

It's Just a Ranch

By

Misty Malone

2016© Blushing Books® and Misty Malone

All rights reserved.

No part of the book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published by Blushing Books®,
a subsidiary of
ABCD Graphics and Design
977 Seminole Trail #233
Charlottesville, VA 22901
The trademark Blushing Books®
is registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office.

Misty Malone
It's Just a Ranch

EBook ISBN: 978-1-68259-903-7
Cover Art by ABCD Graphics & Design

This book is intended for adults only. Spanking and other sexual activities represented in this book are fantasies only, intended for adults. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual spanking activity or the spanking of minors.

Table of Contents:

Chapter One	5
Chapter Two.....	15
Chapter Three.....	25
Chapter Four	35
Chapter Five.....	46
Chapter Six.....	55
Chapter Seven	65
Chapter Eight	75
Chapter Nine	85
Chapter Ten.....	95
Chapter Eleven.....	106
Chapter Twelve.....	116
Chapter Thirteen	126
Chapter Fourteen.....	136
Chapter Fifteen.....	146
Chapter Sixteen.....	156
Chapter Seventeen	165
Chapter Eighteen.....	175
Chapter Nineteen	185
Misty Malone	201
EBook Offer.....	203
Blushing Books Newsletter.....	204
Blushing Books.....	205

Chapter One

May, 2003, rural Wyoming

It had been a long, hard day on The Circle S ranch, but the Stevenson family was finally relaxing a bit as they enjoyed their supper. Helen looked around the table. “You all look totally exhausted,” she said, addressing her husband, Max, their son, Garrett, and their ranch foreman, Wyatt Chilcote. “Did you finish the job in one day?”

“We did,” Max answered with a touch of pride in his voice. “The branding is all done. The men all worked hard, but we worked well together. I’m proud of you, Garrett. You and Wyatt did an excellent job of leading the men today. I couldn’t be any happier with the way you two are working together.”

“Thanks, Dad. Wyatt’s a good foreman, and he’s patient. I think I’m finally catching on.”

“You’re catching on just fine,” Wyatt praised. “There’s no doubt in my mind you’ll be ready to take over as foreman before I’m ready to retire.”

“Yeah, well, don’t be in too big a hurry to retire, Wyatt,” Garrett said. “There are a lot of things I need to learn yet before I’ll feel comfortable in that role.”

“You grew up on this ranch, Garrett. You’re already familiar with and quite capable of doing anything that needs to be done.”

“I’ll agree with you there, and I’ve felt totally comfortable working with the men the last few years, even with teaching some of the greenhorns how to do things that were new to them. But being the foreman’s an altogether different feel. All of a sudden I’m in charge of making sure we have all those things I always took for granted would be there. And I never had to worry about what needs done first. All I had to do was whatever you said I’d be doing.”

“It takes a little planning, a little thinking ahead, but you’re getting there,” Wyatt assured him.

“Wyatt’s right,” Max said. “It’s just like when you get a new saddle. It takes a little bit before you get that saddle molded to fit you good, and the only way to do it is by using it. I’ve been watching, and you’re starting to fit in that new saddle pretty good.”

“If you men are done talking ranch business, I’ve got some news,” Helen offered.

Max nodded. “We’re done. What’s the news?”

“We’re going to have a house guest for a little while. I heard from our friends, Harold and Linda Clayton, today. We haven’t seen them much since they moved away, which is a shame. But Linda called today. They’re worried about their daughter. Do you remember her, Garrett?”

Garrett froze. “Please don’t tell me Windy Mindy’s coming to stay.”

“Now, Garrett, there will be none of that. Mindy’s had a tough time recently, according to her parents, and they’re concerned about her.”

“Why; what’s happened?”

“They didn’t say. All I know is she’s going to make a career change, and they convinced her she needs to go someplace different for a little while first, and sort of regroup. She wants to try writing a book, possibly about a ranch, so they thought of us. They knew we have this huge house, and wondered if we would be willing to rent her a room for a couple months or so while she unwinds.”

Garrett was shaking his head. “And so, of course, you said yes, and now Windy Mindy will be here. For how long?”

Helen frowned at her son. “You need to give Mindy a chance, Garrett. She’s grown up now.”

“I certainly hope so. And please don’t tell me to take her out and show her the animals again. I had to do that every time they came to visit.”

Helen obviously wasn’t happy with her son at the moment. “Garrett, the poor girl didn’t have anything to do while your father and I visited with her parents. I was just asking you to have some manners and find something she could do. I thought maybe she’d like to see the baby animals we had at the time.”

“So I took her out to see the baby animals.” He shook his head. “Windy Mindy drove me nuts.”

“Why do you call her that, Garrett?” Wyatt asked.

“Because all that girl did was follow me around like a puppy and talk. She talked nonstop.”

“Sounds like she had a crush on you,” Wyatt said with a grin.

“I think she did,” Max confirmed.

“No, she didn’t,” Garrett insisted. “She was too young to have a crush on anyone. The last

time I saw her she was about twelve or thirteen, and acted like she was about two.”

Wyatt looked at Max. “Yep, sounds like a crush to me.” He turned to Garrett next. “Two year olds don’t talk much,” Wyatt pointed out, teasing Garrett.

“Then she acted about five. All I know is she followed me around everywhere and wouldn’t shut up for two minutes. She drove me crazy.”

“How much younger was she than you?” Wyatt asked.

“A lot younger. I don’t know; six or seven years.”

“That may have been a big difference then, but it’s not that big a difference now,” Wyatt said. “But it does sound like she had a crush on you.”

“Actually, she wasn’t as much younger than you as you always thought,” Helen said. “She was always on the small side, but only a couple years younger than you.”

“Oh, then I’d say it was definitely a crush,” Wyatt said with a chuckle. “And trust me, she would have been old enough then to have a crush, even at twelve or thirteen.”

Garrett moaned. “She was so little I assumed she was a lot younger than that. She acted younger than that.” He turned to look at his mom. “Is she seriously coming to stay here? For how long?”

“I told Linda she was welcome for as long as she wanted to stay. Linda didn’t say what she had been doing, or what kind of job she had, but said she was burned out and ready for a career change. I asked her a little bit about it, but she said she didn’t feel it was her place to say much. She said if Mindy wanted to tell us what happened, she could, but that would have to be her choice, and only when she felt ready to talk about it.”

“That sounds mysterious,” Max said. “I wonder what she could have been doing.”

“Or if we really want to know,” Garrett said.

“That’s a good point, too,” Max agreed. “Whatever it is that she used to do for a living, though, must have been pretty rough on her, so I think we should try to make her feel welcome and safe here. Do you understand what I’m saying, son?”

Hearing and understanding a reprimand when he heard it, Garrett agreed. “Yes, sir.”

“Good. If your mother’s right and she’s only a couple years younger than you, that would put her about twenty-four or twenty-five, so I’m sure she’s matured a lot since you saw her last. I expect you to mind your manners and be polite, especially if she’s had a rough time.” Knowing his son had received his message clearly, he changed the subject back to the ranch, and what they

needed to do in the next few days.

Nothing more was said about their house guest until about ten days later when Helen informed them that Mindy had booked a flight, and she would be arriving in two days. Max felt it was important that all three of them meet her at the airport to show their support and make her feel welcome. Garrett suggested he stay at the ranch, since he was learning to take over as foreman, but Max was having none of it, and when Garrett caught the look his father was giving him, he quickly agreed.

So it was that two days later, on a Tuesday, the entire three member Stevenson family was at Jackson Hole International Airport, waiting for Mindy Clayton. All three watched as the passengers came through the tunnel and into the airport, but no one looked familiar to any of them. When the parade of people coming through the tunnel ended, they all started looking around again, assuming they'd missed her.

Garrett, being six feet, two inches tall, was looking over most people, when he heard a rather quiet voice behind him. "Garrett?"

He whirled around and looked down at a beautiful little lady who was smiling up at him. "Mindy?"

"I thought that was you, but I wasn't sure."

His eyes were wide as he looked her over top to bottom. She was still short, at just a few inches over five feet tall, but that was the only thing that looked like the Mindy he remembered. Her dirty blonde hair was now a beautiful auburn, much like he remembered her mother having. It had a few streaks of the lighter color through it, but it all looked natural to him, and was stunning. It was long, hanging halfway down her back, and the tight curls he remembered her having had relaxed into gorgeous waves. She had always been a little on the plump side, but that had changed, as well. Luckily, she wasn't overly thin and sickly looking, like so many women today seemed to strive for. She now had what he considered to be the ideal curves for a woman. What got his attention the most, though, was the beautiful, expressive brown eyes that were sparkling up at him.

Making a fool of himself, and not even caring, he pulled her in against him for a hug. "Mindy, you've grown up, and into a beautiful young woman, I might add. It's good to see you again."

Max and Helen stood back watching, eyes wide. She had changed immensely, but not quite as much as his attitude had changed. They looked at each other and had a hard time hiding their

smiles. Helen was the first to find her voice and step forward. “Mindy, I didn’t even recognize you. I’m glad you found us.”

“Welcome, Mindy. I’m also glad you found us, because we didn’t recognize you.”

“Garrett’s taller than most people, and when I saw him I thought I recognized him. I wasn’t sure, though.” She turned to face him again. “You’ve changed, too, but age agrees with you, as well.” She immediately felt her face flush, and looked down.

Garrett thought the blush was the cutest thing he’d seen in a long time, but didn’t want her feeling embarrassed. “Let’s go get your luggage and head for home. We have some catching up to do.”

“I only have one suitcase. I sent a couple boxes through the mail. You didn’t get them?”

He could see the panic setting in, and tried to calm her. “We’ll probably get them today. If not, we’ll go to town and get what you need. Don’t worry about it.” He’d been leading her with a gentle hand on her back toward the luggage area. Max and Helen were following them, noting his hand on her back and the way she was stealing sideways glances at him. They exchanged knowing looks. This could be an interesting summer.

An hour later the four of them were catching up, on their way back to the ranch. She readily talked about Harold and Linda and things they’ve been doing. She told them she’d gone to college in Pennsylvania and got a job right after graduating, but that’s all she would say about her job. It was clear she didn’t want to talk about it, so Garrett steered the conversation in a different direction. “Mindy, you said you sent a couple boxes of clothes to the ranch, rather than check several suitcases on the plane. That was a good idea.”

“It was a whole lot cheaper to mail them instead of checking them. It’s kind of ironic, though, because I thought it would be safer, too. You’re always hearing of the airlines losing luggage, but maybe I should have been more worried about them getting lost in the mail.”

“They’ve probably been delivered this morning while we were gone,” Garrett suggested, “but if not, did you put a change of clothes in your one suitcase you did bring?”

“I have enough for a couple days in it, yes.”

“Good. If your things don’t come in the mail today or tomorrow I’ll take you into town,” Helen said. “We have some good stores, and we’ll have a ladies’ day out and spend the day shopping.”

Max groaned. “That would be nice, Helen, but you’ll remember you’ll be shopping mainly

for Mindy, won't you?"

Garrett tried to hide a smile while his mother answered. "Of course I will, honey," she answered sweetly, "but if something jumps out at me that I know you would think looks nice on me, you wouldn't want me to pass it up, would you?"

All three of them laughed at her strategy. After a moment she stopped trying to fight it and chuckled along with them.

Maria, the lady who helps Helen with the housekeeping and cooking, had supper on when they got back to the ranch. Garrett carried Mindy's suitcase upstairs to what would be her room. "Mom thought you might like this room because it overlooks the pool. My room is down the hall, the first one at the top of the stairs, on the opposite side of the hall. We're the only ones up here in this whole wing, so privacy shouldn't be a problem. If you need anything, just knock on my door."

"Thank you, Garrett. Do I have time for a quick shower before dinner?"

"Yes, you do, and we call it supper, just so you know."

"Supper?"

"We have breakfast, dinner and supper. I just thought I'd mention it so you're not confused. When you hear someone mention dinner, they're talking about the noon meal."

"That might take some getting used to, but thanks for the heads up. Are there other things like that I should know about; things that you do different here?"

"I don't know about different, but there are rules, if you will, for living on a ranch; specifically, living on this ranch. I'm sure Dad will go over them with you at supper tonight."

"Rules for living on this ranch?"

"Mainly for safety. Dad's always been adamant about safety on the ranch. I'm being trained to be the foreman, and I guess I understand now why he's always been like that. Safety is important."

"But rules for safety? What can happen? I mean, it's just a ranch."

"That's the point, Mindy. It's a ranch, and a ranch can be a very dangerous place if you aren't careful."

She wrinkled her nose as she looked at him, a doubtful expression on her face. "Seriously? You're worried about safety out here? I'm honestly looking forward to being out here for the peace and quiet. I need that right now. But one of the reasons I'm so excited about being here is because it's just a ranch, with wide open spaces and no one to bother you. I mean, if I can survive the rat

race of a big city, where people would just as soon run you over as step around you, I think I can handle this.” Before he could say anything in retaliation, she changed the subject. “How long do I have before dinner—I mean, supper?”

“Supper’s at 6:00, and that’s one of the things Dad’s pretty strict about. I’m sure he’ll explain it at supper, but for now, just remember to be there by six.”

“Okay, will do. Should I dress for dinner?”

“No, we’re not formal around here. Jeans or whatever you’re wearing for the day will be fine for supper,” he said, emphasizing the last word. “After all, it’s just a ranch,” he added with a grin.

His comment went unnoticed by Mindy, who simply nodded before disappearing toward the bathroom off of her bedroom. He went downstairs to find his dad. He thought maybe he better mention her comments about safety. He was sure his dad would want to stress the importance of safety to her once he knew that was her attitude. It would be best for him to set her straight right from the start.

* * *

Mindy stood in the shower, letting the hot water that was running over her relax her. She’d been anxious to come to The Circle S ranch for some rest and relaxation, but she’d been nervous about arriving. She wasn’t sure what kind of reception she’d get. She knew Max and Helen would be gracious, but she wasn’t sure what to expect from Garrett.

She thought back to her younger years and visits she’d made to the ranch. Her parents had been good friends with Max and Helen when she was growing up, but she hadn’t been to the ranch all that often. Sometimes they would meet at their house in town instead of the ranch, or other times they’d meet at a restaurant and share a meal. The times she had been at the ranch, she’d never been able to capture Garrett’s attention, or at least in the way she would have liked. He always treated her like a pest.

His parents would tell him to take her outside, or to see the animals, and he dutifully did as asked, but he never seemed to want to spend time with her. She always wondered why. The last few times she’d seen him, she’d tried her best to get a conversation going with him. They were teenagers, although he always treated her as a child. She never could figure out why. She always assumed he had a girlfriend, and that’s why he didn’t want to spend any time with her.

It wouldn’t have surprised her to find out he did have a girlfriend. After all, he was big,

and muscular, and extremely good looking. Even back in high school he was six feet tall, maybe a little over, and muscular. He grew up working on the ranch, which explained his muscular physique. But he was also very good looking. His dark brown, almost black hair was thick and had enough curl to look natural and in place no matter what he was doing. It didn't matter if it was windy, or if he was working and covered with sweat; his hair always looked good.

What always captured her attention, though, was his smile and his eyes. They were so genuine. He didn't pretend. If he was happy or pleased, you could see that in his eyes and his smile. If he was upset, you could see that just as easily. Regardless which it was, whatever he was feeling, you knew it. His eyes seemed to bore right through you, but when he was talking to you, his attention was on you, not on something he'd done earlier in the day, or something he would be doing later. You had his full attention.

The reception she'd gotten from him at the airport was surprising, but she couldn't have dreamed of anything better. She'd convinced herself not to expect much, but if he was at least civil, maybe in time she could get him to notice her as something more than just a pest. With a lot of luck, maybe they could eventually even become friends. But to her delight, he seemed happy to see her. When he gave her a hug at the airport, she wasn't sure her knees would hold her up. It was wonderful.

Even as she thought back to that wonderful moment, she had a stern talk with herself. Don't make too much of it. He was probably just being a gracious host. He'd been handsome back when she saw him last, but now he was just plain hot. He probably had a girlfriend somewhere, she reminded herself. She'd just have to give it some time and see what happened.

As happy as she was about how he'd treated her, it was also a little upsetting. She came here to get away from everything in her life and start over. Other than her parents, she wanted a complete break. She had to get her life back in order, and feel like she was in control of it again. She knew that would be easier if she didn't have a man in her life, at least until she got her feet planted firmly back on the ground. While she'd very much like to get to know Garrett as a friend, partially to prove to herself that he could see her as a friend, she decided for now, anyway, it couldn't be anything more than that.

With that resolve, she finished her shower and got dressed. She kept an eye on the time, as punctuality had always been important to her. She put a minimal amount of makeup on, dried her hair quickly, and went downstairs. Helen was going past the stairs as she was descending, and

invited her out onto the pool deck to sit down a few minutes until supper was ready.

“I was going to offer to help with supper,” Mindy said, “but I am rather anxious to see the pool. I remembered you had one, but I couldn’t remember what it looked like.”

“Maria insisted she has supper under control tonight,” Helen said. “I went in to help, and she chased me out of her kitchen. She said I should use this time to show our guest around, and I think that’s a wonderful idea. Let me show you where we keep the towels for the pool. I take it you found everything you need for a shower?”

“Yes, I did. Thank you. My room is gorgeous.”

“I’m glad you like it. If there’s anything you want that you don’t see, please ask one of us. We’re not real formal around here, so just speak up. Don’t be shy.”

“Thank you, Helen. I can’t tell you how much I appreciate you letting me stay here.”

“You’re welcome here as long as you’d like to stay. Your mom said you kind of need some time to unwind a bit. Hopefully this will give you that opportunity.”

“I think it will. I had a bad experience and I’m having a little trouble getting past it. I think my life just got too hectic. When Mom suggested I see if I could stay here a little while, it sounded perfect. I think I need somewhere quiet and peaceful. Hopefully this will be just what I need.”

“I hope so. It’s usually pretty quiet and peaceful here. It has its moments, though,” she said with a bit of a chuckle. “I guess the trick is to not dwell on those moments, but concentrate on the quiet and peaceful times.”

Mindy wondered about her comment, but didn’t say anything. She couldn’t imagine life being hectic on a ranch, but as she thought about it, she had to admit that hectic was a relative term. To people who haven’t lived in a big, busy city, hectic probably meant something entirely different than it did to her. All she knew is she’d definitely lived hectic, and had no plans on going back to it ever again.

Helen was telling her a little about the house and where things were kept, when Max and Garrett walked around the side of the house and joined them on the pool deck. “Is Maria ready for us?” Helen asked her husband.

“She said she needs a few minutes yet, so we came out to join you two. Did you get Mindy settled in?”

“I think so. I was just telling her where things are.”

“Don’t be afraid to ask,” Max said, looking at Mindy. “We’re laid back out here, so don’t

be shy.”

“That’s what I told her,” Helen said with a smile.

Garrett watched her looking at the pool, and her eyes seemed to sparkle. “Do you like to swim, Mindy?”

“I love to, Garrett. How about you?”

“I’ve always loved to swim. Maybe we can go in after supper, unless you’re too tired. Traveling can wear you out.”

“Actually, I think I’d like that. I was cooped up on that plane for so long, a good swim sounds nice.”

“After our supper digests, then, we’ll spend some time in the pool. We took the afternoon off from the ranch to go get you, so now I feel like I have all this pent up energy I need to work off, too. A swim sounds great.”

“I’m sorry you had to take the afternoon off just for me. I could have taken a cab.”

“That didn’t quite come out the way I meant it,” Garrett said. “We could have sent one of the hands in to pick you up, too, but we all wanted to go meet you at the airport. We chose to take the afternoon off, Mindy. It was our choice, so you don’t have anything to apologize for.”

Maria appeared in the doorway and summoned them to supper before she had a chance to respond. Garrett immediately stood and offered his hand to Mindy, who was relaxing on one of the lounge chairs. She took his hand and allowed him to help her up, and felt his hand on her back as he led her into the house and on to the dining room. He’d done that at the airport, as well. It wasn’t something she was used to, but she liked it, although she didn’t know why. It wasn’t a big thing, but it felt good to her. It somehow felt right.

He casually held her chair for her when they got to the table, and it seemed to her to be a very natural thing for him. That was odd, because she never saw men doing that, although she noticed that Max did the same for Helen, and again, it seemed so natural, she knew it had to be a routine thing for them. She assumed it was just one of the differences between the big city, and life out here in the west, on a ranch. She was sure she’d find other differences, as well.