



TEMPEST

by
Jamie DeBree

Sample Chapters

* * * * *

Tempest
Copyright 2010 by Jamie M. DeBree
Edited by Carol R. Ward
Cover Art by Heidi Sutherlin

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the above publisher of this book.

This book is a work of fiction and any resemblance to persons, living or dead, or places, events or locales is purely coincidental. The characters are productions of the author's imagination, and used fictitiously.

* * * * *

TEMPEST

Chapter One

Charlie scanned the gravel parking lot from her perch on a small boulder and checked her watch for the third time. Ten more minutes before the last trip up the mountain was scheduled to start. An early morning breeze kicked up, rattling the aspen trees as it swept through the forest behind her. Shivering, she resisted the urge to pull on the sweatshirt tied around her waist. Once they started up the trail, she'd be warm enough.

"Professor Reynolds?"

She turned her head, blocking the sun with one hand as she looked towards the timid voice. A young, skinny woman with stringy blond hair hanging in her face waved a hand. "Is it going to be much longer?"

She glanced down at her notes. "About ten more minutes, Ms. Wilson. We're just waiting for one more couple."

The woman's husband, a short, stocky man stood slightly behind her, running a hand over her shoulder. She shrugged off his touch with a dirty look. Charlie turned away, hoping the woman wouldn't be too much trouble on the trail.

The other members of the group lounged on a couple of fallen logs nearby. Brenda and Amy, two of her students from the sociology classes she taught at the local university sat a little ways off from another couple, Nick and Tanya Roberts, professionals who just wanted to get away for the week. It was a large group for this late in the season.

Charlie's gaze drifted to the sky, hoping the weather would hold. The weather on any mountain was bound to be unpredictable, but Tempest had a reputation for throwing surprises at unsuspecting hikers no matter what time of the year it was. She'd heard it had something to do with the surrounding topography and where the mountain sat in relation to the jet stream, not that it mattered when a freak thunderstorm or blizzard hit. The landscape was incredible though, especially the area around Tempest Lake, formed from a dormant volcano crater a hundred years ago. For Charlie, there was no better way to spend the summer than guiding people over the mountain, regardless of the risks.

A tingling sensation built between her shoulders. Someone – or something, was watching. She eased off the boulder, her pulse jumping as she scanned her surroundings. Reaching for the yellow spray canister on her belt, her gaze swept over the trees to her left, paying close attention to the thick bramble between. Bears could be foraging lower for food this time of year, if the upper elevations were depleted. Her senses were on full alert and she turned in a slow, deliberate circle, her instincts urging her to run. Hide.

Then she swung toward the parking lot. Her gaze locked on to a gorgeous pair of

intense chocolate brown eyes and she nearly gasped at the jolt of awareness that shot down her spine. It had been a long time since a man had triggered that particular feeling.

“Dr. Charlotte Reynolds?” The smooth, velvety voice resonated through her body, and Charlie felt the blood rise in her face at the amused up-turn of his full, soft-looking lips. “I didn’t mean to startle you.”

She blinked, swallowing hard as she dropped her gaze, deliberately replacing the bear spray while she tried to recover her composure. “It’s okay. I—um...”

Words failed as she caught sight of his black leather work boots, and followed them up to military style pants tucked in. A black t-shirt pulled tightly across a rock-hard chest did nothing to slow her racing heartbeat. Just below his chin a small scar beckoned to her for a kiss. Moist heat pooled between her legs, and she looked away, her eyes lighting on the others, all watching with ill concealed interest.

Great first impression, professor. Pull yourself together. Looking back down at the clipboard, she scanned the list.

“You must be Jake Nelson?” At his nod, she checked off his name, and then remembered the woman who was supposed to be with him. Desire doused with reality, she peered around the distracting new guy to find a petite redhead standing slightly to the side. “And you must be Adrienne Winters.”

The girl nodded, her long hair hanging in frizzy ringlets that framed her narrow face. She looked bored, not exactly dressed for hiking in her tennis shoes and designer shirt. Charlie noticed a large backpack with two bedrolls attached leaning against a nearby tree, and guessed that Jake would be carrying the supplies for them both. She couldn’t help the tinge of disappointment she felt.

“You can call me Charlie,” she said briskly, checking Adrienne off the list and stowing the clipboard in her gear. “If you’d both join the rest of the group behind me, we can go over a few safety rules and then get started.”

Jake hid a smirk as he followed Adrienne and the professor to where the others were waiting. He looked over his shoulder to glance over the parking lot once more and then allowed himself to indulge in a closer look at the professor. He hadn’t missed her thorough examination of him earlier, or the desire that had flared between them when he’d startled her. Frowning, he wondered about her reaction, though she had been holding bear spray. His dick twitched as she bent over her pack, that tight little ass teasing him as she searched through the pockets. Slender, well-muscled legs called out for his touch, and a long, dark braid swung down over one shoulder, enticing his fingers to set it lose in the late summer breeze.

She stood, glancing back at him briefly as if she knew what he was thinking, and then turned to address the rest of the group. His gaze roamed over her body in profile, curvy hips, flat stomach and perfect-handful breasts. His fingers flexed, and he forced himself to look away. She was off-limits, he reminded himself, glancing at his red-headed charge. Adrienne was his first priority for now.

Charlie handed a whistle on a lanyard to Adrienne, then held one out for him. He

started to shake his head, but a quick glance at the others confirmed that everyone had them. Accepting the toy, he raised his eyebrows, curious.

“In case of a predator.” She held up the one around her own neck. “As I just explained, if you encounter a wild animal, stand still and blow the whistle instead of running.” She didn’t offer more, just waited, her clear green eyes reminding him of a cat at night. A cat ready to pounce on her prey at any minute. She licked her lips, and he couldn’t help but grin. She could pounce on him anytime.

He placed it around his neck, wondering if anyone really believed a whistle would stave off a bear attack. Scanning the group, he noted that aside from a couple of college girls, they all appeared to be out of their element, and he silently admitted the small tool was probably a good way to give them a boost of confidence. A twinge of guilt pricked his conscience, knowing that he was putting them all in far more danger than they’d bargained for, but it was unavoidable. This was the best way to get onto the mountain without arousing suspicion.

Movement to his right pulled his attention back to Professor Reynolds, shrugging into her big pack and cinching the waist strap tight over her flat abdomen. She reached up to slide her sunglasses on and adjust the ball cap on her head, compact muscles rippling slightly under the short sleeve of her shirt. From her automatic fighting stance earlier and that glimpse of lean muscle he’d wager she studied some form of martial arts; interesting choice for a sociology professor.

“Everyone ready?” She paused, apparently giving them one last chance to back out. “Then let’s head out.” She moved to the front of the group, turning briefly to look in Jake’s direction. “Would you mind taking up the rear for now?”

My pleasure. He nodded, and then motioned for Adrienne to walk ahead of him as they all started up the trail. He let the others get ahead and took his time, scanning the woods for any sign of movement. A scream rang out up ahead, and he sprinted up the trail. Had someone discovered them already? His heavy boots gripped the earth as he ran, side-stepping a large rock and barely missing a low-hanging branch. Adrienne should have been back with him, a mistake he hoped for the chance to rectify.

He rounded the last curve and stopped abruptly, his feet slipping on layers of pine needles. It took him a few seconds to regroup and process the sight of Adrienne sprawled across the trail on her back, a mass of red hair tangled hopelessly in a wild rose bush. The professor and one other woman crouched at her side, trying to calm her as Charlie hacked at the bush with a pocket knife.

Jake unsheathed the hunting knife on his belt. “Move,” he said gruffly, startling the women and garnering more than one frightened gasp at the weapon he held. He stalked over to Adrienne, grabbing the red curls close to her head. The other woman moved away, but Charlie quickly spread her hand over his, blocking his aim.

“No.” She shook her head, eyes flashing fire. “Cut the branches, and I’ll untangle her hair.” Her voice was firm, but not nearly as convincing as the warmth of her hand covering his. Jake hesitated. He could see in the set of her shoulders that she expected him to do what she asked. He was surprised to realize that he wanted to give in to her request.

Too bad that wasn’t an option. Untangling those branches would take time, and they needed to be farther up the trail before nightfall if possible. He brought the knife down on the other side of his hand, cutting Adrienne’s hair shorter than he’d originally planned.

She pulled away and sat up with a yelp, frantically touching her head with her hands.

Charlie yanked her hand away and stared in shock as he calmly sheathed his knife. Now that the adrenaline was wearing off, he supposed his reaction might have been a little dramatic, but at least Adrienne was free of the bush. He reached out and grasped Adrienne's arm, pulling her roughly to her feet. He leaned close to whisper in her ear. "It's not worth your life."

She stared at him for a long moment, as if the reality of where they were, and what they were doing finally struck home. Brushing away tears, she turned and ran up the trail, pushing her way past everyone else.

Charlie moved in front of Jake as he started after Adrienne.

"I'm going to have to ask you to leave," she said, taking a wide stance with her hands on her hips. "I won't tolerate your abuse of that girl...or anyone else." She hoped he didn't notice the slight tremble in her voice.

"You don't know what you're talking about." Jake stepped closer, challenging her personal space. On some level, she knew he was posturing. He leaned in, but she held her ground, trying to ignore the blood pounding through her veins at his earthy all-male scent. "If I go, she goes," he said simply. "Ask her." He leaned back, crossing his arms over his chest. His very muscular, military-style chest.

She looked over her shoulder, past the rest of the group who silently watched. Ms. Winters was there, standing just behind the others. She didn't have to ask. Adrienne nodded, shoulders slumped. Turning back to Jake, Charlie was struck by the feeling that something else was definitely going on here. His steely eyes weren't cold as she expected. Determination was reflected in them, and...was that respect? Letting out a long breath, she made a decision her gut told her she'd regret.

"You can stay." She held up a finger in warning. "But she walks with me. You stay back here. I'm in charge - no more ignoring my decisions. Is that clear?"

Jake raised one eyebrow, and Charlie thought for sure he would argue. A long moment stretched between them. Long enough for the feeling that she'd made the biggest mistake of her life to settle in the pit of her stomach.

He glanced up the trail at Adrienne long enough for the girl to wink at him, and Charlie fought the urge to roll her eyes. Apparently there were no hard feelings. She really hoped it wasn't one of those kinky relationships where they got off on fighting with each other. Though she had to admit, facing Jake down had certainly heated her up.

She walked back to the front of the group, disgusted by her own thoughts. She'd managed to avoid bad boys all her life, and this one would be no exception. Adrienne could have him.

"Let's get going," she called out, hitching her pack up a little higher. "We should be able to reach the lake by nightfall."

Chapter Two

Jake crested the last section of trail just before dusk. Brilliant hues of yellow, orange and pink provided a stunning backdrop for Tempest Lake, spread out across the valley before him. The others were already setting up camp but he focused on the professor, standing alone at the edge of the lake staring across the water. In the twilight she was a shadow against the setting sun, her long neck and narrow face reminding him of an old fashioned cameo. He fought the urge to press in close at her back, wrap her in his arms and watch the sun sink into the lake.

Turning away, he reminded himself that the last thing he needed was a relationship. And the last thing she needed was the kind of trouble he could bring her. Scanning the camp, he spotted Adrienne, sitting next to a rock-bordered fire pit. He leaned his pack against a tall pine tree and went to sit beside her as she poked at the small flames.

“You okay?” he asked as he surveyed her ragged hair. He hoped no one had brought a pocket mirror.

“No.” Adrienne looked around nervously. “You didn’t have to cut it off - Charlie said she’d help me untangle it.” She refused to look at him, keeping her eyes on the fire. Jake watched her, letting the silence grow until she finally sent him a frustrated look.

“Your dad could be anywhere,” he said, keeping his voice low. “I promised I wouldn’t let them take you back, and I won’t, but you have to listen to me. We have to find the farm before they know we’re here, not just for our own safety, but for the rest of these people. Understand?” He squeezed her shoulder, wanting to give her some small measure of comfort. She’d been through so much in her short life and it was going to get worse before it got better.

“I’m sorry I got you in trouble,” Adrienne said a few moments later. One side of her mouth turned up in a knowing smirk as she stared into the fire again. “I saw you looking at Charlie back at the parking lot. She was checking you out too.” She paused, and he followed her gaze to watch Charlie help a couple pound stakes into the ground with a rock. “I think she thinks we’re a couple or something - can’t you just tell her I’m your sister?” She leaned toward him, giving his shoulder a friendly bump with her own. “No offense, but it’s kind of gross letting her think I’m your girlfriend. You’re like, old.”

Jake chuckled, grinning back at her. At least she was hanging on to her sense of humor. He looked thoughtfully at the professor, now threading a pole through the side of a tent. “If she asks, go ahead and tell her I’m your brother. Just keep it simple - complicated lies are harder to keep straight.” Adrienne nodded thoughtfully, and he realized that she would know that better than most. He patted her knee gently, then stood up.

“I’ll go set up the tent for you. Did you see where Charlie put hers?”

“I think it’s that green one by the Wilsons’ over there.” She pointed left at a small pop-up tent, the color nearly indistinguishable in the fading light. He nodded, picking up his pack and heading in that direction to set up a tent nearby. If anything happened to him, Adrienne could go to the professor for help, as they’d planned.

Charlie watched the exchange between Jake and Adrienne as she helped the Roberts pitch a tent in the dying light. It seemed like there were no hard feelings, and the girl accepted Jake's light touch to the shoulder without flinching. Charlie frowned as she realized that without the long hair hiding her face, the girl was much younger than she'd originally thought. Was she even past her teens?

"She looks awfully young for him, wouldn't you say?" Tanya Roberts stood beside her, looking over at Adrienne. "How old do you suppose she is?"

"Maybe she's just one of those people who looks younger," she replied, glancing at the older woman. "Or maybe he looks older than he is." She smiled reassuringly, knowing it was a feeble argument. "If you two are all set here, I'll go tend the fire for a bit. Dinner is on your own tonight, but feel free to join me for s'mores when you're ready."

Tanya went into the tent and Charlie started toward the fire. Jake was walking in the direction of her tent with his pack in hand. Good. If they were close, she'd be able to monitor them, make sure the girl was safe. Hopefully Jake would keep his hands to himself. The thought of them being intimate made Charlie a little sick.

Walking over to the fire pit, she smiled at Adrienne and added a couple small logs to the flames. "Are you recovering from your trauma?" she asked, keeping her tone light. Adrienne nodded, her lips curving slightly.

"Oh sure," she said, dismissing it with the wave of a hand. "Jake is a good guy. I just got his adrenaline going when I screamed." She winked at Charlie. "You know how guys are - gotta be the big tough guy and save the world."

Charlie cast her a skeptical glance. "And he couldn't do that without cutting your hair off and pulling you around?"

"Come on, Professor - you know how guys are always overreacting. Or the ones I know, anyways." Adrienne looked mockingly over her shoulder at Jake, who had just finished setting up the tent. "Hair means nothing to them, and he didn't actually hurt my arm, just wanted to get my attention." She lowered her voice as Jake approached. "He's a big teddy bear, once you get to know him."

Charlie watched Jake come closer, her nerves firing up just at the thought of being near him again. No way was this man a teddy bear under any circumstances. He was a grizzly, beautiful but deadly.

She'd always been fascinated by grizzlies.

"I know what you're thinking," Adrienne leaned in close. Charlie felt the heat rise in her cheeks. The girl couldn't possibly know what she was really thinking, could she? She almost missed Adrienne's words as Jake reached the fire pit.

"I'm not his girlfriend."

It took a few seconds for the meaning to sink in, and Charlie realized she'd been standing there staring at Jake as he took a seat on a large log. Adrienne moved to sit beside him, and the girl was grinning up at her. Charlie dropped her gaze, grateful for the near darkness to hide her flaming face. It was a relief to know they weren't together, but

the knowledge made her more aware of the attraction she felt for Jake. Something about him called to her baser self, but that same something told her to be careful. Very careful.

The other hikers joined them to sit around the crackling fire as they laughed and chatted about the day. She greeted each of them, carefully avoiding Jake as she made her way around the circle, then stepped just outside to get a few supplies from her pack. She set out marshmallows, graham crackers and chocolate bars on a wide piece of bark.

“S’mores, anyone?”

The suggestion was met with a round of applause, followed by a scramble to find long sticks for roasting marshmallows. Adrienne sat back, frowning. “What’s that,” Charlie heard her ask Jake. She listened as he explained how to get a stick, hold the marshmallow over the fire and make a sandwich with the gooey results, chocolate and crackers. He speared two, handing one to Adrienne and holding one out over the fire for himself, his eyes meeting Charlie’s over the flames. His pupils glowed in the flickering light, reminding her of a predator watching his prey. Shivering, she turned away, trying to ignore the rush of heat between her legs.

The rest of the group seemed to be enjoying themselves as she glanced around the circle. Nick and Tanya were arguing over how to roast the perfect marshmallow and Mary was complaining about how many blisters she had while Don tried to ignore her. Brenda and Amy were huddled together over a notebook, looking up from time to time as they made notes and spoke quietly. They’d mentioned a research project of some sort when they signed up.

Jake and Adrienne still sat together, Adrienne now facing away from Jake. Was that a knife in his hand again? Charlie peered into the darkness, saw the blade flash a few times in the firelight as it moved near the girl’s head. She leaned forward, preparing to go ask just what was going on when she realized that he was cutting the rest of her hair. She sat back again, her back to a large log as she considered Adrienne’s earlier statement. She didn’t think Jake could be Adrienne’s brother or father, but if they weren’t dating, then what were they to each other?

“Thank you, Professor.” Nick Roberts stood in front of her holding Tanya’s hand. “I think we’ll hit the sack now.”

Charlie nodded and smiled. “Good night - sleep well,” she said as they walked off into the darkness. The Wilsons stood too, Mary looking worried as she stepped in front of Charlie.

“Is it safe to go to the bathroom?”

Grinning, Charlie nodded. “You should be fine - just use the area I showed you, and make sure to bury the hole when you’re done.”

Mary looked up at her husband. “Will you come out there with me?” They moved away before Charlie could hear his answer, but the ensuing mumble didn’t sound happy. She glanced at her students, giggling as they stood and waved at her before walking toward their tent.

Charlie stared into the fire. She let the flames crowd everything else out of her mind, the crackling hum soothing and hypnotic. The flames grew smaller, wood coals burning black and white as she sat mesmerized. This was her favorite part of hiking - watching the fire die down after everyone else had gone to their tents, basking in the glow and communing with nature.

“I can keep an eye on the fire if you want to get some sleep.” A deep, rough voice

brought Charlie out of her meditation, and sent the blood rushing through her veins. She raised her head, squinting to see in the dark after staring into bright firelight. Jake stood over her, his broad chest looking larger and more imposing from her position on the ground. Their eyes met, reestablishing that intense connection she'd been trying so hard to ignore. Charlie started to speak, but closed her mouth again. Words seemed redundant, and she looked away as he sat down in the dirt beside her.

Jake hadn't really expected her to accept his offer. She'd been staring intently at the flames, her body relaxed and soft. He'd spent many nights the same way, settling things in the glow of a camp fire.

Why had he interrupted her? He wasn't sure, except that he felt drawn to her in a way that both frightened and excited him. He noted the warm glow on her cheeks and wondered if it was heat from the fire that caused it, or a different kind of heat. The kind of heat that was causing his groin to tighten.

"I--It's okay," she said quietly, keeping her eyes averted. Jake watched her profile dance in the flickering light, the delicate high cheekbones and small, pert nose begging him to trace them with his finger. He kept his hands to himself. For now. "I'm sure you're tired. I don't mind finishing up here." Her voice was quiet, but steady.

Jake admired how quickly she'd gotten her nervousness under control. "I was actually going to sleep out here, if you don't mind," he said, picking up a twig and tracing shapes in the dirt between them.

"What about Adrienne?" The hint of jealousy in her voice amused him.

His lips turned up a little. "What about her?" He couldn't resist teasing.

Charlie stared at the designs he was still tracing in the dirt. "Won't she wonder where you are?" She shifted her legs, brought one knee up to rest a hand on. He hadn't noticed the set of four scars across the inside of her forearm before. They were fading, but still purple, so not too old. He started to reach out a finger to the raised skin, then thought better of it.

"What happened to your arm?"

Confusion flashed over her face briefly, then she twisted her wrist to examine the area.

"Mountain lion at the beginning of the summer," she said, her tone matter-of-fact. "I surprised a youngster when I was scouting off the trail one day - she jumped off a big rock at me, got my arm, and bit my leg..." She pulled down a thick sock, revealing a good sized semi-circle of scars low on her ankle. "I kicked her hard enough to get her attention, and she ran off. Don't think I would have been so lucky if she'd been full-grown." She pulled her sock back up.

Jake listened, his eyes lingering over her ankle. He wanted to see the scar again, lean over and kiss each little tooth mark that marred her smooth skin. For starters. He reached out a hand, gently pulling the fabric down as he traced the marks with a feather-light touch. Her muscle jumped under his finger, and her quick intake of breath was evidence that she was as powerless as he was to fight the magnetic force pulling them together.

Slowly, his finger moved up over her lower leg. “Adrienne and I have an arrangement,” he said, drawing small circles over her skin. “We’re working together on a project - that’s all.” His fingers moved higher, skimming the inside of her knee, and she shivered under his touch. Her response fanned his desire, sent heat rushing through his groin. He let his fingers begin to slip down her inner thigh in an intimate caress.

“What kind of project?” Charlie shifted both legs to the side, forcing Jake’s roaming hand to slip naturally off of her legs. Her voice was husky, but the message was clear. He complied, clasping both hands around one of his knees.

“The kind you don’t talk about with civilians,” he said, knowing from her quick look that the term had gotten her attention. He braced himself for the inevitable barrage of questions, surprised when she only asked one.

“Are you carrying a weapon? Aside from the knife, I mean.” Jake slid one pant leg up enough to reveal the ankle holster strapped beneath. Charlie nodded as he let the material drop. She stood, brushing her hands over her butt to dislodge any dirt clinging there. Jake considered offering to help, but decided to just enjoy the view. She looked down at him, a pensive look on her face.

“Is the group in any danger because of your presence here?”

Smart woman. Jake gave the only answer he could. “Maybe.”

Charlie nodded, chewing her bottom lip. “I’ll go to bed now. Good night.” She turned and walked to her tent.

Jake watched as she unzipped the front flap and crawled inside, heard the metal teeth lacing together as she closed herself in. He stretched out on one side, absently poking the fire with a stick. He couldn’t remember the last time a woman had held his interest for so long. Her file had indicated that she taught and studied social behaviors, particularly male/female relationships. Maybe when this was all over he could help her with some research.

Chapter Three

Charlie zipped herself into the tent, settling on her sleeping bag. It was cooler here away from the fire and she was grateful. Many of her personal fantasies included a tough guy in law enforcement, and it would seem that one had been dropped right into her lap. When he'd shown her his gun, her arousal had gone on high alert, and she knew she had to leave before she let his fingers finish what they'd started minutes earlier.

She took her shoes and socks off, pulling on a clean pair to keep her feet warm overnight. Her tee and bra came off next, and she slipped a thermal long-sleeved shirt over her head, nearly sighing as the clingy fabric slid over her tight nipples. She gently scraped over them with her fingernails a few times, sending tingles of electricity straight down to her core. Biting her lip to suppress a moan, she slipped out of her shorts and damp panties to lay back on her sleeping bag, her legs falling open. She kneaded a breast with one hand, pinching and rolling the nipple between her fingers as she slid her other hand down over her belly to find the sensitive bud between her legs. She bent her knees for better access, running her fingers through her slit to collect the flowing juices and then rubbing tight little circles over her clitoris.

She imagined Jake's head there, his tongue laving her moist folds and dipping inside to taste her cream. She arched into his mouth, begging for more as she whimpered with pleasure. He suckled her clit, pumping two fingers in and out of her warm, wet sheath, curling them around to find her pleasure spot. The tension built as he nipped gently with his teeth to send more sparks rippling through her body and she grasped his head, her fingers running through his hair as she held him exactly where she wanted him.

Then it was too much. Her muscles contracted hard around his fingers - her fingers - as a powerful orgasm spiraled through her. Another whimper escaped her lips, and she slowly opened her eyes. She lay there for a few moments, breathing and listening for any indication that someone might have heard. Had she really just gotten herself off with Adrienne's tent so close and Jake just a few yards away by the fire?

A little embarrassed, she rolled to the side and cleaned up with a towel from her bag. Pulling on long-johns, she slid into her now-warm sleeping bag and zipped up the side, freezing in place when she thought she heard a low moan from the woods behind her tent. Had she remembered to put the food away? She listened carefully for any rustling or breaking branches that might signify a bear in the area, but silence reined. She laid her head on her pillow and closed her eyes, falling asleep almost immediately.

Behind the bushes, Jake leaned against a tree, quivering from the intensity of his own climax. He'd heard a noise from the professor's tent and walked over to make sure everything was okay. From the sounds as he got closer, it was apparent that things were more than okay, and he considered joining her inside. Deciding against it, he'd unzipped his fly and stroked himself, exploding when she'd whispered his name at the end. It had been intense, primal, and as he tucked himself back into his pants, he promised himself they'd experience it together before they left the mountain.

Charlie stepped out of her tent the next morning to a weary looking group and gray skies. She'd expected everyone to be tired, as people often had an uncomfortable first night sleeping on the ground. The threatening clouds were more of a concern. She'd checked with the weather service just twenty minutes before they'd left the trail head; the forecast had been for good weather all week, but she'd known she was pushing her luck by going out this late in the season. Everyone was breaking down camp, stowing tents and checking their packs. She folded her pop-up tent down and strapped it to her own pack.

"Looks like a storm coming in." Charlie felt the color rising in her cheeks at Jake's deep, sexy voice. Something in his tone sent shivers through her skin and she felt transparent, as though he knew about last night. He couldn't though, could he? She'd made a point of being quiet, and he'd been all the way over by the fire. She was just being paranoid.

She nodded, forcing herself to meet his gaze and smile. "A little rain might be good - cool everything down for a little while." Her optimism sounded forced, even to her own ears as a low rumble sounded in the distance.

"You want to keep going, or head back?" His shoulders were tense, a little muscle in the side of his neck flexing as he waited for her decision. She wanted to reach out and touch it, maybe trace it with her tongue. Instead she forced herself to turn away, reaching for her pack.

"We'll keep going," she said, motioning for the rest of the group to join them. "It looks like it's moving fast, so hopefully it will skim over us quickly." Jake gave a curt nod, leaning back to shrug into his gear.

"We've got around five miles to cover today, but it will be a little harder than yesterday." Predictably, Mary groaned, earning a few stares from the others. "We might see a little rain too, but just keep up and I promise it will be worth the effort. Everyone ready?"

She turned, motioning for everyone to follow. Checking back over her shoulder, she noted that Jake had automatically taken up the rear. What was he really doing here, she wondered again. And just how dangerous was this project?

Half an hour later Charlie started looking for shelter as the sky opened up, dumping torrential rain over the mountainside.

###

For purchasing details, please visit JamieDeBree.com.

About the Author

A webmistress by day, Jamie spends her free time writing sizzling romance novels, hanging out with her husband and two dogs, reading, gardening, cooking, and watching TV. She resides in Billings Montana, and may be contacted through her web site at <http://jamiedebree.com>, [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).