



Night Heat (Forged of Steele Book 2)

By Brenda Jackson

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He was drop-dead gorgeous, wickedly charming and fabulously wealthy. So why wouldn't Jocelyn Mason accept his offer to help run her struggling company? It was his reputation. Sebastian was a corporate shark, and Jocelyn knew the big fish didn't swim with the little fish, they swallowed them whole.

It had been Sebastian's intention to take over Mason Builders, whether Jocelyn liked it or not. But when he started to work with her, sparks began to fly and they shared a sizzling, unforgettable night of passion. And soon it wasn't clear who was bossing whom....

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Editorial Review

Review

"A perfect balance of tension and chemistry." -- *Romantic Times BOOKclub*

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"And there's absolutely nothing that can be done to overturn Dad's request, Jason?"

Jason Kilgore wiped the sweat from his brow. Over the years his office had survived many things. There'd been that fist fight between a couple who'd been married less than five minutes, and that throwing match between two land owners who couldn't agree on the location of the boundary lines that separated their properties.

But nothing, Jason quickly concluded, would remotely compare if Jocelyn Mason took a mind to show how mad she was. Oh, she was pretty upset; there was no doubt about it. She had already worn a path in his carpet and the toe of her booted foot seemed to give the bottom of his wingback chair an unconscious kick each time she passed it.

"There isn't anything you can do other than to offer to buy out your sister and Mr. Steele," he finally said. "Have you spoken to Leah about it?"

"No."

Jason knew that in itself said it all. Jocelyn and Leah had always been as different as night and day. Jocelyn, at twenty-seven, was the oldest by four years and had always been considered a caregiver, someone who was quick to place everyone else's needs before her own. She also believed in taking time out and having fun, which was why her name always came up to spearhead different committees around town.

Responsible Jocelyn eventually became the son Jim Mason never had, although he had tried to balance that fact by sending her each summer to visit an aunt in Florida whose job was to train her how to comport herself like a lady. Jason had seen her dressed to the nines in satin and sequins at several social functions in town, and then on occasion, he would run into her in Home Depot wearing jeans and a flannel shirt with a construction work belt around her waist. Jocelyn had managed to play both roles--lady and builder--while working alongside her father in the family business, Mason Construction Company.

Then there was Leah.

Jason readily remembered Leah as being one rebellious teenager. After her mother had died when she'd turned thirteen, Leah had become a handful and had given Jim plenty of sleepless nights. She had hated living in Newton Grove and as soon as she turned eighteen, she couldn't wait to leave home and abandon what she perceived as a dominating father, an overprotective and bossy older sister, and a boyfriend who

evidently had been too country to suit her taste. Her return visits over the years had been short and as infrequent as possible. But she had come for the funeral and it was a surprise to everyone that she hadn't left town yet.

"Do you know of Leah's plans? Do you think she's going to stay?"

Jocelyn shrugged her shoulders. "Who knows? She's welcome to stay as long as she wants. This is her home, too, although she's never liked it here. You know that. But Leah is the least of my worries now since I believe I can buy her out. What I want to know is why Dad thought this Sebastian Steele deserved a fourth of the company."

It was Jason's turn to shrug. "I told you what your father said to me, Jocelyn. One summer this guy Steele worked for him. They became close, and leaving him a part of the company was a way to let Steele know how much your father thought of him."

Jocelyn turned with fire in her eyes, placed her hands palm down on Jason's desk and stared at him. "Why this Steele guy and not Reese? If anyone deserved a part of the company it's Reese," she said, speaking up for her father's foreman.

Jason blew out a breath. Jocelyn had finally gone into a rant, and was definitely in fighting mode now. "He did leave Reese Singleton a substantial amount in his will," Jason reminded her.

"Yes, but it wasn't part of the company."

"Jim had his reasons. He thought a lot of Reese and hoped the money he left him would set him up in his own business."

Jocelyn knew her father's reasoning. Although twenty-six-year-old Reese had worked as the foreman for Mason Construction for years, everyone in town knew of Reese's gift with his hands. It was legendary what he could do with a block of wood, and her father always thought he was wasting his talent building houses instead of making furniture.

"Well, all your questions about Steele will be answered shortly," Jason said, breaking into Jocelyn's thoughts. "He's due to show up any minute."

Jocelyn sneered. "And I can't wait for the illustrious Sebastian Steele to arrive."

Jason loosened his tie a little. He didn't envy the man one bit.

"Mr. Kilgore is expecting you, Mr. Steele. Just go right on in," Jason Kilgore's secretary said in a friendly voice.

Bas returned the older woman's smile. "Thanks." He opened the door and glanced first at the older man sitting behind the desk who stood when he entered. Then out of the corner of his eye he saw that someone else was in the room and his gaze automatically shifted.

It was a woman and she didn't look too happy. She was definitely a beauty, with a mass of shoulder-length dark-brown curls that framed an oval honey-brown face with chocolate-brown eyes. Then there was the tantalizing fragrance of her perfume that was drifting across the room to him.

"Mr. Steele, I'm glad you made it. Welcome to Newton Grove," Jason Kilgore was saying.

Bas switched his attention from the woman and back to the man. "Thank you."

"So you're Sebastian Steele?"

Bas turned and met the woman's frown. "Yes, I'm Sebastian Steele," he answered smoothly. "And who are you?" he asked, although he had an idea. He could see Jim's likeness in her features, especially in the eyes. They were dark, sharp and assessing.

She crossed the room to stand directly in front of him, in full view, and he thought that she looked even better up close. She tipped her head, angled it back as if to get a real good look at his six-foot-three-inch form. And when she finally got around to answering his question, her voice was as cool as a day on top of the Smoky Mountains, and as unfriendly as a black bear encountering trespassers in his den.

"I'm Jocelyn Mason, and I want to know how you talked my father into leaving you a fourth of Mason Construction."

Jocelyn felt a tightness in her throat and couldn't help but stare at the man standing in front of her. No man should look this good, especially when he was someone she didn't want to like. And that darn sexy cleft in his chin really wasn't helping matters. Standing tall, he had thick brows that were slanted to perfection over dark-brown eyes that made you feel you were about to take a dive into a sea of scrumptious chocolate.

His cheeks were high with incredible dimples and his jaw was clearly defined in an angular shape. Then there was his hair--black, cut low and neatly trimmed around his head. And his lean masculine body had broad shoulders, the kind you would want to rest your head on.

Even with all those eye-catching qualities, there was just something captivating about him, something that showed signs of more than just a handsome face. His look--even the one studying her intently--had caught her off guard and she didn't like the way her heart was pounding wildly against her ribs or the immediate attraction she felt toward him.

Jocelyn took a quick reality check to put that attraction out of her mind and brought her thoughts back to the business at hand--Mason Construction Company.

"Well, aren't you going to answer, Mr. Steele?" she finally asked, her eyes narrowing fractionally. Inwardly she congratulated herself for getting the words past the tightness in her throat without choking on them.

He lifted a brow and said, "Yes, but first I must say that I'm very pleased to meet you, Jocelyn, and please call me Bas." He extended his hand. The moment she placed hers in his he liked the feel of it. How could a woman who worked in construction have such soft hands?

She pulled her hand away. "Now that we've dispensed with formalities, will you answer my question. Why did my father leave you part of Mason Construction?"

He held her gaze. "What if I told you that I had nothing to do with it? Jim's decision was as much a surprise to me as it was to you and your sister."

Jocelyn considered his words. Leah hadn't been surprised. Nor had she been concerned. To Leah's way of thinking it had made perfect sense since she couldn't imagine Jocelyn running the male-dominated company alone. And as for Leah's share of the company, she had no problem with Jocelyn buying her out. She had other plans for her inheritance.

"Now that introductions have been made, can we all take a seat and get down to business?" Jason Kilgore said, halting any further conversation between Jocelyn and Bas. "I'm sure Mr. Steele would like to check into Sadie's Bed and Breakfast in time to take advantage of whatever she's fixed for lunch today. You know what a wonderful cook Sadie is, Jocelyn."

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