

MYSTERIOUS GUESTS



AMITY MAREE

BLUSHING BOOKS

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CHAPTER 1



David glanced down at the hand drawn map one more time, and then shook his head in disbelief. Surely this couldn't be the place? Molly had told him her new home was large, but this place was huge. Trust his little sister to bite off more than she could chew, then call him to come and bail her out. And, worst of all, she claimed that he had given her this harebrained idea.

It wasn't really a house, David decided as he got out of his car and stood in the wide drive to look ahead. It was an old Victorian mansion, and looked exactly like something that belonged in one of the murder mysteries he wrote. *How in hell did Molly manage to come up with the money to buy a place like this?* he asked himself, and promptly decided he hadn't been paying enough attention to his little sister in recent months. With a shake of his head, David returned to his BMW, and slowly made his way up the long, winding drive, looking around at the well-kept grounds as he did so.

"David! David!" Molly ran down the front steps of the mansion and threw herself into her brother's arms, wrapping her arms around his neck to hug him enthusiastically. "I am so glad you are here."

David lifted her off the ground and hugged her tightly, then gave her jean-covered bottom a heartfelt smack. “Just what have you gotten yourself into, Miss Molly?”

Molly stepped back, and one hand went to rub the injured spot. Her blue eyes looked at him accusingly, and he thought she looked about fifteen years old, especially with her long blonde hair in braids. It was hard for him to believe the slightly built beauty was all of twenty-four years old.

“David, I really wish you wouldn’t do that. I’m not a little girl anymore,” she automatically protested the brotherly swat.

“You might not be a little girl, but you aren’t so big or so old I won’t take you over my knee if you have earned yourself a good spanking, little sister,” David stated without hesitation, the firm expression in his dark eyes giving her to know he was perfectly serious. “Now tell me about this trouble you are in.” He couldn’t fix it until he knew what was broken.

“I’m not really in a mess – yet.” She smiled impishly. “And with you here now, I know I won’t be.”

David couldn’t help smiling. Molly always made him feel like he could move mountains. They’d become close after their parents were killed in a car crash a little over twelve years ago, and he’d moved back home to finish raising the little sister he barely knew. He was fifteen years older than Molly, and was in college before she started preschool.

“I made your favorite salad for lunch,” Molly told him, opening the front door and leading the way inside the old house.

David looked around in shocked surprise. The house was filled with antiques but seemed homey and comfortable. He followed her through a dining room with a table large enough to seat at least twenty people, into a kitchen that let him know with great certainty that his Miss Molly well and truly resided here. It was completely modernized, and fairly gleamed. “Nice kitchen,” he commented.

"It is perfect," Molly enthused, walking over to the restaurant style refrigerator and taking out two plates. "Follow me," she said with a smile. David walked with her through a doorway and into a small breakfast nook. The room was bright and cheerful, reflecting Molly's bubbly personality. The table was already set for two, and after motioning for him to have a seat, she went to the kitchen, returning in a few seconds with a bottle of Chardonnay. "I am so happy to have you here, David. I wanted to have the house all fixed up before you saw it; didn't want you having nightmares," she added with a grin, as she uncovered their salads.

"This looks wonderful, Molly." David's mouth watered in anticipation as he looked at the avocados stuffed with lobster salad. It was one of his favorites, and Molly always spoiled him when he came for a visit.

"I knew you would be hungry when you got here, David," she replied, and then said, "Eat up, then I'll take you on a grand tour, and you can be amazed with all I've accomplished in the last couple of months."

"Molly, how on earth can you afford this place?" He had to ask. "I know you were making good money working for Armand, but not the kind of money to buy something like this."

"I haven't done anything illegal, David," Molly quickly reassured him, then chewed her lower lip and looked at him with a guilty expression. "You won't like what I am going to tell you, however," she warned.

"Am I going to take you over my knee, Miss Molly?" he asked.

"I surely hope not!" she declared, but admitted with her usual honesty, "You might feel like it, though."

"So, tell me and get it over with, honey," he urged, taking another bite of the delicious salad.

"Okay." She toyed with her fork, obviously trying to find the right words to use. "Remember when I told you a few months ago that Dora and I were going to take a vacation together?"

Dora was Molly's roommate from culinary college, and they'd stayed in touch ever since graduating. "Yes, you were planning to go to skiing in Colorado," David replied.

"Well, at the last minute the resort called to tell us they'd overbooked, and canceled us. They refunded our money, so Dora and I decided on the spur of the moment to go to Las Vegas." She didn't have long to wait for the frown to appear on David's handsome face.

"You went to Las Vegas without letting me know your change of plans?" he questioned, upset at the very idea of his little sister doing the one thing he'd absolutely forbidden her to do.

"I knew you wouldn't be happy about it, David, but I *am* an adult. I wanted to go. Dora promised we would have a great time, and I knew I could be responsible with my money. So, I trusted myself and went." She sipped her wine, then continued her story. "The problem is, Dora met a man the first night we were there, and she fell head over heels for him. I was the odd person out, and didn't have a thing much to do. I didn't want to walk the streets alone, and the show at the hotel was icky. So, I decided I would amuse myself by gambling a little bit. I set an amount that I felt I could afford to lose, and decided that once it was gone, I wouldn't play anymore. I would just catch the next flight home. But, once I started playing, I couldn't do anything wrong. I just kept winning and winning. Finally, I raked in an enormous jackpot! There was more money there than I imagined having in a lifetime, David; I decided that it was time to stop, and not be stupid. The establishment was a little disappointed that I didn't continue," she said with a smile. "But I knew I would kick myself for the rest of my life if I wasted the opportunity I'd been given. I cashed in my chips, said goodbye to Dora and her love interest turned jerk, and then came home. I saw an accountant, invested some of the money, gave some to charity, then I found this place and knew I had to have it."

David was speechless. He looked at her, stunned, as she continued.

"I've put a lot of money into restoring this place, but now that I am ready to open for business, I am scared." She took another sip of wine, and waited for David to absorb what she'd told him.

"You know how I feel about gambling, Molly," were his first words.

"And with good reason." She looked him in the eye. "It was a heady feeling, David. I can see why Jenny became addicted." She took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "I give you my solemn word I won't ever do it again."

"Jenny promised me over and over *and over*, Molly. She didn't keep that promise, ever," he said in a hurt tone of voice. "Gambling destroyed her life. Uncle Pete and Aunt Marge lost everything they owned trying to help her. When she finally committed suicide, it broke them completely. They died within a few months of Jenny's death," he reminded his little sister.

"I know, David," Molly said quietly. Their cousin had been a couple years older than David, and Molly didn't remember her at all. All she remembered of her aunt and uncle was the sad looks on their faces whenever her parents asked about Jenny. "But, you have to remember that I am not Jenny. I honestly don't have a problem, and once was enough for me. Can you please be happy for me?" she beseeched him, her blue eyes full of tears.

David looked at her for a full minute, reliving old horrors, then he said, "I am happy for you, Miss Molly, but I'm still of a mind to spank your bottom."

Molly nodded in acceptance. David's feelings were strong on this subject, and she knew without a doubt that he wasn't going to be satisfied until he was convinced she was sincere about staying away from the gaming tables. "I swear I am not going to start gambling, David. It has been six months now, and I haven't even bought a lottery ticket since then. But, if it takes a spanking to convince you that I am serious, then so be it. I don't want you worrying about this."

Molly's words managed to reassure him more than she could

have known. Jenny hadn't been able to go a week without gambling in some way. Still, a swat or two on Miss Molly's backside would enforce his feelings in a memorable way, he decided. "We will discuss this a bit more later, young lady," he said, mostly to give himself some time to think, and Molly some time to confess why she'd left him an urgent message to come help her.

Molly accepted her brother's reply, relieved that he was going to take some time to think things through before just upending her and setting her fanny on fire. She was positive that once he realized what she was about, and how much work she'd put into her plans, he would change his mind. She could always count on him to be fair.

David finished his salad while Molly brought him up to date on finding the house, and renovating it to her tastes.

"You still haven't told me what you're going to do, honey. A bed and breakfast? Or an inn? What are you planning to do with this place? I know whatever it is will involve food." She started chewing on her lower lip again, and David braced himself for another bit of news he probably wasn't going to like.

"Can I tell you after I show you around, Davey?" she asked timidly.

"The only time you call me Davey is when you have earned a spanking and are trying to put it off, Miss Molly," he pointed out, getting to his feet to tower above her by a good twelve inches. Molly was tiny.

"It isn't anything wrong, Davey," Molly quickly insisted, clearing the table. "It's just that I honestly don't know if you are going to think I have taken leave of my senses."

David helped her carry the dishes into the kitchen and then place them in the dishwasher. Once things were cleaned to her usual impeccable standards, Molly put her arm through David's and started walking him through the house.

A good long while later they ended up in her office, which was

located at the back of the old mansion. Looking out the window, he was able to spot a good-sized parking lot. "Okay, Molly, out with it. What sort of business are you going to be running from here?"

"What does this house make you think of, David?" she asked, her blue eyes full of curiosity. "What were you thinking about as you walked down the hallways, and checked out all of the rooms?"

David grinned. His little sister knew him as well as he knew her. "I was plotting a murder," he admitted. "This house is a writer's dream."

"I know. And that is why I bought it," she enthused.

"You're going to let writers come here to work?" he asked in surprise.

"No, I am going to hold murder mystery weekends," Molly told him. "You know how much I love mysteries, especially yours, David. I actually went to a couple of mystery weekends, and just knew I could do it better. Think about it. This is a beautiful old home. It is nice and comfortable, yet has modern conveniences. I can offer excellent meals, and I can accommodate whole parties. I also have the option of letting couples book with complete strangers and doing a weekend."

"Is there a demand for this sort of thing?" David asked, intrigued by the idea.

"Yes. You can check the internet and find all sorts of places, but this one is going to be special, David. I have only been advertising for a little over a month, and I am already booked up for three months."

"You can't possibly do this all alone," David worried aloud.

"I have a couple of ladies who will come in each day to do up the beds, and the linens," she assured him. "I will do the cooking. I have a couple of local actors hired to come in and help with the murder mystery. The guests will be playing parts too," she explained. "I open this Friday, David, and I am so scared. What if the murder is too easy and they figure it out right away?"

“Is this where I come in?” he asked with an amused smile.

“Well, I would appreciate it if you would read it and tell me what you think,” Molly said, then blurted, “But that isn’t why you are here, David.”

He looked at her tear-filled eyes, and flushed cheeks, waiting for the bomb to drop.

“One of my first guests is Brianna King.”



DAVID FOLDED his hands under his head and stared up at the ceiling in the bedroom right beside his sister’s. Brianna King – his ex-fiancée, Brianna. Lovely, tempestuous, stubborn Brianna, his one love. The woman he measured every other woman against and found lacking. The reason he had never married. And, he hadn’t seen her in years.

He had done his best to reassure Molly that Brianna booking a reservation for herself and guest had nothing to do with the past, but then, it was an absolute fact that the lovely redhead had never understood his fascination with mysteries. She was never interested in reading any of his work. She felt “cheated and ignored” when he spent hours researching different poisons to learn how they affected the body. David had been equally bored with Brianna’s plans to own her own nursery. He didn’t have a green thumb, preferred to hire the gardening done, and he definitely did not want to discuss what plants would look best where.

But, the real problem between them was Molly. When his parents were killed by a drunk driver, David was suddenly thrust into the role of guardian for a minor child. Brianna and Molly didn’t get along at all, even before the accident. Brianna simply couldn’t accept David’s decision to move home so that Molly wouldn’t have to disrupt her entire life at a time when David felt she needed familiar surroundings and all her friends. The final

showdown came when David was forced to choose between attending a junior high school concert, in which Molly had a solo part, or in traveling with Brianna to attend her grandmother's birthday party.

David swore he would never forget the anger on Brianna's face when she ripped the engagement ring off her finger and threw it at him in a fit of temper. She cursed him, then walked out of his life forever. It wasn't until Molly was preparing to leave for college that, crying and in genuine distress, she slipped into his den to interrupt him while he was working. Molly confessed to him that she felt guilty and responsible for his "loneliness." When he demanded to know what brought on all the tears, she confessed that Brianna had paid her a visit when she knew he would be away, to tell the then twelve-year-old that she had ruined her brother's life. While it had been twelve years ago, Molly was still devastated and crushed that she'd ruined her brother's only chance at happiness. David did his best to reassure her that it was pure nonsense, but from the worried look in her blue eyes when she told him Brianna would be one of her first guests, David realized that Molly was still carrying around a load of guilt over the broken engagement.

One thing was certain, David smiled grimly, Brianna was going to treat Molly with respect or she was going to get the paddling she should have had twelve years ago.



"WELL?" Molly asked breathlessly, placing a mug of coffee on the small table beside her brother's chair.

"Where did you get this?" David asked, tapping the document on her laptop with his finger.

"You hate it. It's too simple, and my guests are all going to be disappointed." Molly's face fell.

“Miss Molly, I already owe you a spanking, and now you are asking for another,” David warned. “I asked you a simple question. I want to know where you got this manuscript before we go making any changes.”

“I sort of wrote it,” she admitted.

David smiled. “I thought so. Actually, it’s pretty good, but you need a couple more twists,” he stated, and then set about explaining the changes. By the time he was finished, Molly was laughing.

“I knew you would know what it needed,” she enthused, giving him a big hug.

“Just like I know what you need.” He grabbed her and lifted her off her feet.

Molly squealed when David ticked her ribs, and then laughed when he immediately released her at the mention of one simple word.

“You wouldn’t?” he asked her in mock horror.

“No more tickling,” she warned with a grin.

“Oh well. Anything to avoid spinach in any form,” he agreed, then turned business-like. “If you have your manuscript saved, Miss Molly, I will type in the corrections for you.” She agreed, and then quickly had the right document up on the screen.

“Davey, what are we going to do about Brianna?” She wanted to know.

“Honey, as far as you know, she has simply booked a reservation. The odds are darn good she doesn’t know you own this place. Don’t worry about it.”

“She hates me, Davey. She promised she would ruin my life just as I’d ruined hers. I wish I’d never installed the automatic reservation software. If I’d seen her name, I would have told her I was booked solid for the next twenty years.”

“Molly, I won’t let her come here and make trouble for you,” David promised, pulling his sister down to sit on his lap so he could give her a brotherly hug. “If she starts with the attitude, I will turn her over my knee.”

Molly giggled at the thought of David spanking the lovely Brianna, then the imp in her took over, and she looked up into David's dark eyes. "I can't imagine anyone spanking Brianna. She's not the type who would put up with that sort of treatment from any man."

David just smiled, and reminded Molly that she had some shopping to do. Once she was gone, he sat back in the desk chair and lost himself in the memory of the first time he'd met Brianna.

DAVID WAS proud of the work he'd accomplished in the university's library. He had enough information on medieval weapons to commit several murders, and was determined to make his second murder mystery just as good as the first one. He walked down the sidewalk, and just as he stepped into the street, a bright red sports car whipped around the corner bearing down on him at frightening speed. He jumped back onto the sidewalk as the driver hit the brakes, causing the car to spin around out of control until it came to a stop mere inches from where he stood.

David looked toward the driver, unable to believe that anyone could be so reckless. To his amazement, the driver was a she, and had the most beautiful shade of red hair flowing down her back. She stepped from the car, giggling, and David realized that the young woman was intoxicated.

"You should be more careful," she told him, pointing a finger in his direction, and then promptly passed out in his arms.

David did the only thing he could do. He picked her up, put her in the car, and then climbed behind the wheel to drive her the short distance to his apartment. He put her to sleep in his bed, removing her shoes, socks, and blue jeans. He left her in her tee shirt and panties, then made up a bed for himself on the sofa.

"Who the hell are you? And how did I get here?" He was rudely awakened the next morning. "What have you done to me?" she demanded.

"My name is David Randolph. I brought you here after you nearly ran me down while driving drunk, and I haven't done anything to you – yet,"

David replied tersely, waiting to see if she would show some sign of remorse for her actions.

Far from being repentant, the redhead was furious with him, and started calling him all sorts of names. David finally decided that he'd had enough. Without giving it a bit of thought, he took her by the arm, and pulled her over to the sofa. He turned her over his knee, flipped up her shirt to reveal blue bikini panties, and then proceeded to bring the flat of his hand down on her backside.

"Stop it! Let me go," she protested.

"This is what I think of drunk driving," David told her, peppering her backside with stinging slaps meant to chastise and burn like the very devil. "I would think you would be thanking me for bringing you here and keeping you safe, young lady." He continued to scold as he spanked her backside. Her skin around the panties was turning a deep red, and he had yet to hear the first "I'm sorry" from her lips.

"It is none of your business," she yelled.

"You nearly ran over me," David repeated his earlier words. "Then you passed out cold in my arms. That makes it my business." He punctuated the words with another barrage of spanks. "How old are you?" he demanded.

"Eighteen," she admitted, then cried out in dismay when he grabbed the waistband of her panties to jerk them down to her knees, baring her completely to his hand, and to his gaze.

"Too young to be drinking," he announced. Before long the backside in front of him was a glowing red, and was hot to the touch. The backs of her thighs and her sit spot were also beet red; he had no doubt that she wasn't going to sit for a good while without remembering this lesson. "What's your name?" he finally asked.

"Brianna, Brianna King," she replied through her tears.

"Well, Brianna, have you learned your lesson?" he asked gently.

"Yes." She hiccupped. David lifted her and held her while she cried. From that point on, they were inseparable.

DAVID SHOOK HIS HEAD, and then smiled. Yes, if the lovely Brianna came here to make trouble for Miss Molly, he would deal with the situation in the time-honored way that worked best with the hot-tempered redhead.