



Make Me Stay (A Hope Novel)

By Jaci Burton

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The *New York Times* bestselling author of *Love After All* and the *Play-by-Play* series delivers a new novel about how love sometimes has plans of its own.

Having left his hometown of Hope years ago, only one thing could persuade architect Reid McCormack to come home for a lengthy stay—the challenge of renovating a historic building. But once the job is finished, he'll be headed back to Boston, no matter how much he's drawn to beautiful florist Samantha Reasor.

Samantha watches over her elderly grandmother and pours a piece of herself into every floral creation she designs. Her crush on Reid has been blooming for a while now, but she's reluctant to act on it. A temporary fling isn't what she's looking for, even if Reid is smoking hot and super sexy. She wants a real, permanent, forever kind of love.

Two people with different goals couldn't possibly work, and yet as their attraction grows into something deeper, maybe falling in love is the one thing Samantha and Reid can build a future on.

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Editorial Review

Review

PRAISE FOR THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING NOVELS OF JACI BURTON

“Jaci Burton’s books are always sexy, romantic, and charming!”—Jill Shalvis, *New York Times* bestselling author

“Jaci Burton is a stalwart in the romance genre.”—*USA Today*

“Jaci Burton’s stories are full of heat and heart.”—Maya Banks, *New York Times* bestselling author

“Burton sets the bar high for smalltown allure and just-folks characters who like a good romp—or six—in the hay.”—*Publishers Weekly*

About the Author

Jaci Burton is the *USA Today* and *New York Times* bestselling author of the Hope Novels, including *Love After All*, *Hope Burns*, *Hope Ignites*, and *Hope Flames*, and the Play by Play series, including *Quarterback Draw*, *Straddling the Line*, *Melting the Ice*, and more. She lives in Oklahoma with her husband and dogs. A lover of sports, Jaci can often tell what season it is by what sport is being played. She watches entirely too much television, which she considers “book research.” When she isn’t on deadline, Jaci can be found at her local casino, trying to become a millionaire (so far, no luck). She’s a total romantic and loves a story with a happily ever after, which you’ll find in all her books.

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Chapter One

Reid McCormack stood in the middle of the main floor of the old mercantile in downtown Hope, his boots kicking around years’ worth of dust and debris. The ceiling was collapsing, the original wood floor had seen years of use, and some of the floorboards were worn down to holes. He’d already been to the second and third floor to check things out. The original staircase leading to the second floor should probably be condemned. Plumbing was shit, electrical was shot, and the list of crap items he ticked off in his head should be giving him nightmares.

But Reid had a vision of what this place could be—of what it once had been. As an architect, he built from new—he’d never done work on anything historical. He was an architect, but he was also a licensed contractor. He’d done renovation work here and there, but nothing of this scope.

As he studied the blueprints for the old mercantile he’d agreed to renovate, he still had no idea what he was doing back in his hometown, or why he’d agreed to this job.

It was a big project, and he had plenty of projects with his company in Boston. Shifting responsibilities over had been a giant pain in the ass, as was taking a leave of absence and putting his company—his baby—in the hands of his associates. He’d sweated blood and risked a hell of a lot of money to get his architectural firm

up and running, and with numerous late nights and damn good work, he'd made a success of McCormack Architectural Designs.

The thought of not being in Boston overseeing the business sent a shot of nervousness straight to his gut. But, he'd had to admit, when he'd come back home for his brother Logan's wedding in the spring and they'd taken a look at this old place, it had been childhood memories, plus the challenge of restoring the mercantile to its former glory, that had been too much to resist.

This was his chance to do something out of the ordinary.

He had ideas for the mercantile. A lot of them. And now that he and his brothers had bought the old building back from the town, it was their responsibility to do right by it.

He intended to do it justice.

And when the job was done he'd head back to Boston, where he belonged.

He heard a knock on the front door, dissipating the cloud of memories.

Figuring it was the general contractor he'd hired—or maybe his brothers, who were also supposed to meet him there today—he went to the door and pulled it open.

It wasn't the contractor or his brothers. It was Samantha Reasor, the owner of the flower shop around the corner. Sam was the one who'd pushed hard for them to take on this project. Or rather, for him to take it on. She was as passionate about the mercantile as anyone in Hope.

Today she wore dark skinny jeans that showcased her slender frame. Her blond hair was pulled high on top of her head, and she had on a short-sleeved polo shirt that bore the name Reasor's Flower Shop. And she had the prettiest damn smile he'd ever seen, with full lips painted a kissable shade of pink.

Not that he was thinking about kissing her or anything. He was back in Hope to work.

"Hi, Reid. I heard you were in town and getting ready to start the project. I couldn't wait to get inside here again. I hope I'm not bothering you. If I am, I can take off."

"Hey, Sam. You're not a bother. Come on in. Though the place is still as dusty as it was when we did the walk-through in the spring. Are you sure you want to get dirty?"

She waved her hand as she stepped in. "I don't mind. I've been snipping and arranging flower baskets all day for an event. There are probably leaves in my hair."

As she walked by, he inhaled the fresh scent of—what was that? Freesia? Roses? Hell if he knew, since he didn't know jack about flowers. He only knew that Sam smelled damn good. And there were no leaves in her hair.

She turned in a circle, surveying both up and down the main room. "It's amazing, isn't it?"

He laughed. "Right now it's a dump."

Her gaze settled on him. "Oh, come on. Surely you can see beyond the trash and the layers of dust to what it can be. Do you have ideas yet? I mean, of course you do, because you're here to tear down and build up, so you have all the ideas, right?" She spied the rolled-up documents in his hand. "Do you have blueprints?"

“Yeah.”

“Care to share? I’d love to see the plans you’ve worked up.”

“Actually, the general contractor is due to show up here shortly, along with Luke and Logan. You’re welcome to hang out while we go over them.”

She pulled her phone out of her back pocket. “Unfortunately, I can’t. I have a delivery to make in about thirty minutes. But I’d really like to see the blueprints.”

“Some other time, then.”

Her eyes lit up. “Oh, I know. Are you busy for dinner tonight?”

“Uh, dinner?”

“Sure. Why don’t you come over to my place? I make a mean plate of spaghetti. If you’re not busy with your family. I know you’d like to get reacquainted with them, so I don’t want to step all over that.”

“No, it’s not that. I’ve been here a couple days already, so we’ve done the reacquainting stuff.” He didn’t know what the hell was going on. Was she asking him out, or was she just interested in seeing the blueprints?

“Perfect. Give me your phone and I’ll put my address and cell number in it.”

He handed his phone over and Sam typed in her info.

“Is seven okay? That’ll give me time to close up the shop and get things going.”

“Sure.”

“Great.” She grasped his arm. ‘I’m so glad you’re here, Reid. I’ll see you later. You and your blueprints.’”

She breezed out of the mercantile and he found himself staring at the closed door, wondering what the hell had just happened.

Sam probably just wanted to get a good look at the blueprints when they’d have more time. She was interested in the old building. Not in him.

And he wasn’t interested in her. Or in any woman. He was in town to refurbish the mercantile, and nothing more.

But, whatever. He liked spaghetti. So he’d see Sam, she’d see the blueprints, and that would be it.

Sam went back to the shop, wishing she’d had more time to check out Reid—check out the blueprints. Not that Reid wasn’t some awesome eye candy. Today he’d worn loose jeans, boots, and a short-sleeved T-shirt that showed off his tanned, well-muscled arms.

It had taken everything in her to walk out of the mercantile. Fortunately, she had a job and a timeline, and that always came first. She loaded up the flowers that Georgia Burnett had ordered for the Chamber of Commerce luncheon today, put them in her van, and drove them over to the offices. Georgia, who’d had a terrible fall last year and had spent several months laid up, was back to her old cheery, mobile self again.

And since she was the mother of two of Sam's friends, Emma and Molly, Georgia was like a mother to Sam as well. Which was so nice, since the only family Sam had left was her Grammy Claire.

And family was a big deal to Sam.

She pushed through the doors of the offices, her arms filled with bouquets. Georgia was right there at the front desk waiting for her, looking slim and gorgeous as always.

"Hello, Georgia, how are you?"

"Doing wonderfully, Samantha. And you?"

"Great." She pressed a kiss to Georgia's cheek while simultaneously juggling two baskets of flowers.

"The baskets are gorgeous, honey," Georgia said. "The tables are already set up inside, so you can place them in the center of each one."

"Will do."

Sam went about her business, and once she finished, she said good-bye to Georgia and headed back to the shop. She still had several individual flower orders to prepare and deliver, which took up the remainder of her day.

Which suited her just fine. Busy was good for business, and business had been great lately. She had two weddings coming up, including that of Georgia's daughter Molly next month.

When her phone buzzed, she smiled. Speaking of the bride-to-be . . .

"Hey, Molly," she said, putting her phone on speaker so she could continue to work.

"Are you sure all the flowers we ordered are going to come in on time?" Molly asked.

"Yup."

"In the right colors?"

"Absolutely."

"And how about the lilies? Oh, and the corsages for my mom and for Carter's mom?"

"All under control, honey."

Molly paused. "I'm being a neurotic mess, aren't I?"

"Nope. You're being a bride. This is normal."

"I have a checklist of items, and then I came across flowers, and I know we've gone over this a hundred times, but you know, I just had to check."

Sam was used to this. Brides called her all the time, even if everything was perfect. "Of course you had to check. Call anytime. But Molly? I've got this. Trust me."

"I know you do. Honest, I really do. Oh, and Sam, thanks."

“You’re welcome. I’ll talk to you soon.” She hung up, figuring Molly would call her again tomorrow.

Which didn’t bother her at all, because as a florist, her job was to keep her customers happy. And when one of her customers was also one of her closest friends, that counted double.

She delivered the afternoon flowers, then came back to clean up the shop and prep things for tomorrow morning. By then it was closing time, and she made a quick grocery list so she could dash into the store and get what she needed for dinner tonight.

She had no idea why she’d invited Reid over for dinner. First she had to go in and start blabbering at him like she had some kind of motormouth disease.

Ugh. What was wrong with her, anyway? She was normally calm and in control of herself.

Except around Reid, for some reason. Ever since that night at Logan and Des’s wedding when she’d sat next to him, she’d felt an instant zap of attraction.

And ever since that zap, she’d been ridiculously shy around him.

Normally when a woman was shy, she’d be quiet, right?

But not Samantha. No, she had run-of-the-mouth issues when she was around a man she was attracted to.

So what did she do with Reid? She invited him to dinner. An impulse suggestion, sure, and only because she really wanted to see the blueprints. But was that really the only reason? When he’d been in town in the spring for the wedding, she’d definitely felt that tug of . . . something.

He’d gone back to Boston soon after his brother’s wedding, and she’d ignored the zap, figuring it had been nothing more than a passing mutual interest in the mercantile. But seeing him today, that zap had been something entirely different, and totally biological.

She chewed on her bottom lip and decided to call her best friend, Megan, for some advice. She punched in Megan’s number on her phone.

“What’s up, Sam?” Megan asked when she answered.

“Reid McCormack is back in town.”

“I heard. So he’s going to start work on the mercantile, right?”

“Yes. I popped over there today when I saw him go in. And then I invited him to dinner.”

Megan paused. “That’s interesting. Why?”

Sam pulled up the stool behind the counter and took a seat. “I don’t know. Impulse. And, you know, I got to talking to him. I might have overtalked.”

“You babbled.”

Leave it to her best friend to know her so well. “Yes, I babbled. I guess I babbled my way into a dinner invitation. We were chatting about the building and he had the blueprints, which I was really interested in, and I could tell he was busy, so it was an impulse thing.”

“Always go with your impulses, Sam. You’re obviously attracted to him. Did he say yes?”

“He did. And why do you think I’m attracted to him?”

“Everyone saw the way the two of you were together when we all went to check out the mercantile in the spring.”

Sam frowned. “What do you mean, everyone saw? What did they see?”

“Oh, you know. Heads together, wandering around looking the place over. And when you climbed up the ladder to look at the ceiling? He checked out your butt.”

Sam leaned her arms on the counter. “He did not. He did? Really?”

“He did. Chelsea and I were watching. And he was not looking at the ceiling. He was looking at your butt.”

“Now that is interesting.”

“I know. So enjoy dinner. And see what happens for dessert.”

“I will. But you know, I didn’t invite him for dinner to have . . . dessert with him.”

Megan laughed. “Sure you didn’t.”

“Megan, I’m serious. I just wanted to see his blueprints.”

“Is that what we’re calling it now?”

Sam rolled her eyes. “You’re so funny.”

“I know I am. Call me tomorrow with all the details.”

“Okay.”

Samantha hung up, grabbed her purse, and locked up the shop, then headed out to her car. Once inside, she looked at her phone to double-check her grocery list.

She was going to cook a spaghetti dinner for Reid McCormack tonight, and then she was going to look over his blueprints. And by blueprints, she really meant actual blueprints. Nothing involving “dessert.”

But if he checked out her butt again, dessert might be back on the menu. And she wasn’t talking sweets.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Muriel Colvard:

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book? Sometime, particular person feel need book when they found difficult problem as well as exercise. Well, probably you will require this Make Me Stay (A Hope Novel).

Guadalupe Ramsey:

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George Medrano:

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