
BELLA'S COWBOY
DADDY

Rescue Ranch Book Four

MELINDA BARRON



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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.
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Prologue

Bella's Musings
By *Bella Beaumont*
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Keeping a secret in a small town is virtually impossible. It's not as if those words are a surprise to anyone. If your neighbors have overnight guests, you know it. If your co-worker is having an affair, you know it. If your friend's son is involved in something illegal, you know it.

Or at least you think you do. Sometimes the things you think are true turn out to be lies and sometimes things are buried, buried so deeply you don't really learn about them until someone is dead.

That is the case with me. I thought I knew my father, inside and out. He was a good man. A teacher. A coach. An animal lover who rescued strays. A newspaper publisher. A good husband. A wonderful father. A fantastic friend.

But after my father's recent death I found out he also kept a secret, one that affected Bookman Springs for fourteen years, and continues to cast a shadow over our town. Everyone who lives in Bookman Springs knows the story. Fourteen years ago, a person, or persons unknown, broke into the museum and took Native American artifacts: pottery, a box of arrowheads, and a spear.

Last week those items were found. How they were found is what is of importance to me. It seems my father held the secret all these years. According to information he left in his will, he found out a few of his students were involved in the theft. To keep them from getting into trouble he took the artifacts from them and buried them out in the country.

Why did he do it this way? I can't tell you, because the only thing he said was he wanted to keep them from getting into trouble. Dad made sure the items were recovered, but he did not name the thieves. He took that secret to his grave.

I've had a great many of our neighbors ask about the situation. All I can tell you is to read the news story on the first page. I don't know who took the items, and I doubt we will ever find out.

But there is one thing I do know. Now is the time to put the incident to rest. It is time to move on. It is time to heal.

On behalf of my mother and my brothers I am authorized to apologize to the citizens of Bookman Springs. Not for the theft, but for the cover up. We are happy the items are back with the tribe, and are sorry it took so long. We can give no excuses for why Dad did the things he did. But we are happy they have been found.

Chapter 1

Bella Beaumont took a step back as the doorway to Rowdy's opened before she could grab the handle. A cloud of cigarette smoke followed the cowboy who walked out the door. Loud country music followed in his wake. He saw her standing there, tipped his hat in her direction and held the door open and said, "Ma'am."

Even at thirty-four years of age she wasn't used to men in their early twenties calling her ma'am. She felt so old right now.

"Thanks," she said as she entered the bar. She didn't want to be here. After an eight-year hiatus from Wyatt Coleman's company she'd been thrown into the same room as him too many times in the last few weeks; and now here she was, about to initiate another conversation. With what she had in her pocket, this meeting could be one of many. She wasn't sure how she felt about that.

Getting over Wyatt Coleman had not been easy. She was eighteen and he was sixteen when they started their thing. It had ended when she was twenty-six, and there were times when he, both as a Dom and as her Daddy, still fueled her

fantasies. The fact he was a man who couldn't keep it in his pants was what had ended their relationship.

Wyatt was a ho-dog, which was in direct contrast with his ability to treat a woman like a lady. Years ago, when they had lost their virginities to each other, he'd kept her secret, despite the fact it made him the main suspect in an infamous theft of Native American relics that still haunted the town of Bookman Springs, Texas.

The relics had been recovered by Wyatt's brother Reed, and his wife of one-week Leslie. Much to Bella's chagrin it had been a video from her late father that had uncovered the items. But her father had not revealed who had stolen the relics, only that he'd taken them and hidden them to keep the person—or persons responsible from getting into trouble. The small town's rumor mill had gone into overdrive, and it had centered on Wyatt Coleman, a known troublemaker.

But the night the theft had occurred from the museum, Wyatt had been taking her virginity. Over the years she'd told him she was going to let everyone know there was no way he was the thief, but Wyatt would not let her. He'd even gone so far as to tell her that he would denounce her words and say she was lying just to protect him.

"Your reputation is more important than mine," he'd said over and over.

So she'd let it pass, and the rumors had died down. Until now. Now that the relics had been recovered, and given back to the tribe, people were once again besmirching Wyatt's name and saying he'd done the deed. Now they were saying she knew and was covering it up in the newspaper she ran.

And then there was the letter, a copy of which she had in her pocket right now. Her hands shook as she thought about it. She'd received many complaints from people over the years, but she'd never had a death threat before. There was a part of her that wondered if she shouldn't go see Hawk, Wyatt's

brother and the town constable, and show it to him instead of Wyatt. There was no telling what Wyatt would do with the information.

Wyatt was a hothead, and could fly off the handle at a moment's notice. The letter might send him into overdrive, which wouldn't be a good thing.

Bella made her way to the bar and stopped at the end. She surveyed the crowd. The pool tables and the dance floor were crowded, and there was every chance Wyatt was in one of those places, since she didn't see him sitting at the bar, or at any of the tables.

"Bella Beaumont!"

She turned her attention to the bartender who had just called out her name.

"Bert Lynch," she responded. "I haven't seen you in a month of Sundays. How are you?"

She'd graduated with Bert. He was now the owner of Rowdy's, which he'd named because of his youth, when he'd been a troublemaker, just like Wyatt.

Bert swept his arm out and said, "Busy and making money, which is a good thing. Can I get you a beer? First one's on the house for you."

"Sounds good," she said. She reached into her pocket for a tip, and watched as Bert made his way to the cooler where he pulled out a Mexican imported beer and twisted off the top.

He approached her and said, "If I remember correctly you're an out of the bottle drinker."

"No need to dirty a glass," she said as he set the bottle in front of her. Bella took a generous swig, then said, "I'm looking for Wyatt."

"Really?" Bert's eyes widened. "I thought the two of you avoided each other at all costs."

"I need to discuss something with him," she said. The piece of paper in her pocket felt warm, as if it would catch

on fire. She had to share it with someone, and since it was about her, and Wyatt, he seemed the logical choice. But once again she wondered if she should call Hawk instead. She shook her head. Best to keep it between herself and her former lover.

“There’s a couple of tables on the other side of the dance floor,” Bert said. “He’s usually sitting over there with his flavor of the night.”

“Thanks.” She picked up her beer and started in the direction Bert had indicated. As she made her way there she nodded at people who called her name in greeting, but didn’t stop to talk. She wanted to get this over with.

She spotted Wyatt sitting in a corner. His cowboy hat was tipped back, and there was a blonde woman sitting next him, her hand in Wyatt’s lap. His eyes were closed and there was, what her father always called, a shit-eating grin on his face. The woman’s movements told Bella what was happening. She was jacking Wyatt off. If there was one thing Wyatt loved it was sex in public.

Memories flooded her brain—of the time he’d fucked her behind the newspaper office at the Fourth of July town gathering; of the time he’d fingered her at the movie theater and she’d had to bite her hand to keep from screaming out his name when she came; and of the time he’d fucked her at the county rodeo, eating her out first while two old cowboys talked about horses not twenty feet away. Minutes later she’d had to participate in the barrel racing competition, the memory of Wyatt’s cock thrusting inside her pushing her to finish first. He’d made her wear the sash she won, and only the sash, to bed that night.

Thinking about it made her pussy wet. She glanced to where Wyatt sat, and to her surprise his eyes were no longer closed. He was looking directly at her, and his smug smile was still prevalent.

“Hello darlin’,” he called out, his voice rising above the music. “Come and visit.”

Bella fought the urge to turn tail and run. She patted the letter in her pocket and knew she needed to do what was necessary.

She made her way to the table, and as she walked she saw several people whispering behind their hands. It would be all over town by Monday that Bella had gone hunting for Wyatt on Saturday night. Were they getting back together? Or was she looking for a booty call?

When she was at the table she set down her beer.

“I need to talk to you,” she said.

“So talk,” Wyatt responded.

To her surprise he pushed the blonde’s hand away from his lap.

“Hey,” the woman said.

Not to her surprise, Wyatt’s hands went to his lap, and from their movement, Bella was sure he was zipping up his pants. Some things never changed.

“We need to talk,” she said.

“You pregnant?” he asked, and then he laughed. “Sweetie, I’m sure my boys are good swimmers, but they’re not that good. It’s been a while.”

Bella took a deep breath. “Wyatt, I’m serious. Something has come up that I need to talk to you about.”

“On a Saturday night?” he asked. He leaned over and kissed the blonde on the shoulder. “Give me a few minutes, sweetie.”

Every woman was sweetie, or darlin’ to him, Bella thought.

“But I thought we were going to fuck,” the woman asked, her words slightly slurred.

“Later,” Wyatt answered.

“Tell the bitch to go away,” the blonde said. Then she batted her eyes at Wyatt.

“Behave, and give me some time, or you’ll spend the night by yourself,” Wyatt said.

The woman pushed back from the table. She stood and stalked toward the main part of the bar. When she passed Bella she threw her hand out, and slapped Bella in the shoulder. In her younger years, Bella would have tackled the woman and started a catfight. But she was the publisher of the paper now, and she had a reputation to uphold.

“Behave!” Wyatt called out. When the flavor of the night was gone, Wyatt glanced up at her. “Want to finish what she started?”

“Fuck you, Wyatt,” Bella said. She’d had the whole thing planned, how she was going to calmly tell Wyatt about the letter, and ask him what he thought they should do. But his attitude pissed her off.

“We can always fuck in the bathroom, but you know... gross.” He winked at her, and her anger intensified. “Of course there is my truck outside. I seem to remember you never minded being bent over the hood. A few good swats and you’ll be wetter than a sidewalk in a hurricane.”

She was always wet, but there was no way she was going to tell him that. If she stood here much longer there was every chance she would take him up on his offer. He might fuck every weekend but it had been a year since she’d had a dick inside her, and Wyatt’s cock was the best she’d ever had.

“Screw you!”

“That’s the idea,” Wyatt said. “If you prefer we can use that fancy car of yours. I’m sure the seats fold down and being inside it would give us a little more privacy. Not that discretion ever mattered to you.”

That was it. She couldn’t stand here and take anymore from him. Bella pulled the letter from her pocket and tossed it on the table. “Read it for yourself, and then go to hell.”

Bella stalked off through the people who had gathered to

watch. She waited to hear Wyatt call out or tell her to come back, but nothing came. People on the dance floor had stopped moving and were staring at her as she moved to the front door. The door opened just as it had when she'd come in; she sailed through it and went to her SUV, her hands shaking as she climbed behind the wheel.

Damn she hated that man. She hated the way he made her feel, and the fact she wanted to do as he'd suggested. She wanted to sit down at the table and jerk him off, or better yet go down on him. The fact that her pussy was wet made her even madder. All these years later and he still made her so damn horny she thought she would go crazy.

She pressed the button to start her car and then put it in gear. She'd parked so she didn't have to back up, but when she hit the gas she immediately slammed on the brake as Wyatt appeared in front of her.

He was holding the letter, clutched in his hand and yelled, "What the fuck is this?"

"Looks like a death threat," Bella screamed in return. "Good luck figuring out where it came from. Now get the hell out of my way."

Wyatt planted his hands on the hood of Bella's fancy SUV, the piece of paper hot in his hands. "Turn off the engine."

In response she gunned it, but it was obvious she had her foot on the brake, too, because the car barely moved. Either that or she'd put it in park and he hadn't noticed. "Get out of the car."

From behind him, Wyatt heard laughter. He turned to see a crowd of bar-goers gathered to watch the confrontation. Damn, this was all he needed. Since the retrieval of the arti-

facts, people had been talking about him behind his back and turning away from him when they saw him in town.

The word used most often, he knew, was thief. The widespread thoughts in Bookman Springs was that he'd taken the Indian artifacts and his brother had found them hidden not out in the boonies where it had been reported, but buried on the Rescue Ranch. The lie, people thought, was an effort to save Wyatt's reputation and keep him from possibly being charged in the theft.

If those stupid people did any research they would know the statute of limitations on theft was way past, and even if he had stolen the objects he couldn't be charged.

"Move out of my way!" Bella yelled from inside the car.

He shook the paper at her again. "Tell me what this is, and where you got it."

Bella gunned the motor again.

"Run me over if you have to!" Wyatt pointed behind her. "Either that or hit the car that's parked there. Either way you'll be up the proverbial creek."

"I hate you, you fucker!" she screamed.

The gathering crowd broke out in laughter.

Wyatt turned to them and shouted, "Get lost."

"Not a chance in hell," a male voice called out.

Wyatt knew if he stepped out from in front of the vehicle, Bella would take off, and he'd end up running to his truck and following her to her house. He couldn't decide if that was the best way to handle things, or if he should think of something else.

He stared through the windshield and saw her glaring back at him. Damn she looked sexy sitting there, her anger rolling off her. They'd always had their best sex when one of them was angry.

"Move!" Bella slammed her hands against the steering wheel.

Wyatt moved his hands from the hood, then moved to the side. Before she could put the car in gear he climbed on top of the car, his back against the windshield. He'd effectively blocked her view. Then he pulled his phone from his pocket and sent a text to Hawk. Sometimes it helped to have a brother who was in law enforcement.

Meet me at the ranch, ASAP: he texted.

There was a pause, and then Hawk's response came: *You kill someone?*

Not yet: Wyatt replied. *But if I don't show up within twenty minutes there is every chance Bella might have run me over.*

Again? Hawk texted.

Wyatt put his phone away. He settled against the windshield and called out, "Someone get me a rope."

The SUV moved, as he had expected. A cowboy he didn't know ran up and handed him a rope.

"Already tied in a lasso," the young man said, and Wyatt knew he would be telling his friends this story for years to come.

"Thanks," Wyatt said. He slid off the hood and banged his fist against the hood. Pain shot up his arm, but he ignored it. He fell to his knees and called out, "You hit me! You hit me!"

Bella was out of the car in seconds, her hands in fists. He jumped up and grinned. "Gotcha."

She slammed a fist into his chest, but before she could hit him again he took a step back, threw the rope around her and tightened the lasso.

"You son of a bitch!" she called out as he lowered his shoulder and threw her over it. She kicked at him but her hands were effectively out of commission.

Wyatt crossed to the back of the SUV and lifted the hatch. He tossed Bella inside, then used the last of the rope to hogtie her.

"I'll get you for this!" she yelled. "I swear you'll be in jail!"

“It wouldn’t be the first time,” he said with a chuckle.

After he’d lowered the hatch he went to the front of the vehicle. “Show’s over,” he called out. He got behind the wheel of the car and put it in gear. As he pulled out of the parking lot, Bella continued to scream and call him names.

Damn he’d missed this woman. The only problem with tying her up right now was he would not be able to fuck her afterward.

Or maybe he would. This sort of thing always got her motor running. Maybe he would be able to talk her into a little extra kidnapping activity. Something told him it would be one of their best fucks ever.