
THE FOREVER KIND: SULLY

The McKenna Brothers - Book One

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

Chapter 1

Texas spring had turned hot and dry in early April and was showing no signs of relief. After two and a half months of rainless skies and rising temperatures, the grasses on the campus lawns were already yellow and brittle. The student body and graduating class of the previous year had departed the week before, and the dorms were empty. Workmen were already busy, cleaning, painting, and doing whatever it took to get the campus buildings ready for the upcoming fall classes.

Summer classes were scheduled to begin on Monday. These were accelerated classes to be completed in ten weeks of rigorous study.

One of the summer students was Karina Farinelli. She was only one of many scurrying across the campus. She was concentrating on the campus map in her hand as she charted a route through the maze of buildings. She'd taken evening classes, but she didn't know the layout of the campus buildings. She was trying to decide on the most efficient routes to get from one classroom to another. As usual, her mind was on more than one thing. Managing her life over the next few months was Karina's highest priority. She still had no idea how she was going to run a restaurant, take classes, and do everything she was responsible for

doing. She did know she would somehow do it. One way or another, she'd get the job done. It was what she did. She'd put on her capable hat, and she'd get on with it. People who knew her would never guess that sometimes, all she wanted was a shoulder to lean on, and someone who would take care of her.

Karina tucked herself into the booth closest to the kitchen door and began organizing her life on her phone calendar. It would help get her where she was supposed to be at any given time all summer. The booth she was using was too loud and busy for most customers to enjoy a meal, so it was reserved for restaurant staff. Karina sometimes used the booth as a makeshift office. She turned from her work when a sudden hush settled over the restaurant. Then low whispered voices broke the silence.

Karina saw the hostess leading several members of the McKenna family into the seating area. The famous family of musicians and singers were local celebrities in San Antonio. Carole and Daniel McKenna had been a successful country music duo long before Karina had been born. After several years of success, the couple had quietly married and refocused their interests to having a family and building a music production company. Their previous success was mostly forgotten except when their music was played on retro radio stations.

Two decades later, the McKenna name had reappeared in the music arena. The couple's three sons had formed a band named I-35. The band had burst onto the music scene with a rock and blues album that took the music world by storm. Micah, Sullivan, and Coyote McKenna; nineteen, seventeen, and ten at the time had written, produced, and marketed an album with their parents' backing. Three of their single releases had rocketed the young group from obscurity to number one positions on the sales charts. They had gone on to conquer the rest of the listening world, breaching rock, country and blues stations. I-35's

first album had sold millions worldwide. The independently produced CD had been nominated for four Grammys. That year the band had walked away with three of the trophies, and they were launched.

Since their debut, I-35, locally known as the McKenna brothers, had traveled extensively. They had toured the world and produced four additional albums. Enlarging the local family-owned production company. Tri-Texas Productions was a multi-million-dollar music company, employing, and representing many musicians in the San Antonio area.

Karina recognized Sullivan and Coyote McKenna, as did most of the restaurant patrons. The two were without their older brother, the leader of the band. Over the years, San Antonio residents had become used to seeing the brothers in and around town.

During their first couple of years of success, frenzied teenage fans, mostly young females, had flocked to San Antonio to visit the home place of their musical idols. San Antonio had, in turn, enjoyed a swell in tourism.

The brothers, who had caused the phenomenon, had been noticeably absent since they had launched a yearlong world tour. When the family had returned, it was to a home broken into, picked apart and angry neighbors who were fed up with their lives being aggravated by fans of the boy wonders. The family had promptly moved to a secluded, gated community behind the safety of high-fencing and security systems.

Now, after producing commercially successful and critically acclaimed albums successfully for years, most of the hysteria had settled. As young adults, the brothers came and went as they pleased with little fanfare unless they were deliberately hyping the media coverage for a new album release or if Sullivan McKenna was promoting a movie release. In the middle of all the mania, Sully had tried acting, and had been wildly successful in that venue too.

Two younger children accompanied the McKenna brothers.

Karina assumed they were two of the four children adopted by the McKenna parents. A fatal car accident involving a family member had left the children, orphans. Karina vaguely remembered the news release because she'd identified with the children's loss.

She ducked her head and tried to refocus on work. She felt guilty over knowing so much about strangers, but she supposed it was typical for celebrities.

The hostess led the McKenna party to the adjoining booth, and Karina couldn't help a small jolt of excitement as Sullivan slid into the seat directly behind her. Karina was a fan, although she had very little time to listen to music and no time for concerts and the fan obsession of her early teenage years. Somewhere, packed away in a box, was a collection of posters, magazines and favorite photographs. Somewhere, packed away in a box, there were many of her lost dreams and hopes for happy-ever-afters.

"Okay, guys, are you hungry?" Sully asked his younger siblings.

"I want ice cream," the little girl said in a pleading voice.

"That's stupid. I want pizza!" the smaller boy exclaimed.

"Noah, Lily, stop it," warned Coyote. "This will be our last outing together for a while, so no fighting."

"Can I have ice cream?" Lily asked.

"If you eat a decent dinner," Coyote answered, in a time-old repetition of his mother's words, as their server handed them menus.

"Mom says Lily doesn't eat enough to keep a bird alive," Noah repeated, the sole intent of the nine-year old's remark being to torment his five-year-old sister.

Lily leaned against Sully and batted her big blue eyes at him.

Sully's look was one of resigned defeat as he surrendered all hope of getting his youngest sister to eat a full meal. "Why don't

we order a pizza first? Then we might have ice cream. It depends on how you two behave.”

“Yes,” Noah exclaimed, pumping his fist in the air and causing both of his brothers to smile.

“I wish Allison had come,” Coyote remarked.

“Allison doesn’t want to spend time with her dumb brothers. It’s bad enough she’s being dragged off on some dumb vacation,” Noah quoted spitefully. “That’s what she said on the phone. All Allison does is complain since Macy left. She goes to her room, talks with her friends, puts on make-up, and paints her toenails.”

“Back off, Noah. Allison is having a hard time with Macy going off to study dance,” Sully interceded mildly. “She’s probably lonely. The twins have never been separated before. It’s good that she can spend time with her friends. Girlfriends are important at her age.”

Sully was listening to his youngest brother with concern. The three older brothers had accepted the four younger children as their siblings, but only Coyote had spent much time with the youngsters. Sully and Micah, were busy with separate careers and adult lives beyond I-35. When Coyote joined Sully and Micah on various projects and tours, Noah felt outnumbered by his sisters, as he was one to three. He was going through an *I hate girls* stage. It was a stage Sully had never experienced.

“Girlfriends are important at any age,” Coyote casually remarked with a little tongue-in-cheek smirk.

“Girls are stupid!” Noah snarled, and Coyote popped the boy lightly on the back of his head with the palm of his hand.

“Behave!” the seventeen-year-old admonished. Coyote flashed a wry grin across the table to his brother. Noah’s behavior could have been a clone of himself at the same age.

“The next time you guys get to eat pizza, you will be in Italy,” Sully commented.

“They probably don’t even have real pizza there!” Noah

grumbled. "I don't know why I have to go. Why can't I stay at home with you guys?"

"The folks are not going to let you stay with us," Sully explained wearily. "Family vacation means the family goes."

"You don't have to go!"

"We're not kids," Sully responded.

"Coyote is still a kid! I don't want to see stupid statues and museums. I'll be stuck with Allison and Lily the whole time. This whole deal is bogus! Can I go play video games?" the youngster demanded.

"Yeah," Coyote agreed as he stood to let the boy slide out of the booth. He gestured and mouthed to his brother, "I'll talk to him."

When Noah and Coyote left the booth to go to the game room, Lily snuggled against her older brother.

"Why doesn't Noah like me?"

Sullivan tightened his hug on the child. "Lollipop, Noah is a typical little boy who thinks little girls are yucky right now. He'll get over it."

Lily gave an exaggerated dramatic sigh.

"I think Noah and Allison should go with Mommy and Daddy. I should stay here with you and Coyote. I'll be really, really good!"

"Not a chance, sweetie," Sully said patiently. "Mom and Dad would miss you like crazy, and Coyote and I won't have time to take care of you. We'll be busy taking college classes this summer."

"I'm not going to have any fun," Lily complained. "Allison and Noah pick on me all the time. I'm going to ask Micah to let me stay with him. He loves me."

Sullivan smiled at Lily's dramatics. There was likely to be another actor in the family. "We all love you, but not so much when you behave like a spoiled little girl. Micah will be here tomorrow morning to see everyone off at the airport. He's busy too. He has a lot of work to do in a short time, but he hasn't

forgotten you're leaving. You'll get to see Macy when you go to Paris. This ballet program means the world to her. She was brave to go to Paris by herself. I know she misses you like crazy, and she will be excited to see you!"

"Sully, please, please, please. I want to stay with you!" Lily pleaded.

Sully shook his head and wagged a pointed finger toward his little sister. "Don't do that," he reprimanded sternly. "There is no chance of it happening. I have my hands full."

"Allison bet Mr. Rutherford ten dollars that Coyote would get into trouble before the summer was over," Lily tattled.

"Well, I'm going to try to prevent him from getting into trouble," Sully promised, wondering if he could lay a bet with their booking agent. He too, had his doubts about containing his younger brother's high spirits for the duration of the summer.

The pizza arrived, and Sully left Lily sitting at the table while he went to retrieve his brothers. He kept his eyes on the child and at the doorway of the game room, motioned for his brothers to come out.

Karina was shamelessly eavesdropping while she half-heartedly completed the paperwork in front of her. She had lived in San Antonio, this time for eight years, but this was her first sighting of the I-35 band members in person. She was watching them in one of the mirrors strategically placed around the restaurant for the wait staff to quickly glance at and avoid collisions while going around corners.

She didn't need the mirror as she watched Sully coming across the room. She shielded her eyes with her hand, pretending to read the paperwork spread out on the table. Her teen idol had grown into a gorgeous man. He was much more mature looking than he'd been in his teens when her crush on him had been one among millions. He was over six-feet tall and lean-hipped. His blond hair was thick and curly, always looking a bit messy and like he needed a haircut. Being blond and blue-eyed had made him stand out onstage against both of his brothers, as they were

brown-eyed with brown hair. The handsome young face that had made him a pop icon among millions of teenage girls had smoothed out to manly features. His jawline had squared into a strong profile, and she could see a light five o'clock shadow on his face.

Coyote was walking behind his brothers, and he towered over them. The youngest member of the I-35 band was a good five or six inches taller than Sully. He was larger and more muscular than both of his older brothers. His frame was extra large, and he resembled a football player more than a musician. His long hair was pulled into a neat ponytail, trailing nearly to his waist. He was famous for letting his hair loose during performances when it flew around his head in a frenzy as he beat out wild rhythms on various instruments, usually behind a guitar.

The McKennas slid in the booth behind Karina, and began eating their pizza. The family members companionably argued over this and that, and occasionally one of them would plead with the youngest to eat.

Karina knew the brothers were students at Trevecca College. As a part-time student, taking evening courses, she'd never seen them on campus. They only appeared during the summer sessions. Micah had been known for taking evening classes, but she'd never crossed paths with him. She was trying to work her way back to student status. She had been forced to leave college at the end of her second year because of her father's illness, subsequent death and other circumstances.

It was common knowledge on campus that McKenna Music, Inc. had donated a great deal of money to Trevecca College to develop its online presence. There were lots of cameras and sound equipment in the classrooms, for live classes. The family had the kind of money it took to influence college administrators that having online classes was necessary to compete with other colleges. For the last five years, a major entertainment industry magazine had ranked all three brothers of I-35 in the top twenty-five highest industry earners under the age of thirty.

A light argument broke out in the booth behind Karina when Noah complained again about having to travel with his parents on vacation. Sully and Coyote were trying to convince the boy he would enjoy the vacation, but he wasn't buying it.

Meanwhile, the small child lying on the booth seat beside Karina started kicking and waving her arms. It was an indication she was finished with her bottle and ready for attention. Karina lifted her nine-month-old daughter and propped her on her shoulder. She unconsciously bounced and patted the child on the back with one hand while gathering her books and papers into a stack, and stuffing them into an oversized messenger bag.

Suddenly Karina heard a yelp of, "Hey!" behind her. She pulled Alexa away from the back of the booth seat, eliciting another yelp, "Hey! Hold Up!" It was only then she realized her daughter was attached to something.

Sully McKenna knew precisely and painfully what the baby was attached to—his hair. "Hey, quit pulling!" he griped, grabbing the little hands behind his head, unable to see his assailant.

Lily jumped up from her seat in the booth and twisted around on her knees to see what was happening. Karina was aware of Coyote towering over her as he lifted her baby gently out of her grasp.

"She's got herself tangled," he explained as Sully twisted around, trying to dislodge the tiny fists. Karina ducked under Coyote's arm and unwound the tight, little fisted fingers from his brother's famous blond locks.

"I'm so sorry," she exclaimed, her face flaming red from embarrassment.

Released from his nemesis, Sully turned to face his tiny tormentor. He found himself face-to-face with a lovely young woman and a baby with identical dark curly brown hair, with deep reddish tones and sapphire blue eyes.

"Well, hello there," he greeted with a grin.

Coyote handed the baby to Sully and slid into his seat on the other side of the booth.

“I am so sorry!” Karina repeated.

Sully flashed her another smile. “Don’t worry about it.” He shoved his plate out of the way and sat the baby on the edge of the table, holding her firmly under her arms to keep her in place as he took a good look at her. “Hey there, little dumpling. I haven’t had anyone get tangled in my hair since Lily here was a baby.”

“Sully!” the five-year-old protested in embarrassment.

“Well, it’s true,” he laughed. “You pulled many a chunk of hair from all of us!”

The little girl rolled her eyes at her brother’s teasing as she patted the baby’s chubby knees. “What’s her name?”

“Alexa,” Karina supplied somewhat surprised. Her daughter had unknowingly attacked a superstar, and he wasn’t angry or upset. Sullivan was looking at her daughter intently and smiling.

“Alexa, you are a beautiful baby,” Sully cooed. Coyote reached across the table and ruffled his fingers lightly in her curls.

“She’s a pretty baby,” Lily offered shyly.

“Thank you. You are very pretty yourself,” Karina answered. She turned to the brothers, “I’m sorry we disturbed your dinner.”

“No problem,” Coyote answered with a grin, introducing himself, and his brothers and sister.

Karina introduced herself with a returning smile. She reached for her child, and Sullivan released her. She excused herself, and with Alexa on her hip, grabbed her bag, and left.

Sully watched the young woman walk away with her daughter until Coyote gave him a nudge under the table.

“She has a kid. Husbands usually go with kids,” he commented softly.

Sully gave one last look at the retreating figure as she stopped at the cash register.

“All the pretty ones are taken,” he mumbled.

“Pity, poor Sully,” Coyote smirked. Then he grimaced as his brother landed a hard stomp on his foot.

The McKennas returned to their dinner, and a few minutes later, their server appeared with a tray laden with ice cream sundaes.

“We haven’t ordered dessert yet,” Coyote said to keep the server from making a mistake.

“They were sent over by a friend,” the server clarified. “If you want something else, I can change the order.”

“Heck, no!” Noah protested.

The older brothers smiled at Noah’s response and accepted the ice cream. They questioned their server to find out who had treated them, but she wouldn’t acknowledge their benefactor.

“I think it was the pretty lady with the baby,” Lily remarked around a mouth full of ice cream.

When Sully signaled their server for a bill, she returned to the table and handed him a check with *Paid in Full* scribbled across the bottom.

I-35 was accustomed to perks. It came with being celebrities. When they were on tour or performing, freebies were typical, although they usually came with a price tag of an autographed photograph to be hung on the wall, or a write-up in a gossip magazine as publicity for the eatery. When they were on tour or at high profile clubs in major cities, meals were comped in exchange for free promotion.

Nevertheless, when the brothers were home in San Antonio, they were rarely extended this kind of treatment. They didn’t expect or want it. They preferred to be treated as ordinary as possible when they were on home ground and out of the spotlights.

They argued with their server to reveal their sponsor, but she was as tightlipped with information as she was friendly. They surrendered graciously but flipped the bill over, wrote TIP on it, and left the equivalent of their dinner and desserts.

Sully looked around and poked his head into the other part of the restaurant. It hadn’t skipped his notice that the girl with the baby had the same name as the eatery.