

SPRING FEVER DADDIES

SECOND CHANCE RANCH



RAYANNA JAMISON

BLUSHING BOOKS

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CHAPTER 1



APRIL

*J*ealousy was a green-eyed bitch. In this case, that bitch was me. And with my bright red hair, green was not my best color.

Running my fingers over the soft white paper the letter was printed on, I scowled at the photo in front of me. I should not have run home on my lunch break to eat and grab my mail. Now my whole entire day was going to be wrecked because I couldn't not be a jealous bitch.

"Hello, burning hunk of sexy man love. Who are these hotties, and who in the hell is that lucky woman between them?" My friend, Janine, smacked her gum loudly as she grabbed the photo off the desk and held it between her fingertips.

"That's my friend, Merry. And her baby daddies, Slade and Blake."

Janine's jaw dropped. "Shut the front door. Baby daddies? How the hell does that work? She got a kid with each of them?"

"No, one baby, so far, but they are all in a relationship, so they

aren't going to find out who the biological father is. Unless, at some point, they really need to, for health reasons or something, I guess."

"Hot damn. You know these people? They're wearing cowboy hats in this picture. Chicago is a long way from cowboy hat territory."

"They're from the ranch." I tried to snatch the picture away from her so she would leave. She swooped out of the way and clutched it to her chest.

"The ranch? That place you're always waxing poetic about, calling them your family and all that?" Her eyes narrowed. "These hotties have any brothers?"

"About thirty of them," I deadpanned, waiting for her to remember that Second Chance Ranch was a home for foster children. Or it had been, in its heyday. Now, it was just Nan, Merry, Slade and Blake running an outreach program that paired horses with local foster kids.

Janine nodded and peered at the photo again. "Some girls have all the luck. Only thing that could make me even more jealous would be if these cowboys knew how to handle a riding crop in the bedroom."

Janine was a kinky bitch, who had a penchant for having her ass smacked. The harder and more often the better. And, of course, she was just generally a loud person, so everyone here at the office knew her preference for kink.

"I'm pretty sure they do know how to handle a crop," I mused. "Among other things."

"Well, hot damn. Some girls have all the luck." She placed the photo back on the desk in front of me with a sigh. Her eyes fell on the letter that had come with it, before I was able to move it out of her line of sight.

"What's that?" She pointed.

"Oh, it's just a letter from Merry. Nothing special. They are trying to get me to come down and help out at the ranch for a few months. Or maybe longer. I don't really know."

“Like a job?” Her eyebrows furrowed in confusion.

“Yeah, I guess. Sort of. With Merry being pregnant, Nan being old, and Blake and Slade being so protective, they want to hire a housekeeper slash cook.”

“And they want you to be that person?”

“I guess.” I shrugged. “It doesn’t matter. I already have a job.”

“Girl! You crazy? All you ever talk about is that ranch! And you are so burnt out on city life. You need a change of pace. Preferably one where you’re surrounded by gorgeous cowboys.”

“Gorgeous, taken, fully committed to my good friend, cowboys,” I reminded her.

She waved her hand dismissively. “Girl. It’s Texas. Surely, those two are not the only hot cowboys in the whole state. If they are gonna pay you good and give you a place to live, you should go. Fulfill your dreams for once. Take a chance. Find a man who isn’t a selfish city boy. You’ve seen enough of those to last a lifetime.”

I sighed heavily. Everything Janine said was true. And completely valid. I could go if I wanted to. And I *was* burnt out on city life. Especially city men. But I wasn’t sure that relocating to a ranch in Texas was really the answer.

I was starting to feel like I was destined for the single life. Or a life full of heartbreak. I searched my whole life for one decent man who would love me fully and completely and stay faithful to me, and only me, and I had yet to find him.

And Merry scored, not one, but two of the hottest cowboys I have ever laid eyes on. And I had laid eyes on a lot of men in my life, thank you very much.

Unfortunately, I had a dominant personality and what some might call a savior complex. Not to mention, an affinity for assholes. Let’s not forget that. Sighing loudly, I turned my attention back to the letter and enclosed picture, which was a pregnancy announcement. No news there. I had been at the ranch when she’d told Slade and Blake and, well, everyone else who happened to be there for the annual Christmas party, which was a hell of a lot of

people. Pretty much everyone the threesome knew, I was sure. So the announcement was just a formality or, in this case, more salt for the wound. Damn, they looked great together and so happy. Their story was the kind of thing fairy tales were made of. Seriously, it basically belonged on the pages of the trashy romance novels I liked to read late at night while nursing a broken heart and inhaling pints of Ben and Jerry's and watching sappy Hallmark movies.

Dammit. Wiping a tear from the corner of my eye, I turned the picture over, and turned my attention to the letter once again.

Dear April, I read.

I am writing this letter from my spot near Nan on the couch, because Blake and Slade insist on pampering and babying me for the entire nine months. I really wonder sometimes if neither of them have been around a pregnant woman at any point in their lives.

With all the pushing and prodding they did to get me to work with the kids again, doesn't it figure that they don't seem to want to let me anywhere near them now? Okay, I get it, it's not the kids they are worried about, it's the horses, but still.

It wouldn't be so bad if they would let me work around the house and take care of Nan, but they won't let me do much of anything. They treat Nan and me both like invalids and insist on doing, not only everything around the ranch, but nearly everything here at home, too. They are driving us both crazy and wearing themselves ragged.

I finally put my foot down, with Nan's help, of course. She is much better at wrangling those two men than I am, even if I do have them wrapped around my little finger, according to her. They cannot continue to do everything. So they have agreed to hire help, for both the ranch and the house.

And this, my dear April, is where I hope that you come in. Nan and I have free rein to hire someone to help out around here. It's a boring job, just cleaning and some cooking, but Slade pays very generously and you get to hang out with us all day.

I know you have a job. I also know you need a change in life, and Nan

and I can't stomach the idea of having just any old Sally hanging around all day. You were the first person we both thought of, and we are holding our breath in hopes you will say yes.

If you have any questions at all or want to talk about salary, benefits, hours, or anything, call Slade. He's waiting to hear from you.

Much love,

Merry

My hands were shaking as I set the letter back on the desk. I had a job. The pay was decent, with good benefits, and I had been there for years. Under no circumstances, should I consider leaving it for a job cleaning house and cooking for an old woman and a pregnant lady with, not one, but two amazing men willing to wait on them hand and foot.

Yet, here I was, considering it. Not just considering it—wanting it. My stomach jumped into my throat the minute I opened the envelope, and before Janine interrupted, my hand had been on the phone, ready to dial Slade.

Speaking of Janine, she was still standing there, watching me with a thoughtful look on her face while I sat quietly, the wheels in my mind turning a million miles a minute.

"I'll think about it," I grumbled, hoping it would get her to leave.

"You do that, honey." She smiled widely and turned on her heel.

As soon as she was out of earshot, I reached for my cell phone once more, my fingers hovering above the "S" section of my contact list. *Stop, April.* I chided myself. *This is crazy.*

I picked up my phone and began to dial. Janine was crazy, but her advice was generally sound. And I usually never took it, regretting it later. Maybe it was time to shake things up. *Or*, at the very least, get a change of scenery. Away from the after work happy hours, and the downtown bar scene. Away from the hot business men and the sexy urban hipsters.

Away from trouble, broken hearts, and Friday night Ben and Jerry's cry sessions. Hell, maybe I could beef up my savings account. The thought was appealing. But it shouldn't be.

Staying in the same house with Merry, Slade and Blake every day would only serve as a punch in the gut reminder of what I didn't have. What I would probably never have.

I set the phone down firmly on the table in front of me. Never mind the fact that I loved Nan and the ranch and had always wished, deep down, that I could have grown up there. That fact just proved what a shitty person I could be, I mean, really, whose innermost wish is to have grown up on a foster ranch, when, instead, they got to grow up in the kind of loving two parent home most of those kids only ever dreamed about? I was a sick individual.

That was the thought running through my head as I picked up the phone and dialed.



MITCH

The phone rang beside me in our small office apartment and I ignored it as I glared at the screen, willing it to change as I entered in the last line of code. Nothing happened.

“Dammit!” I yelled, banging my fist on the top of my cheap wooden desk. This coding was airtight. We spent months figuring it out, and we were down to our last day to get the app up and running. Our investors were getting antsy, the lease was up on our apartment at the end of the month, and I was getting down to my last dollar, too, practically. Everything was riding on this, and it was failing.

The phone rang again, and this time, my partner and roommate flipped it over, raising his eyebrows in amusement when he saw the caller id.

“Man, Slade doesn't give up, does he?” he asked with a chuckle, referring to my foster brother.

“None of them do,” I muttered, moving to grab the phone from

him so I could send the call to voicemail, just like I had been doing all week.

Brody was too fast. And too tall. Holding the phone way above my head, he put his finger over the green arrow and slid the icon to answer.

“Hello, Mitch’s phone,” he said with a sly grin at me as Slade’s voice rang loud and clear through the line. “Why, yes, he’s right here. Hold tight; I’ll get him for you.”

Brody ignored the fact that I was emphatically shaking my head back and forth and that my eyes were still stuck bouncing between my notebook and the computer screen, wondering where we went wrong. When I didn’t move to take the phone, he held it up to my ear. He was helpful like that. And by helpful, I mean, domineering and interfering.

“Say hello, Mitch,” he instructed, taking for granted that I, like everyone else in his life, would jump to obey him.

“Hello, Mitch,” I growled, knowing that Slade was enjoying the exchange.

“You’re a hard guy to get ahold of, you know that?” Slade began jovially, not wasting time with small talk or pleasantries.

“I’m very busy,” I informed him grumpily. “If I wasn’t, I would have answered one of the first ten times you called.”

“What if it had been an emergency?” Slade asked, laying on the guilt trip.

“You’d have said so on the voicemail, which I have been checking.”

Slade sighed. “Fair enough. Aren’t you tired of being cooped up staring at a computer screen all day? Don’t you think it’s time to take a trip out to the ranch, see your family, get some fresh air? Maybe some sun on your face, before you turn into an albino? Nan won’t be around much longer, you know.”

“I was there last month,” I deadpanned. “It was snowing. And Nan is going to outlive us all. Not to mention the fact that she

wouldn't appreciate you using her age against me as some sort of emotional blackmail."

Slade didn't respond to the accusation, ignoring my protests and railroading past them with his own agenda.

"Come home, Mitch. We could use some help around here, and it's time for you to stop playing yuppie computer programmer and give in to your roots. You have a gift, man, and we could use someone like you around here."

"I have a job. Find someone else. You're in Texas, for God's sake. Cowboys are a dime a dozen."

Not giving him a chance for rebuttal, I hung up, slamming the phone down beside my keyboard and rolling my eyes at his persistence when it immediately rang again.

I side-eyed Brody, daring him to pick it up again. He didn't. He was stubborn but not stupid. Instead, he crossed to stand in front of me, placing his body between me and the computer and resting one large hand on each of my shoulders as he bent down to eye level.

"Mitchell," he began, his voice laced with a warning in a tone I hadn't heard him use since our MIT days. "It's time for a break. This..." he waved his hand at my notebook and vaguely at the computer behind him "...will all be here when we get back. After lunch. You need some food in your stomach and a change of scenery."

Annoyed, I pushed him out of the way, reaching for my notebook. The answer was in there. I knew it was. It was probably as simple as some swapped letters or mistyped commands.

"I'm not hungry," I growled.

Before I could stop him, or even see it coming, Brody used his brute strength to haul me out of the chair by one arm. Quicker than shit, he spun me around and landed a hard swat to my rear end, leaving me gaping at him in shock.

As my mouth opened and closed like a fish, while I searched for

the words that escaped me, Brody winked. “Been a while, hasn’t it? It’s still effective, I see.”

A while was an understatement. *Years* were more accurate.

Still at a loss, I glowered at him. “Not so much,” I argued, even as I marveled about how much sting he managed to pack into that one swat. His morning workouts were not for naught.

“Really? Is that so? Should we test that theory? Do you want to find out how I feel about liars?” Brody challenged.

I wasn’t sure what exactly had spurred this sudden change in our dynamic, but I wasn’t stupid enough to argue with Brody once he had his Dom hat on. Our history together was long enough that I already knew how that would end. Not seeing a choice, I grabbed my jean jacket off the back of my chair and shrugged into it, heading for the door, with Brody at my heels, snickering softly, apparently pleased with himself.

We were silent as we made our way down the dimly lit hallway, but as soon as the elevator door closed behind us, Brody looked at me, his eyes dark and foreboding, yet twinkling with mischief.

“Good to know I’ve still got it.”



BRODY

My palm twitched with the memory of the hard smack I laid down across Mitchell’s tight derriere. I could still feel the curve of his ass against my open palm. The simple gesture had been automatic, but it awakened a desire that had been squelched for far too long.

I needed to lay someone across my lap and air my frustrations across their ass as they moaned and writhed against me, my cock growing harder with each delicious wiggle. I wanted to watch milky white skin turn red under my palm, until it was hot to the touch. Lastly, I needed to plunge my cock into a tight hole between

two tight and bright ass cheeks and fuck someone's brains out until we both came with a fury that left us spent and breathless.

Man. Woman. It didn't matter. Either would do. If Mitch didn't lighten up and agree to my plan, he was as good as offering himself up as sacrifice to my growing needs, and he knew it, too. If he didn't, he was about to.

We exited the elevator, and I guided him out of the building with my hand pressed against the small of his back, removing it once we pushed open the main door and walked into civilization, for what I swear must have been the first time all week. I could have kept it there, or even held his hand all the way to the café, I didn't care one bit, and it would keep him from trying to escape. But Mitch wouldn't have liked it. I was the only one on this earth who knew of his tendency to swing both ways.

I was also the only male he happened to swing with, and it had been that way on and off for the last twenty years. Always friends. Always roommates. Often Dom and sub, when I thought it was needed, and, occasionally, lovers. Very occasionally. Over two decades, I could probably count the number of times we were intimate on one hand. Mitch's choice, not mine. He had never fully come to terms with that side of himself. He had his reasons. I understood them, but I waited for the day when he would accept that side of himself and be fully comfortable in his own skin, outside the comfort of our home. Most days, I seriously doubted that such a day would come.

The café was small and quiet, although very full with hipsters and students, all lost in books or busy on their electronic devices. In the early days of our start up, we often used this place like a second office, taking advantage of free coffee refills until they kicked us out.

Veering towards a small table in the back corner, I inhaled deeply, taking in the smell of freshly brewed coffee and homemade bread. When had we gotten out of the habit of working here? It was

much preferable to being holed up in our apartment all day every day.

I sat first and smiled as Mitch sat down carefully. Years had passed since the last time I spanked him, and I put everything I had into that one swat, determined to make it count, in case it was the only one I got.

We stared at each other in silence, a thousand unspoken memories lingering between us. Finally, he spoke. “What the hell, man?”

“You needed it,” I grunted. “And there can easily be more where that came from, if you don’t pull your head out of your ass.”

“We don’t do that anymore. And I’ve spent far too long honing my skills as a Dom to give into my submissive side. It’s buried so deep, I don’t think I could find it again if I tried.”

“I bet I could.”

“Ha,” he cackled, barely cracking a smile, but I saw the longing hidden deep beneath the scowl. I could bring him to his knees in front of me in a second, and he knew it. We both did. We also knew that if we were being honest, it wasn’t what either of us wanted. Or, it was, but it wasn’t *all* we wanted. I knew that we would be happiest if we could have each other and a woman, as well, but getting Mitch to be open to such a suggestion was another thing entirely. Threesomes, yes. It was on the list of things we had done.

“Tempting, but, no,” he finished, using one of my favorite lines.

“We shall see about that,” I countered, using one of his. It was the same old song and dance we had been using since our freshman year at MIT.

Knowing what was coming, he leveled me with a hard glare. “What do you want, Brody?”

My grin spread wide across my face. I liked winning. I liked it a lot.

“I heard what Slade said—that they need help out at the ranch. I want to go. Both of us.”

Mitch's mouth opened in surprise. "You want to go to the ranch? Why? You've never come with me before."

He never wanted me to before, nor had he invited me, this time, but that was irrelevant in my opinion. I took my opening before he came to his senses and began the out and out refusal that I knew was coming.

"You, Mitchell Waters, are an enigma. You dress like a metrosexual business man, hang with hipsters, and talk like the lone ranger. Even after twenty plus years of friendship, your past is a code I have yet to fully crack, and I see an opportunity has presented itself. More importantly, you need a break. This project has worn you down and turned you into a shell of a man. You barely eat or sleep, and your eyes are permanently red from staring at the screen all day, your stress level is through the roof, and I can't even remember the last time I saw you crack a smile. I'm done sitting here watching you work and stress yourself into an early grave, you hear me? Finished." I pulled out my Dom voice and raised my eyebrows so he would know I meant business.

I watched in satisfaction as his eyes widened and his jaw locked tight before I continued. "Mitch, I know you think the world is going to end, if we can't figure out this coding glitch and get the app up and running. I get it, I do. It's hard to see years of blood, sweat, tears and all our savings swirling down the drain, but we are young, and we are MIT graduates, and the world is still our oyster, so to speak. We have options, and a nice working vacation at the ranch while we lick our wounds is currently our best one."

A soft sigh erupted from his lips, but he said nothing. That was fine, because I had enough to say for the both of us.

"We either go lick our wounds at this ranch you call home, or we stay home in New York and my belt licks your ass."

Mitch raised his eyebrows at me a second before he exploded into raucous laughter that shook his whole body.

"What's funny?" I questioned. "That wasn't a joke, you know. I'm dead serious. I'm in the mood to Dom someone, and if it has to be

you, so be it.” I much preferred domming him to domming a stranger, even a female one, but he didn’t need to know that.

Mitch shook his head, holding up a hand in front of him, as if to halt my threats. “I’m just trying to picture your citified ass mucking out stalls or riding a horse or being of any use whatsoever out there. Have you ever even seen a horse?”

“Phshaw.” I laughed off his teasing. “I told you I’m in the mood to Dom; I bet I can tame a horse with a simple cock of my brow. Poor horse won’t see it coming.”

Mitch shook his head, his shoulders still vibrating with laughter. “You’re good, Brody, but you’re not that good.”

I watched as he stroked his chin thoughtfully and knew I had him right where I wanted him. Sometimes, a good threat or two and a single swat could make a world of difference. Still, I knew it would take more than that to get him to see things my way.

“We can work from anywhere, Mitchell. Our lease is up soon, anyway.”

He didn’t respond.

“I heard what Slade said. Nan isn’t getting any younger. If you don’t go, you might regret it.”

Mitch drummed his fingers on the table. “I know what you’re doing,” he accused.

I grinned. I didn’t need to respond. I knew I was winning.

He sighed. “And I’m going to let you do it.”

“You always do.”

Mitch shook his head, chuckling, and slammed his open palm down on the table between us. “All right, city slicker. Buckle up, and get ready to ride. I’m going to enjoy making a cowboy out of you.”