

### Author's Note:

**If you haven't read *Jagged Edge*, I suggest you wait to read this. It occurs immediately after the end of book 1 in *The Arsenal* series and bridges its conclusion with the second book, *Sight Lines*.**

Pleasure fanned from Mary's neck and down her spine. She arced backward into the feather-soft caress and moaned. "Dylan."

"Good morning, future Mrs. Mason."

"Good morning, future hubby." She half turned until she was on her back and grasped his head as their lips collided in a fiery kiss.

Though desire spread through her quickly, she recognized the slow, cautious glide. The soft caress of lips and tongue. The sweep of fingertips. He severed the contact and drew her against him, her back to his chest. Fingers interlaced and locked at her chest, she breathed deep.

"You want to talk about it?" he asked.

"It was the same as last time," she whispered into the otherwise quiet room.

The soft hint of daylight glimmered through the window—the one he'd gotten up and cracked a few hours earlier when she'd woken the entire house screaming like a banshee.

One week had passed since he'd proposed and they'd moved into his mom's house temporarily. Contractors were already starting work on renovating what'd be their home soon enough. The work would be expedited once more contractors were found to assist. Dylan wanted them in their own home. Stat.

If she was perfectly honest, Mary did too.

"If you don't feel safe here, we'll move back into the compound. Whatever you need," he offered.

Mary had no doubt Dylan would move the Earth if she asked. It was one of the ten million two hundred reasons she loved him. "I'm okay. Doctor Sinclair says it's a good sign, something about my unconscious accepting I'm ready to handle more."

"You're handling enough. There's no rush."

"Tell that to your sister," she whispered into his throat. "Or, better yet, look Rachelle in the face and tell her."

"Easy, sweetheart." Dylan caressed her cheek. "You're my only priority. Besides, Rachelle would understand."

"I'm ready to tackle whatever's going on in Marville. Seriously. I need the distraction." She huffed her frustration and sat up in bed. Dylan's gaze roamed to her bare breasts.

Warmth settled there, fanning inward. He loved her. He didn't see the fat or the stretch marks. His fingers traced along the side of her breast.

"I'm thinking we can keep you plenty distracted without Marville. Leave that to Marshall and the guys."

"Please. We both know he's already tried. He and all your brothers drove into that town and everyone locked up tight. They're not getting anything."

His jaw twitched. “And Rachelle’s not saying much, just that she’s worried about her sister.”

“Did you know her?”

“They’re closer to Riley’s age, so not really. Dallas knew her though, said Kamren was so like Riley it was scary.”

Oh boy. Dylan chuckled.

“Yeah, little sis has a way of keeping us on our toes.”

Riley alone was a good distraction for Mary. The more she had to think about, the less time she’d have to remember what’d gone down with Peter. He’d betrayed her.

Hurt her.

Mary brought the sheet up around herself and rose from the bed. As if sensing the shift in her thoughts, Dylan remained in the bed, giving her just enough space.

She wasn’t the type to focus on what’d happened, but that didn’t keep the insidious memories from creeping into her thoughts like unwanted assholes.

“What’s on your agenda today?” she asked.

“Depends.”

“On?”

“On whether you want me to be part of yours.”

He stood. Her gaze wandered down his sculpted chest, across his ripped abdominals. She’d never understand how she’d gotten lucky enough to attract his attention. Dylan made Michelangelo’s David look like a potbellied pig. And he had the patience of a saint.

“I love you,” she whispered as she closed the distance and wrapped her hand around his hard cock. She kissed his throat and moaned as he wrapped her into an embrace.

“We’d agreed to work Marville together,” he whispered.

“Yeah, but after the reaction your brothers got, I’m thinking I’m better off going without a Mason man glowering at everyone.”

“You aren’t doing this alone.”

“Of course not. I’ll have my girls.”

“Riley shouldn’t be part of this,” Dylan added.

“I’m thinking the entirety of the US Military couldn’t keep her away,” Mary retorted.

A loud banging on the door startled Mary. Dylan drew her closer as the door rattled.

“Mary? You’d better not be in there doing naughty things with my big brother. You’re supposed to be downstairs, ready to go.”

Damn.

She looked over at the clock and then up at Dylan, who was flashing a not-so-nice-look toward the locked door. “She can wait.”

Mary chuckled. “I’m afraid we’ll have to wait to continue this. Once we get started, I doubt it’ll be quick.”

“Never, not with you,” he promised. He cupped her face. “You get overwhelmed, or need me, you call.”

“I’ll be fine.”

“I know you will be. Just remember it’s okay to step back and focus on you.”

“You’re starting to sound like Doctor Sinclair,” she teased.

“Mary?” Riley pounded on the door again. “Don’t think I won’t kick this thing down. Get your cute, brilliant ass out here. We’ve got a hornet’s nest to stir up, and Addy’s not the patient sort.”

No kidding.

Dylan kissed Mary softly on the lips. “See you later, sweetheart. Text, let me know how it’s going.”

“HERA will have eyes on us.”

The system she and Vi had created was at the root of so many of the problems they’d had lately. It was almost hard to believe something they designed in their dorm room was worth all the effort to secure. But she couldn’t regret it’s creation, not when it’d saved so many lives and done good. That trumped the evil, right?

Mary hoped so.

She dressed and headed downstairs before Riley decided to make good on her promise to kick down the door. Fortunately her newest friend was standing outside on the front porch with Addy and Vi.

“Where are Bree and Rhea?”

“Their new labs, probably debating who has the coolest stuff,” Vi replied. “We won’t see them for days.”

Mary was glad the two brilliant women liked their new labs. They deserved the fresh start they were going to receive at The Arsenal. Heck, they all deserved a reboot. Mary regarded Addy as everyone made their way to a black SUV with tinted windows. Vi widened her eyes and snapped her head in Addy’s direction in a not-so-subtle indication she was worried too.

“You two keep doing that creepy eye and head thing I’m making you walk,” Addy threatened as she glared at the two of them. “Get in. We’ve wasted enough time.”

Mary kept her mouth shut and climbed into the backseat next to Riley. Now wasn’t the time to sort whatever was going on in Addy’s head. Today was about Marville. She looked over at Riley, who was unusually quiet. From what she’d seen, Dylan’s little sister only had two levels-energetic and Energizer Bunny. She reached over and squeezed the woman’s hand. “We’re going to figure this mess in Marville out.”

“I know we should wait. You’ve all been through so much.” She chewed on her lower lip.

“Your girl can’t wait,” Addy added from the driver’s seat and she wheeled the vehicle in. “Today we get her back here and hole her up. Then we’ll go from there.”

“Right,” Vi agreed. “And we’ll get more eyes on Marville. I’ve got three dozen drones.”

“Christ,” Addy muttered. “It’s Marville, not Manhattan.”

“I didn’t say we’d use them all,” Vi replied indignantly. “Besides, small doesn’t mean much. I’ve scoped out the satellite images. Small town Texas loves to spread out.”

“It’s the only way to live,” Riley claimed. “You city girls don’t know what you’re missing.”

“I’m thinking we’ve figured it out.” Mary smiled. “Fill us in on Marville.”

“It’s nothing like Resino. Folks don’t like outsiders. At all,” Riley emphasized the last word. “News spreads like wildfire. Rachelle works at the local bar slash laundromat.”

Silence descended in the truck.

“I’m sorry. What did you say?” Vi turned in the seat.

“I thought that’d get you.” Riley laughed. “Folks tend to focus on more than one business endeavor around these parts, makes the lean times a little less lean if you cast a wider net. In Marville the bar is also the only available laundromat. So the Sip and Spin is the go to place. Haul your laundry in, get a couple loads done and have a few beers while you wait. It’s brilliant.”

“It’s weird,” Addy said.

“Well, yeah, but this is Marville we’re talking about. Their county didn’t even bother putting in a high school. Education there ends at the sixth grade. Everyone gets bussed to Resino to carry on their education. Either Resino or Nomad.”

“Wow,” Vi replied.

“And the local crimes? Any gang affiliations or anything like that?” Mary asked.

“Yeah, though I’m not sure who’s running things. When we were in high school, it was Dani’s older brother. Dani works at the bar with Rachelle.”

“They friends?” Mary asked.

“Not really. Dani was tight with Rachelle’s sister, still is. She didn’t take it too well when Kamren tore off after their dad passed.”

“Rachelle’s dad died?” Vi asked. “When was that? Was it natural? Did he have enemies?”

“Dial back the twenty questions,” Addy ordered. “This isn’t a Hive or Arsenal operation. It’s a side mission.”

“Actually, everyone’s pretty sure he was murdered, but the local sheriff and medical examiner ruled it an accident,” Riley said.

“Is that when Rachelle started ghosting through life?” Mary asked.

Riley had made the comment about her best friend ghosting through almost two weeks ago, but Mary still remembered it, as if a part of her was haunted by anyone experiencing that level of...

Grief? Fear?

Numbness.

A part of Mary had gone numb long ago. Somehow Dylan had started rousing the side of her she’d let die long ago. The part that craved love, affection.

A family.

“I think that was part of it, but Rachelle wouldn’t talk. I mean, she’d cry about her dad and everything. At first it was pretty much the way I expected someone to react.”

“It changed?” Addy asked.

“Yeah, a couple weeks after Kamren went AWOL. She got jumpy, spooked easily.”

“No idea why?” Vi asked.

“None. She won’t even talk about her sister, says she’s just as dead as her dad as far as she and her brother are concerned. But she still worries about her, so she’s obviously having problems sorting that out in her head.”

“And the brother?” Mary asked. “Would he know more?”

“Pft. Cliff’s as dumb as they get. He’s sweet, but as useless as a box of rocks.”

By the time they wheeled into an older house with flaking white paint, Mary was armed with as much information as Riley had, which wasn’t much. Today was a recon rolled up into a recovery operation. Getting Rachelle secure and within The Arsenal compound was the first priority. Anything beyond that was a bonus.

Riley exited the vehicle before it was parked like a soldier on a mission. Addy cursed and threw the SUV into park halfway up the drive.

“Swear that woman’s trying to piss me off.” Addy glared over her shoulder at Mary, then over at Vi. “You two stay behind me.”

Vi nodded quickly. Mary followed suit. Today wasn’t the day to mess with their kickass ninja friend.

Mary exited and settled beside Vi. They both waited until Addy had closed the distance between herself and Riley, who’d made it halfway up a rickety set of stairs, where she was frozen a foot from the business end of a shotgun. A paunch bellied man with a receding hairline and a few days growth on his face held said weapon with an intensity Mary had seen too many times while working at Hive.

“Crap on granola. This isn’t good,” Vi whispered.

“No kidding,” Mary replied. “Come on. We both know this is going to go bad if we let Addy handle it.”

She charged forward with more determination than thought. While she didn’t know the man holding the weapon, she figured it was Rachelle’s brother Cliff. His wide eyes scanned the area with a frantic speed that left Mary more than a little unsettled. He was on the verge of losing it altogether.

“Put that damn thing down before I kick your ass,” Riley growled. She took another step up and sidestepped the shotgun. Cliff backed up and reaimed it at her.

“I’ve got no beef with you, but you shouldn’t be here. We don’t need no Mason sniffing around and stirring up shit. We’ve got enough trouble without your help.” The man’s hands shook.

“Rachelle!” Riley shouted. “Get your ass out here and wallop your brother before I do.”

“Get back down here,” Addy ordered. “The only one kicking ass today is me.”

Riley looked down at Addy and shook her head. “Sorry, I’m the only one allowed to kick their butts. It’s in the best friend contract.”

“Wow, I think you and I need to overhaul our BFF contract. Clearly we missed a few pertinent clauses,” Vi commented to Mary.

A gorgeous brunette with long, curly hair appeared from the side of the house. “Riley? What are you doing out here?”

“I called. We discussed the plan.”

“No. You dictated. I refused. You yelled. I hung up.” Rachelle skirted past Vi and Addy and settled between Riley and her brother, who dropped the shotgun instantly. “Why are you here?”

“You know why. We’re packing you up, taking you out to the ranch.”

“No, we aren’t.” Rachelle lowered her voice. “Riles, I appreciate your concern, but this is my home. I can’t just turn tail and abandon my responsibilities.”

Mary looked around the property. Although the house was in desperate need of some patchwork, the lawn was well tended. Colorful flowers hugged the edge of the house on both sides. This wasn’t a house.

It was a home.

“Rache, I’m not leaving without you.”

“And I’m not leaving Cliff here by himself.”

Ah. Something in Mary clicked. The secret to preventing a situation from unraveling was to understand what was at stake for the person you were dealing with. Riley’s friend might be terrified about something, but she wasn’t going to leave her brother alone. Fine. That was something they could handle.

“We’ve got plenty of room for both of you,” Mary added to the conversation. “Hi, I’m Mary, Dylan’s fiancée.”

Rachelle’s gaze settled fully on Mary. Curiosity mixed with undisguised concern. A tiny ball of worry twisted in Mary’s gut. Something had the woman too scared to remain at her own home. That wasn’t acceptable.

“Dylan and I are getting married in a few weeks. His mom suggested we overhaul one of the old houses on their property since we wanted to stay as close as possible. Riley mentioned you were really good with that sort of thing, and I’m not.” Mary offered a tentative smile. “The guys have their hands full and could probably use Cliff’s help. I heard Dallas telling Nolan they needed to hire some people.”

Rachelle’s gaze darted to her brother, whose brows bunched in confusion.

“They wouldn’t hire me,” Cliff replied. “I’m not good at much.”

“He’s great with repairing stuff, a natural fixer like our grandpa.” Rachelle motioned toward the house. “This might not be pretty, but he keeps the roof patched and the boards replaced. We’d do more if we had the funds, but since Dad…”

“We’re not here to judge your house. It’s a hell of a lot more than I’ve ever had,” Mary said. “The guys have a lot of repair work to do around the ranch, and on some houses out there. Dallas has been stressing over how they were going to get it all handled since they have The Arsenal and the Wounded Warriors Project to handle. It sounds like this is a win-win. You two could be a huge help. The pay wouldn’t be great, but it’d be fair.”

“We can’t leave, sis. What if Kamren comes back?” Cliff’s voice rose an octave. “She wouldn’t know what happened. She’d think they got to us.”

“They?” Addy asked.

“It doesn’t matter. Cliff’s right.” Rachelle cleared her throat, as if forcing the refusal out. “It sounds like a great opportunity, but I’m afraid we’ll have to decline.”

“Okay, here’s how it’s gonna go,” Vi said as she closed the distance and settled an arm around Rachelle. “You don’t know me and my girls Mary and Addy, but we make trouble go away. It’s what we do, and we are the best around at doing that. We’ve partnered up with the Masons out at The Arsenal. Whatever mess you’re in here, it won’t follow you to Resino. No one’s that stupid, but if they are? Well, they’re in deep trouble. No one’s getting within a mile of that ranch without us knowing it.”

“I don’t have a sister or a brother, but if I did, I’d want them out there where they’d be safe, not here. Whatever your trouble is, we can help,” Mary offered.

“It’s not like we know anything,” Cliff admitted. “Kamren’s stirring stuff up.”

“Hush,” Rachelle ordered. “We don’t know anything.”

“We know someone’s not happy with her. They’ve told us so with all those threats.”

Missing pieces to the puzzle clicked into place. “She’s looking into your dad’s death?”

Cliff and Rachelle looked at one another, then nodded.

“Okay, then. We’ll leave a note inside, make sure she knows where you are. When she surfaces, she’ll know where to go,” Riley said. “Until then, we’ll lay low at the ranch and work on getting a place situated for my new sis.”

*My new sis.*

Mary loved the sound of that. She’d been wrong earlier. She did have a sister. And five brothers. Wow. Talk about an insta-family. She couldn’t help the huge smile that escaped at the thought. She looked around and noted Addy’s smirk as she crossed her arms and chuckled.

Riley dragged Rachelle toward Mary and forced them into a hug. “This is going to be so much fun!”

“I can’t breathe,” Rachelle said as she tried to squirm from her friend’s tight grasp. “Let’s get us packed. We’ll take Dad’s truck because I’ll need something to get back and forth to work in.”

Riley’s lips thinned, but she didn’t say anything as her gaze flashed to Mary, then Vi and Addy. None of them would want Rachelle working at the Sip and Spin, not until things were settled. But that was a battle for another time.

Mary’s phone buzzed. She yanked it from her pocket. Bree.

“Hey, Bree. Everything okay?” she asked.

“No. She’s gone, Mary.”

“Who’s gone?”

“Rhea! She left a note, something about needing to tie up some loose ends.” Bree’s distraught voice crackled through the cellphone. “Why would she just up and leave? She knows it’s not safe.”

“What’s wrong?” Addy asked. Vi touched Mary’s shoulder.

“Rhea went AWOL, to tie up loose ends.”

“In the vehicle. You two head back to the ranch, get the guys on that. I’ll stay here with Riley and help Rachelle and her brother get packed up. The rest will wait until later,” Addy said.

Mary took the keys and piled into the vehicle with Vi. By the time they were headed back to the ranch, unease had spread through her like a brushfire. “It’s not like Rhea to go off like that without saying anything.”

“No, it’s not.” Vi tapped a few keys on her laptop, the laptop that went everywhere she did. “She’s deactivated her phone’s tracker. I really wish I had stupid friends, you know? Why do you all have to be so fracking brilliant and think of all these things? It makes stalking you so much harder.”

“We’ll find her,” Mary promised. “I just wish she’d opened up more about her past. It worries me.”

“Yeah, me too. She’s the one we know very little about.”

Rhea had no idea how coveted her knowledge was. The things she could do were unimaginable, especially if they found their way to the wrong hands. They needed someone tracking her immediately. Although Mary knew everyone within The Arsenal were great operatives, she wanted someone she trusted with her best friend. She required...

Mary didn’t know what the woman required in the way of handling. That was the thing with genius scientists. They operated differently than everyone else. She pulled out her phone and tapped a button.

“You sitting on another bomb already?” Amusement filled the inquiry.

Mary couldn’t help but laugh. Only Fallon Graves could turn the horrid situation she’d recently underwent into a joke. No one else had the guts. She doubted even Fallon would do so if Dylan were within hearing range. “Rhea went AWOL.”

“When?”

“Not sure, the past few hours. Her phone’s off. Vi and I are going to try a few more things, but we aren’t holding our breath. She’s too smart to be tracked easily, which means she’ll stay under radar until she’s ready to surface.”

“And you don’t want her off your radar,” Fallon said.

“There are very few people in this world capable of single-handedly changing the face of humanity, Fallon. She’s one of them. I need her found and brought back, for her own good and everyone else’s.”

“Wow, dramatic much?” Vi asked.

“Am I lying?”

Vi blinked. Leaned her head back and sighed. “No. I hate when you point out that stuff.”

“I’ll head to the airport. Give me a city to start from. She would’ve left via San Antonio or, if she was overly paranoid, Austin. The latter would’ve taken her five hours to get to. The airport’s small, so flights out would be limited.” His calm voice offered the quiet confidence Mary expected.

“Already on it,” Vi said as she typed frantically on the keyboard. “Chicago or Atlanta. Those are your biggest options. Both are hubs”



“Right. I’ll start with Chicago. I’ll be in touch when I land.”

Mary ended the call. “He’ll find her.”

“Yeah,” Vi said. “We need to figure this out. I feel like Rhea’s and Bree’s jailers. They shouldn’t be locked up just because they have knowledge people would kill for, including our own government.”

“Wow, now who’s being dramatic?”

“Am I lying?” Vi shot back. “You know the alphabet soup was circling us like vultures back at The Hive. Now that it’s burned and we’re out, they’ll be back.”

“Maybe, but they’ve got to go through The Arsenal to get to us. I’m thinking Dylan and his brothers aren’t going to let a few letters strung together push them around.”

“And I’m thinking someone’s deep in love. You fracking glow when you say his name.” Vi reached over and squeezed her hand. “So happy you found him.”

“We found each other,” Mary replied.

She turned the vehicle into the entry for the ranch and slammed on the brakes when she saw Dylan’s mom flagging her down. She rolled the window down. “Is everything okay, Mrs. Mason.”

“Oh, dear. I told you to call me Mom.” The woman settled beside the truck and patted Mary’s arm, which was perched on the window frame. “The boys are inside having an early lunch. You left without eating. That’s not a good habit to get into.”

Vi chuckled from the passenger’s seat. Mrs. Mason leaned forward and peeked into the truck. “That goes for you too, Vi. You girls might be good at what you do, but that doesn’t mean you neglect yourselves. So, shut that truck off and come inside.”

Mary switched the truck off. The two of them exited the vehicle and followed Mrs. Mason inside.

*Mom.*

She had a mom now.

*Wow.*

Warmth settled in her chest. Vi squeezed her into a hug. “You okay?”

“Never better,” Mary admitted. “Overwhelmed. I have a mom now. A sister. Brothers.”

“Yeah, a whole freaking football team of family. How awesome is that? I’m declaring myself an adopted sister-in-law. Think that’ll stick?” Vi asked.

“Damn straight it will,” Dylan replied as he closed the distance. He kissed Mary’s temple and drew her into his arms. “Addy called, gave us a head’s up. Let’s eat first, then we’ll all talk. Mom’s called a family meeting.”

“Family meeting?” Mary asked. “Vi and I can...”

“Oh no you don’t. She’s already miffed Addy and Riley aren’t here. You two aren’t going anywhere. Besides, you’re the main conversation point.”

“I am?”

“She is?” Vi asked. Her gaze narrowed. “If she’s got problems with Mary, then-”

“Slow your roll there,” Dylan said. He shook his head and chuckled. “It’s about the wedding.”

Mary looked down at the engagement ring and smiled. The wedding.

Dylan laughed outright and guided them both into the house. By the time they made it into the dining room where everyone was gathered, the sense of belonging had rooted so deeply in her that Mary doubted it’d ever go away. She’d found a home. A family.

She sat beside Dylan and plated food from each tray as it was passed to her. Mom sure could cook. By the time she had a full plate and everyone started eating, Mary had almost forgotten about the family meeting.

“We’ll have to do this without Riley and the other girls, but Vi and Mary can fill them in. We have a big problem,” Mrs. Mason said.

Marshall flashed Dylan a humored smirk from across the table. Their mom didn’t grasp what problem translated to for her six sons. They infiltrated the bowels of unimaginable hells on a regular basis.

“We need to have the wedding here, at the ranch,” their mom stated. The finality in her words made Mary choke in amusement.

“Afraid we can’t do that, Mom,” Dylan said. “We can’t have people wandering around out here. It’s not just a ranch now. We can’t have a secured compound open to the public.”

“It’s your wedding, Dylan,” his mom argued. “The first of my children to marry. The first Mason to put a ring on someone’s finger in decades. No church in the area is big enough.”

Uh oh. That sounded bad.

“In the area? How far out did you go?” Dallas asked. “They’ve got some really big ones in San Antonio, you know.”

“Don’t sass your mom,” Vi said. “It’s not nice.”

“H-how many people are we planning for? I thought we were going small,” Mary said, reaching for Dylan’s hand under the table.

“Mom, we talked about this,” he added.

“I know, dear. I know. But drawing a line at what immediate friends means is almost impossible. Do you have any idea how many people would be upset, hurt or offended if they weren’t invited?” The woman shook her head. “People take that sort of thing very personally.”

“So you’re inviting all of Resino.” Marshall wiped his mouth. “It’s still not a good idea to have it out here, Mom. We need this compound secure. We also have a commitment to the soldiers in the Warrior’s Path Program to provide them a location away from civilian populace, a place to safely decompress.”

“Surely we can accommodate both,” Mrs. Mason said. “The front of the ranch near the house here. We can cordon off the road heading to the compound.”

Damn. That worked.

“And those little bug thingies can keep flitting about.”

“Little bug thingies.” Vi’s voice sounded pained.

Mary swallowed her amusement. She and her best friend had worked for years to perfect those little bug thingies. The defensive drone surveillance system was lightyears ahead of anything anyone had.

Dallas and Cord laughed. Nolan and Jesse shook their heads, but flashed sympathetic grins. Marshall kept eating, but his gaze cut to Dylan in a silent man-speak of I've-got-this-if-you-need-me-to.

Mary's soon-to-be-husband, the man who owned her heart, made no reply. His intense gaze settled on her.

Her mind whirled with what his mom had said. All of Resino at the ranch? The backyard was huge, but would it hold that many people? How many were in Resino anyway? Her fingers itched to hack into the latest census data. No. The electric company. They'd have the number of customers, then she could factor in the average family size by using the school records. No, dang it. Lots of Marville folks had their students enrolled there. Then again, Mrs. Mason would probably invite all of Marville, too.

"Look at me, sweetheart," Dylan whispered.

He caressed her face and smiled when their gazes locked. Suddenly she didn't much care if the entirety of the tri-county was invited. She was marrying Dylan Mason. Becoming Mary Mason. Future mother of little Dylans, maybe a little Mary for good measure. Her stomach fluttered as another huge grin overtook her. The love in his gaze burned away the fear. As long as he was at her side, she didn't much care what his mom did for the wedding.

"Whatever you want," he said.

"It doesn't matter. I just want you," she replied in a whisper. "Let her have her dream wedding."

"Oh, dear. I'm so sorry. I don't mean to overwhelm you." Mrs. Mason pushed out of her chair and hustled over to Mary. She hugged her tight. "Dylan's right. Whatever you want. I'll cancel the florist and the caterer and the cake, and everything else. We can keep it just family if that's what you want. Okay?"

"I'm okay with whatever you want. I love the idea of showing off my new man to the whole tri-county," Mary teased. Dylan and his brothers chuckled. Vi smiled. "Plan whatever you want...Mom."

The word tumbled from her lips in a not-so-subtle test. She'd said it was okay to call her that, right?

The woman's eyes teared. She blinked, then sniffled. "Thank you, sweetie."

She bustled from the kitchen, saying something about a third cake. Dylan feathered a soft kiss across her lips.

"I love you sweetheart," he said.

"I love you more," she shot back.

"Impossible."

"Wanna bet?"

"What do I get when I win?" Dylan asked.

“I’m not sure. Doesn’t matter because I already know I’m going to win, and I already have my prize lined up.” She let her voice turn husky at the end and leaned forward. “Do you want to know what it is, future hubby?”

“I do,” he said. “See? I’m already practicing for the big day.”

“Good, then when you lose, we can start practicing for something else,” she teased. Hand settled on his chest she leaned in and whispered, “I’m thinking I’d rather call my hubby future daddy soon, which means we need to get all the practice in we can.”

A huge grin spread across his face as he rose. She squealed when he picked her up and headed out of the room.

“Dylan Mason, put me down.”

“Hell no. You’re right. We’re going to get going on that practice. Right now.”

“Dylan, we can’t. Rhea’s missing and we’ve got all the stuff in Marville.” Mary looked at Dylan as he halted halfway up the stairs.

“The guys and Vi and Addy can handle Rhea and Marville. Let them take care of that so I can take care of you.”

Pleasure spiraled in Mary. For once there was something far more important than work. Her friend was out there, in danger, but for once Mary knew someone else would take care of it. For now. She’d be downstairs or over at the control room taking charge soon enough. For now she had a future hubby to love.

Stay tuned for more information on the next release of The Arsenal Series, *Sight Lines*.