside from the fantastic sex, it was a pretty lousy end to her first time. Images of herding him into her bathroom played through her mind like a film clip. His hand reaching for the light switch. Her hand slapping it away. It was her first time, how was she supposed to know? And even if she did, there was no way she could have broached such an intimate subject. His mouth was more relaxed. A wash of anger still mottled his cheeks but his brows creased more in confusion now. Maybe he believed her. Virgin or not, surely you understood the implications of unprotected sex. Zack leaned on the couch, his eyes boring into her. The worst was over. She cast him some furtive looks and his well-remembered features began to make an impact on her already heightened senses. Skin like his loved the sun and her own pale arms, bare from the elbow, looked insipid compared to his healthy tan. His sandy hair was still short at the back but longer than she remembered at the sides and front. The deep dimples that traced a line from his well-defined cheekbones to his strong chin were not in evidence tonight. Skylar had fallen head over heels for those dimples almost at first glance. After the birth, or She sighed, still not looking at him. Skylar rose, guilt clawing at her throat. Zack bared his teeth mirthlessly. Pain making his voice sound raw. Why had she offered? The only alcohol Skylar had ever kept in the house was the odd bottle of wine if Maya was coming by. She peered at a dusty bottle of some apricot liqueur that must have been there for three or four years, then closed the cupboard and poured him a glass of water. She tottered a few steps, turning f Read more.

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