

RESPECTING THE
ROUGHNECKS

BIG G RANCH - BOOK THREE



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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



SARAH

Sarah Jones rushed through the general store, collecting the items on her list. She was short on time today as Johnny, her new husband, told her he would be finished with his errands soon and to meet him at the carriage so they could get back to his ranch.

She'd moved from her sister-in-law Kate's house in town to his home on the ranch after the wedding and was still busy adding her own touches to the house he'd built on the property.

In her hurry, she dropped one of her items. As she bent to retrieve it, a man's hand lifted it off the floor and handed the tin of tea to her.

"Thank you," she said and then smiled when she saw the man's face. "Conrad! It's good to see you. I'm glad I ran into you. I didn't get a chance to talk to you at the wedding, but I've wanted to tell you how happy I am that you were able to work things out with your sister and that you've decided to stay on here."

"Thank you, Sa... I mean, Mrs. Jones. I'm glad things have worked out as well. And I wish you well in your new marriage. I should let you finish your shopping. Do you need help getting these things up to the counter?"

"No, but thank you. I'm finished now and I think I can manage. Good day to you."

Conrad Appleby tipped his hat and said his goodbye, then he went on his way.

Sarah proceeded to the counter where the owner was holding the rest of her items for her. After she paid and waited for Johnny to come help her carry them, she thought about the handsome man she'd met on the train on her way to Oklahoma. She had enjoyed talking with him. He was pleasant and not bad to look at. But she hadn't given him a second thought once she'd arrived and met her Johnny. She had come west as a mail order bride, to marry a rancher. And Johnny Jones had turned out to be even more than she had dreamed of. Rugged and good-looking, with a hard, muscled body and sandy-colored hair that fell in waves around his face, he had the bluest eyes of any man she'd ever seen. She couldn't wait to see what their babies would look like. And judging from the way they had quickly become compatible in the marriage bed, she wouldn't have to wait too long to find out, she was sure. She was looking forward to a long and happy life with her man and a houseful of little Joneses.

Her Johnny was sweet and caring, and he took good care of her but also had a dominant side. She'd learned early on that the way of the west was for the man to take his woman in hand if she needed it. And that thrilled her, surprisingly. In fact, everything about her new husband thrilled and excited her. She was lucky that things had worked out for her. She'd heard stories of some mail order brides being unhappy, but the ones she'd met here hadn't seemed to regret their decision.

She was thinking naughty thoughts about the way they'd

spent their evening after supper the night before when the subject of those thoughts entered the store.

Johnny sidled up next to her and took some packages from her. Whispering in her ear, he asked, "What is my naughty little minx thinking about?"

She looked up to see a knowing smile on his face. "Wouldn't you like to know, Mr. Jones?" she teased.

"I'm sure I have a pretty good idea. And the sooner we get home, the sooner we can make it a reality. Are you ready to go?"

"Oh, yes, sir," she said as she walked out of the store with Johnny following her.

When the young couple arrived at their ranch, Johnny told her to go on in while he carried in their purchases and had one of his men see to the horses and wagon. "Bedroom, naked," he commanded as he helped her down.

Sarah grinned at him and replied, "Yes, sir."

Once inside the house and in the bedroom they shared, she wasted no time complying with his wishes. She was as anxious as he was to explore their newfound intimacy again. After all, it was expected; they were still newlyweds. The hands all knew to stay away from the house. She was sure Johnny had made it abundantly clear to them when he'd brought his new bride home for the first time a few months ago.

As she carefully folded her clothing and placed it on a chair, she thought back to their wedding day—and the night that had followed.

She'd been concerned that her friend Annabelle wouldn't be back from her trip in time to stand up with her. But she'd made it. In fact, she had surprised all of them by coming back as Mrs. Clyde Gonzalez. The odd thing was that she and Emma were supposed to be back east. Turns out, they'd gone to Texas with one of the Big G ranch hands in search of Clyde, Claude and their sister. It was all very secretive, but since everyone got a happy ending out of the trip, no one really questioned them

about it. They'd brought back the Gonzalez boys' sister, Lizzie, and a couple of cousins. She'd heard more family was to follow. So maybe that was why they'd all gone in the first place, to bring back cousins and the sister. All that mattered to Sarah was that her friend was safe and happy and that she'd made it back in time for the wedding.

A lot of people came to the wedding to congratulate them. She couldn't remember all of their names. Conrad and his sister and her family had been there. There was a meal for everyone afterward that Johnny's family had arranged, and then Johnny had brought her home, here, to his ranch, to his bed.

And, oh, if these walls could talk...

She heard footsteps on the stairs and smiled. She ran to the corner and stood, as she knew Johnny liked for her to do.

"Mmm, what a sight to see," his deep voice said as he entered the room. "I'll never get tired of this."

Sarah grinned to herself as she waited for him to walk across the room. Were all married couples as frisky as they were? She wondered at times if they were. It seemed that her husband enjoyed some really sensual things. She wasn't complaining, mind you, she just wondered. Maybe she could casually mention it to Annabelle sometime. She was a newly-wed, too. Johnny's sister had hinted to her that the marriage bed could be a glorious place when they'd chatted before the wedding.

No more thinking, now, though, because Johnny was standing behind her, nuzzling her neck. Sarah moaned as she threw her head back and enjoyed the now familiar sensations beginning to take over her body and mind. She knew they would grow and grow until she couldn't stand it any longer, and then, when Johnny said it was time, she would let go and the most delightful feelings would consume her, making her body shudder and her mind float away as if on a cloud or an ocean wave. It was hard for her to describe the way he made her feel,

but she knew that now she'd discovered it, she never wanted to be without it again.

She shivered as his hand found a breast and began to knead her nipple. Then he scooped her up in his arms and carried her over to the bed. Instead of laying her on it, though, he stood her on her feet, sat down on the edge and pulled her over his lap. It was a ritual, one they practiced often in their foreplay and love-making. She stripped and stood in the corner, he spanked her, which set them both on fire, then he made passionate love to her, sometimes several times.

Today, however, she knew it would only be once as they both had chores to do, and it was the middle of the day. But she was sure that when night came, they would do it again. She couldn't believe how wanton she had become since marrying this handsome, sweet, dominant man. It was as if she couldn't get enough of him. Apparently, he felt the same way about her.

Smack! Smack! Smack! Those three sharp swats to her rear brought her out of her thoughts and back to the present. One to the left cheek, one to the right and one on the top of a thigh. More rained down as he alternated spots, making her bottom and upper thighs a bright apple red color before he was finished. One would think she would be upset with him. On the contrary, she wanted him so much right now, he could have thrown her on the hard, wooden floor and taken her and she wouldn't have complained at all.

When he was satisfied with the color of her bottom, Johnny moved her to the bed, kissed her and stood to remove his own clothes before joining her.

Johnny Jones believed a wife should be well spanked at all times and equally well loved. He'd learned this from his dear sister's husband. It had worked so well for them that he decided to enforce it in his own marriage to his sweet Sarah. And, shockingly, the girl he'd chosen to be his bride hadn't balked at all. Apparently, she'd been talking to his sister.

Kisses and caresses followed before Johnny claimed her. Since he had to get back to work, he wasted no time, thrusting forcefully as his new wife eagerly matched his movements with her own. Soon, she was begging for permission to release and even though she knew he liked to make her wait, today, he didn't. So she exploded and so did he.

"Mmm, I hate to get out of this bed, but duty calls," he murmured as he kissed her lovingly before he got up to wash, dress, and head out.

She watched as he got ready. When he'd gone, she also got cleaned up then went into the kitchen. He'd already put away the cold things, so she only had to put the rest away before deciding what to cook for their supper. She pattered around the house for a while then put a roast in a pot to cook. She started peeling vegetables to add to it when there was a knock on the door.

Wiping her hands on a kitchen towel, she hurried to the door. One of the ranch hands stood on the porch. He seemed upset.

"George, what's wrong? Come on in."

"Ma'am, it's Mr. Jones."

"What? Johnny just left a few hours ago to go do chores."

"There's been an accident. One of the men went to get the doc. Please, you need to come with me. We were gonna carry him to the house, but we thought maybe we shouldn't move him."

Sarah looked at him in disbelief, unable to form any words. Finally, she said, "Let me take care of the food I have cooking. We don't need two disasters today." She rushed to the kitchen and turned off the stove then grabbed her shawl and went with George.

"How bad is it?" she asked the man as he helped her up onto his horse.

He told her it would be best if she rode with him, as she might become upset and frighten her own. "I'm afraid it's bad,

ma'am. He was moving some of the cattle and one of the bulls went after him. Gored him pretty bad."

"Oh, no! Someone should get his sister."

"The man who went after the doc is going to stop and tell her."

"Oh, good."

"We couldn't get to them fast enough when we realized what was happening. We all tried, ma'am."

"I'm sure you did what you could," Sarah said, wiping a tear from her eye.

They had arrived at the pasture where the accident had taken place. Apparently, some of the men had gotten the bull and put him in the barn. The rest of the cattle had been moved and the gate shut. The ranch hands were gathered around Johnny. When they saw George approaching with Sarah, they moved to make room for her to get to her husband.

She knelt beside him and took his hand in hers. There was blood everywhere but the hands had tried to stop it with Johnny's shirt, she could see. "Honey, I'm here. Open your eyes for me, sweetheart. The doctor is on his way." She leaned over and kissed him.

Johnny opened his eyes and looked in hers. "I love you, sweet Sarah. Take care of things for me." And then his eyes closed again and his hand fell limp.

"No!" Sarah screamed. "No, no, not like this. Please, God, no."

George picked her up and held her, like a kindly father would his daughter. "I'm so sorry, Miz Jones. Come on, let me get you back to the house. Your sister-in-law will be here soon."

Somehow, he got her back. She didn't know how. She remembered nothing.

She was lying on her bed, the same bed she and Johnny had made love in just hours before. Someone was holding a cool cloth on her forehead. She could hear voices.

"I'll leave this medicine here. It will help her sleep if she can't later."

"Thank you, Doc. And thank you for getting here so quickly." That was Johnny's brother-in-law Jim's voice.

"I wish there had been something I could have done, but he'd lost too much blood by the time I made it. He was injured too badly."

"At least you were able to help us with Sarah. This is going to be very hard for her. I'll see that she takes the medication if she needs it." Kate, Johnny's sister, was talking now.

"Try to get her to drink some tea or eat some broth later. She needs to keep up her strength."

"I will," Kate promised. "It looked like she was starting supper, so I finished cooking that. Maybe she will eat a little later."

"Are you two going to stay out here with her for a few days?" Doc asked.

"Yes, I think it's best," Jim said.

"All right, let me know if you need anything."

"I'll walk you out. Thanks again, Doc," she heard Jim say.

Sarah didn't want to open her eyes and face the truth. She knew Johnny was gone, and that Kate and Jim were here with her. But she needed just a little more time to process it all without having to face anyone. And so she kept her eyes closed and tried to drift off again.

"Let's leave her alone and have supper," Jim suggested when he came back.

She heard Kate agree, and when the door closed, she let the tears fall.

Three days later, she laid her beloved new husband to rest. The churchwomen had prepared a dinner after the burial, and most of the area ranchers and townspeople were there to pay their respects to Johnny. Jim had his hands full with both Kate and Sarah.

Annabelle and her husband, Clyde, talked with Sarah and offered to help her in any way they could.

Conrad was there with his sister and the Garrisons. He also offered to help her with any business matters she didn't understand.

It was all too much for Sarah. Seeing that she was close to collapsing, Conrad led her to a chair. "You should sit and rest. It's been an exhausting few days for you. Let me get you some coffee or tea."

"Coffee, please, thank you," she said weakly.

Clara Mae, Conrad's sister, came over and sat with her. "Just take a few deep breaths, honey. When was the last time you ate something?"

"I don't even remember. Kate and Jim have been staying with me and I know she's been bringing food in to me on a tray, but for the life of me, I couldn't tell you if I ate it."

Clara Mae looked over at Johnny's sister. She was crying in her husband's arms. She probably needed a break from her sister-in-law so she could grieve for her brother. An idea popped into her head. When Conrad returned with the coffee, she asked him to stay with Sarah. "I'll be right back," she said.

A few minutes later, after conferring with her husband, Clayton, she returned. "Sarah, honey, why don't you come home with us for a few days? Kate and Jim can go home, and we'll take good care of you. Clayton thinks it is a good idea. You shouldn't be alone yet."

"But what about the ranch?" Sarah asked.

"Sarah, dear, you can't take care of that now. You need time. George and the others will stay on and help you. I talked to some of them earlier today and that's what they told me," Clayton said when he joined them. "You need time to rest and regroup before you decide what to do about the ranch."

"Yes, Sarah, it would be best. There are plenty of us at Clayton's place to make sure you are eating and resting properly,"

Conrad added. "You will make yourself sick if you don't start taking care of yourself."

"I-I just don't know. Let me speak to Jim and Kate and see what they think I should do."

"You stay here. I'll bring them over," Conrad said.

Jim and Kate walked over with him and sat down next to Sarah. "Honey, Conrad told us the Garrisons have asked you to stay with them for a while. I think it's a good idea," Kate said softly as she took her brother's widow's hand.

"Are you sure?" Sarah asked. "What about the ranch? Johnny asked me to take care of it, you know. Right before..." She started crying softly again.

"I know, I know. The men are going to stay on. Jim has talked to them. He will go out and check on things every day for you. You and I both need some rest. We need time to grieve for Johnny. He would want us to do our grieving and move on. The ranch will be fine. When we are all feeling better and have our wits about us again, we'll decide what to do. Or rather, you can decide. The ranch belongs to you now. But we'll always be around to help you. You are not alone, Sarah. You were a good wife to Johnny, however brief the union was. He loved you."

"And you have good friends who will help, too," Clara Mae said.

"That's right," Annabelle added as she came over to tell them she and Clyde were leaving. "You have all of us."

Finally, Sarah gave in and agreed to go with Clara Mae, Clayton and Conrad. Jim and Kate said they would go back to the house and get some of her things ready. Conrad agreed to pick them up before he went back to the Garrison place.

It was settled, and soon everyone began to leave to go about their day. Sarah looked around, wishing her day were normal too. But she feared she would never know "normal" again.

She hugged her sister-in-law and brother-in-law and thanked

them for all they had done for her. Then she let Clayton lead her to the wagon. He helped both her and his wife, and Conrad told them he would be along after he picked up her things.

Clara Mae and Laura, who, with her husband Everett Garrison, had also come to Clayton and Clara Mae's house, helped to get her settled in one of the guest rooms.

"Now, how about a nice cup of tea?" Laura asked.

"I've got to check on little Clay, then I'll be back to see if you need anything. Ma and Pa Barrett stayed here with Charlie and Clay while we all went to the service. Mary Catherine and Charles will be by to pick up their little one soon."

When they had gone, Sarah looked around the room. It was fresh and clean, with a beautiful quilt on the bed. She took off her shoes and decided to lie down for a bit. Laura soon came in with tea and set the tray down on a table beside the bed.

"Here you go, sweetie. I'm glad you decided to rest."

"When are you due?" Sarah asked.

"Not for a while. Mary Catherine and I are due about the same time, I believe."

"I guess I'll never get to be a mother now. We—Johnny and I—were being careful so he wouldn't get me with child just yet." A tear slid down her cheek as she remembered that last afternoon in their bed.

"Now, don't talk like that. You never know what the future holds. It will take time, but someday, you may be ready to move forward. You loved Johnny, but he loved you too. He wouldn't want you to grieve him for the rest of your life. I know he wouldn't."

"I know that too, but I don't think I could ever find anyone as good and kind as Johnny."

"Well, you don't have to worry about that now or for a long time if you don't want to. You need to rest, get your strength back, and then go home and make some decisions. Right now,

though, you don't need to think about anything but yourself. And we're all going to make sure that's exactly what you do."

Clara Mae popped her head back in. "Mary Catherine and Charles have taken little Charlie and Ma and Pa home. Conrad is back with your things. I wanted to make sure it was all right for him to bring in your bags."

"Yes, it's fine. Laura and I were just having tea and talking. Can you join us?" Sarah asked.

"Yes, I would like that. Clayton is putting Clay down for a nap, but I'd love to chat with you. Let me tell Conrad to bring your things and then I will be back."

After Conrad brought in the few bags Kate had packed for Sarah, he said goodnight and Clara Mae closed the door after him.

"Now, are you settling in all right? Is the room suitable?"

"The room is lovely, thank you. I'm just numb right now. I feel like I need to sleep for a week."

"Well, if that's what you need to do, then do it. But after a week, I'll be getting you up and making you get some fresh air," Clara Mae said with a laugh.

"I will let Everett know I am staying here this afternoon and to come here for supper," Laura said. "He and Clayton will probably want to check on things with the hands."

"Thank you, Laura," Clara Mae said. "Just don't overtire yourself. You sit and talk with Sarah and I'll start supper when you get back."

A few minutes later, she came back and Clara Mae left them to talk. "If you need anything, I'll be in the kitchen."

Laura looked at the sad young woman. "If you want to talk, I'm here. If not, you don't have to say a word. We'll just sit and have our tea."

"You are all so kind."

"Conrad and Annabelle have always talked highly of you."

We're happy to help and to get to know you better," Laura said with a smile.

Sarah talked then, about all the things on her mind, while Laura listened sympathetically. When Sarah finally fell asleep, Laura pulled a quilt from the back of the chair and rested too.

It had done Sarah a world of good just to get things off her chest. She slept soundly until Clara Mae came in to tell her supper was almost ready and asked if she wanted a tray or would like to join the family.

"I think I'd like to join you if it's all right," Sarah said shyly.

"Of course, it is. We'll see you in a few minutes."