

Bondage Ranch 7: An Expert in Domination
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Chapter One

Sophia Walker had met Remy – she didn't know his last name – around a bonfire, and she already knew that he was not the man for her. But he was fun, crazy, and had a nice body. He called himself a primal, which resonated with her. He was an animal when he made love, and there was no pretense. She liked it, even though it was just a fling. When he'd told her about the bonfire at Bondage Ranch and invited her to come along, she thought it sounded fun, even if whips and chains had her only mildly curious. *What the hell. You only live once.* She wanted to experience new things. He'd made it clear he intended to play the field, and that he had lovers there. She'd made it clear that going along didn't mean she intended to have sex with *him* there. Or probably with anyone else. All she intended to do was watch, do some camping, and maybe take off a few clothes and dance around the bonfire if she felt comfortable enough.

She hoped it would be immersive. She had two children at home, and while she loved them dearly, time away now and then refreshed and invigorated her, and the more "adult" the fun she had, the better she was at being Mom when she got back. Jack and Lana were having a blast at their grandparents, so she knew she didn't have to worry about them. Nana and Papa would take good care of her precious children. Right now, her job was to relax, have fun, and get home safe.

They got there, set up tents – one each – and helped get the fire going. There are a lot of good-looking guys here, thought Sophia. And a few plain ones too. She spent some time idly admiring a particularly attractive shirtless man with a well-defined chest and six-pack abs. Then a woman sidled up to him, and he put his arm around her. She was a big girl, all curves and no lines, and she didn't wear a top or even a bra. The way he held her and kissed her spoke of a deep connection. Sophia smiled. She knew she was no size-

8 beauty herself, but watching the couple made her feel all sizes and shapes were welcome. *Yes, some clothes might come off this weekend. And that will be freeing. Hopefully I'll meet some interesting people and get some hugs too, but whatever happens, it will be different.*

A drop fell on her shoulder. She looked up and saw the sky blackening.

A tall bare-chested man with a dragon tattoo on his shoulder, who Remy called Dane, seemed to be organizing. Dane surveyed the sky. "Looks like we're in for it."

The slender woman with him, who wore a leather skirt and a corset, said, "Maybe we should go inside?"

"A little rain won't hurt us, Sue," said Dane.

"Yes, Sir," Sue replied, but she looked a little chagrined.

Dane swatted her. "Go get inside the tent, and you'll be my warmth once we have things going here."

Sue scampered, and Sophia went back to work. It was a race to see if they could get a fire going so strong that the rain wouldn't put it out. The rain started coming down heavily, soaking her yellow shirt and the thin skirt she wore, making the latter cling to her legs and turn almost transparent. That didn't bother her any more than taking a shower would. It felt good to be out in nature. Besides, a little water never hurt anyone. She'd had some great times while soaked. Hell, she wasn't sure she'd have attracted her first boyfriend if it hadn't been for a wet T-shirt. It had been a good relationship for a while. It just hadn't lasted.

A big, dark-skinned man came running down the path, looking just as soaked as everyone else. Dane stood to meet him. They had a moment's conversation, and Dane nodded as he listened. Then he walked over to where the flames licked up from the pile of tinder and signaled for everyone to come close. A score of men and women gathered around him.

"We've got to put it out and get out of here. Head inside or go into town. I'm sorry, everyone, but I can't control the weather."

"It's just a little rain," said one man.

It was hardly a little, and it was getting worse, but other than that, he echoed what Sophia was thinking. For a bunch of people who supposedly liked extreme sex, she was surprised they'd give up so easily.

Dane shook his head. "It is now. But there's lightning coming. There. Hear that?"

Sophia could hear it. It was distant, a low rumble. She hadn't seen a flash of light.

"It's not safe to be out. Sorry, everyone. I'm going to get my girl and drag her out into the rain to get her to safety. The lightning's still a few miles away, but Diego says the weather report has it moving fast. We've got a half hour to douse the fire and get to shelter. If you aren't a runner, go now."

Remy moved toward her. He'd been flirting with a topless blonde, and Sophia hadn't seen much of him. "Go ahead, Soph," he said, in his soft Louisiana accent. He pointed down a path. "The building is straight that way."

"All right." She didn't like being called Soph, but whatever. *I can run. But I certainly don't want to try it now without a good sports bra.*

She wasn't sure what she'd do exactly. She hadn't come for the kinky aspects of Bondage Ranch. She was here for the fire, the warmth, the feeling that her own body was okay with or without clothes. The kink was mildly interesting but nothing to travel for. As she understood it, that was the reason most of the people who stayed in the building were there. *I might be better off heading into town. And besides, I look like a drowned rat.* Her shirt clung indecently to her now, and while she suspected no one had a problem with that, it wasn't how she wanted to make a first impression, even on people she'd never see again.

She took the path to the parking lot instead of to the building. The rain reduced visibility, which gave her a thought. She had dry clothes in her car, and she could change. And she had an umbrella too. Maybe seeing what the people inside were doing wouldn't be so bad. And besides, there was a rumbling in her tummy that reminded her she had

been working hard and hadn't eaten that much. Remy had said there were sometimes incredibly good pastries in the dungeon.

I'll have to give that a try. She never liked backing away from a new experience. Or good pastries.

She got into the backseat of her SUV and peeled off the wet clothes. She put on a red bra and panties, then picked out a long flowered skirt and an orange T-shirt that dipped low in the middle. After she'd gotten everything on, she looked down her cleavage critically. The bra and the shirt clashed a bit, but not too much of the bra was showing. She shrugged. *It's better than the all-wet look. And I like it.* She liked cheerful, bright colors, and she was used to being told she clashed. She sometimes wondered if she had no color sense, but despite the occasional criticism, people often told her how bright she looked, so maybe people here would enjoy her sense of style amid all the black leather. Since anything she had was just going to get soaked anyway, she didn't bother with shoes. Bare feet at least washed off easily.

She half opened her umbrella, pushed the car door open, and then opened the umbrella the rest of the way. As hard as it was raining, she wasn't sure it was going to protect her, but it was better than nothing.

She ran across the parking lot to where the front awning provided some shelter. There were a couple of people there—a woman with hennaed hair and a black leather outfit that screamed dominatrix was smoking, and a man in leather pants and no shirt was chatting with her. Sophia didn't care for the smoke, but she wanted to wipe her feet off before she went inside, and there was a mat there for the purpose.

"Hi there, cutie," said the woman. "Haven't seen you here before. I'm Valerie." She stuck out a hand.

"Hello. Sophia." Sophia shook her hand. "Nice to meet you." *Maybe.*

"Here to see Colby Brock?"

"Who is Colby Brock?" She'd heard the name mentioned at the bonfire as well.

Valerie's eyes widened. "You don't know who Colby Brock is?"

"No."

"Oh, honey. He's written four books on how to do BDSM. He's even been on TV talk shows, and he used to write an advice column. Dylan and Alex flew him in all the way from the West Coast to give some demonstrations. They were going to be outside on the stage, but they've had to move them in because of the weather."

So, a hotshot. Probably thinks he's all that too. "Ah. Thanks for the info," said Sophia.

"No problem."

She walked in and looked around.

One man stood on a stage that had been erected in the middle of the room. He was older than Sophia and most of the people there, his dark hair marked by a streak of gray around the temples. *That must be Colby Brock.* He wore black leather pants that had seen a lot of use and a matching vest. His thick boots needed a shine. *Definitely not my type.* But she was still curious, because she'd never seen anyone quite like him before. There was a grace in him as he stood on the makeshift stage in the middle of the room, flicking his single-tail whip casually toward a black post, missing it by less than an inch each time. And the arms revealed by the vest were muscled and strong. He reminded her of some gay leather porn she'd seen once, and she wondered if he liked girls at all. She found herself undressing him in her mind.

Around the stage, all sorts of people gathered in all sorts of clothes. But leather predominated, along with lots of skin. A few women were in their underwear. One was dressed only in rope. There were some very good-looking men in the room, and almost without exception, they had a woman intimately near them—kneeling, on a lap, or standing so close as to be almost touching.

Don't want any of them anyway. She'd been to a BDSM club once. Her impression was that the indoor leather crowd tended to make everything cold. S&M was just sensation to them, and it wasn't spiritual. They didn't want to connect with their inside animal selves the way Sophia did. The latex, the vinyl, even the leather was there to heighten the sense that everything was artificial—a scene, and not reality.

The furniture too. It was pushed to the side, but it was much the same as she'd seen the one time she'd been in a club. Crosses, tables with rings, frames for tying people to, a sex swing.

Remy came up behind her. "Here to gawk at the show?"

She looked back to give him a kiss on the cheek, and then resumed her inspection of the room. Dylan Allison, dressed in something from another century, in this case a long velvet tailcoat, breeches, and a ruffled shirt, was helping his wife, Alex, into a chair. Sophia had met them at registration, and they seemed like good people. Alex looked like she'd injured her ankle from the way she was leaning on him, and she didn't look at all happy.

Another man went over to help, and the woman with him, who wore a white collar around her neck, pitched in as well. Dylan stepped away reluctantly, and with one wistful backward look at Alex, he headed for the stage.

The two men consulted together in low tones. An interesting picture, thought Sophia—the leatherman and the fop. Miles apart in so many ways, but the same in a way too. Dylan's garb said even more clearly than Colby's that the play was the thing—how one looked and not who one was inside. There was respect between them, though. In the end, Colby shrugged and nodded. Dylan turned to face the crowd—well, some of the crowd, as it wasn't really clear what part of the stage was front. He affixed a small microphone to his lapel, fiddled with it, and then gestured for silence.

"As some of you know, Colby Brock is here from California to show us a few things. My wife, Alex, was going to be Colby's demo bottom for today's impact play demonstration, but she was injured setting up the stage. I've asked a few of our more experienced submissives if they'd like to fill in, but I haven't found anyone yet. So I'm looking for a volunteer. This is a scene that might leave some marks, and there's definitely some pain involved, but Colby is very skillful with his tools. There might not be a safer person in the whole country to do this kind of play with. Anyone? Man or woman, doesn't matter."

Colby stepped forward and scanned the crowd like a wolf deciding which sheep to eat. It made Sophia shiver. She looked around, curious as to what brave soul was going to volunteer, when she felt Remy's hand pushing on her elbow. The next thing she knew, her hand was in the air and Colby was staring straight at her.

"Ginger, maybe you'd—" Dylan began, looking over at a redhead who had put her hand up.

Colby stepped in front of Dylan and pointed straight at Sophia. "That one," he said.

"I didn't—" Sophia started and turned to glare at Remy for pushing her hand up. Dylan, meanwhile, stood back and shrugged at Colby. He said something quiet to him. Maybe it was warning Colby off the newbie.

"You looked out of place with all those clothes on," Remy said softly. "And hey. New things."

"Unless," Colby said, "you don't want to."

Unless you're afraid. That might not have been what he said or meant, but that was what it came down to, wasn't it? Sophia *was* afraid. But she was even more scared of admitting her fear in public. Remy gave her a gentle push. She took the next step forward on her own. People made way for her. By the time she got to the stage, she bounded up the steps with a jaunty, carefree attitude as if the single tail were ice cream and she could hardly wait. Colby coiled the whip while she mounted the stage.

I think I've got them fooled.

Colby had an amused look on his face.

I'm not sure I have him fooled. But why did he want me?

Colby stuck out his hand. "Hi. I'm Colby. What's your name, beautiful?" It was odd hearing him directly and hearing him from the speakers at the same time. She spotted a little lapel microphone on his vest.

"Sophia." She shook his hand. He had a good firm grip. Did he practice that like he obviously practiced his whip?

"Good to meet you, Sophia. Have you ever been struck by a single tail before?" He handed her the coiled whip, and she took it from his hand, not sure what she was supposed to do with it. Surely he wasn't expecting her to swing it.

"No."

"Cane?"

"No."

"Riding crop?"

"Never."

"Flogger?"

She shook her head. Was he going to shoo her off the stage? It would be a welcome relief in a way, although her curiosity would go unsatisfied. At times, she had enjoyed pain with sex. She liked the energy of her lover scraping their nails across her back or even striking her with an object. She saw it as the natural human desire to fight, and struggle turned into lovemaking. But she didn't get off on pain as much as the ferocity and the energy that could cause it. And pain without sex? She wasn't sure she saw the point.

"Any objection to stripping down for this?"

"No." So much for a reprieve. She had no desire to be naked in front of everyone, but as a matter of principle, she refused to be ashamed of her body.

"Good. Take your shirt off. Your bra too, if you're comfortable." Colby turned and looked around at everyone. "So we're going to veer off into some different territory today. Because I'm not just going to demonstrate the use of some toys. I'm also going to teach Sophia a few things about how to process pain. Maybe she already knows. Some people come to it naturally without even realizing what they are doing. But since she hasn't done much heavy pain play, she'll be good for demonstrating this."

Sophia lifted her top, and then glanced around. She was used to being naked outside, among other naked people. Today, though, most people were wearing at least

some clothing, and inside in front of an audience was a different thing. People came to see Colby, but they'd be looking at her. She had a few extra pounds she wasn't happy with. Ginger would have been a better choice. Had Colby picked her because he'd detected her inexperience somehow? She'd had lovers who'd bit or scratched. By comparison, the whip seemed cold, distant, and impersonal. Even a cane or a flogger allowed the top to be close enough to touch the bottom, but the single tail forced the wielder far away from his target. The presence of the long whip in his hand made her nervous.

Why had Remy put her hand up? She glared over at him. He grinned back at her. She decided to ignore him.

She folded the top neatly and placed it in a chair. There were plenty of people wearing less than she was. She took a deep breath and unstrapped her bra as well. *I will not be ashamed.* But she crossed her arms over her chest nonetheless. *Naked when other people are naked is different from standing in the middle of the room and being the center of attention.* She looked around. There were women wearing nothing, and at least one guy naked too. She decided to focus on them and ignore the rest of the audience. Colby kept talking. He had a nice, smooth voice, and even though she wasn't really focused on what he was saying, it was relaxing to listen to him.

He put the single tail on a small table that shared the stage with them and picked up a flogger from his toy bag. Sophia leaned to the side to get a better view. There were floggers, she could tell, of various colors, and canes and a black riding crop. Maybe other stuff too, but she could see all that clearly.

"Most bottoms," said Colby, "can take more pain if you give them a warm-up. And yeah, I know that most of you know this already. The point is Sophia isn't an expert up here, and she needs some extra help. So I'm going to warm her back up while I talk about some heavier techniques." He gave her a swat on her bottom and pointed to a wooden post near the center of the stage. "Go hug that, Sophia, like it's your best friend. Something to hold on to will help."

The swat stung but didn't really hurt. Maybe I should make Remy hold me, thought Sophia. But she was pissed at him, so no. She went over and wrapped her arms around the pole, feeling silly.

Colby started talking about the technique of swinging a flogger, and Sophia zoned out. She had no intention of ever swinging anything at anyone. She closed her eyes and relaxed against the pole. Behind her, she could hear the swish of the flogger going through the air. Then she could feel the wind it created. It was getting closer. She snapped out of her reverie and tensed.

"No," said Colby. "Rule number one: don't tense up."

She looked back. "Are you going to hit me with it?"

"Yes."

"Then of course I'm tense!"

She heard a gasp from someone in the audience. Maybe one didn't talk back to Colby Brock that way, but she'd never held her tongue for anybody. Still, she didn't want to anger someone with a whip in his hand. Or a flogger. Whatever.

His lips slowly curled into a smile. "Perfect," he said. He glanced back to the audience. "She's right, isn't she? That's a perfectly natural reaction. The problem is it's a natural reaction that doesn't help, because tense muscles hurt more when they get hit. Soft muscles squish and absorb. As does padding, which is why I like playing with a girl with a little meat on her."

Oh, so that's why he didn't choose Ginger. Thanks a lot.

"So, Sophia, since tensing is indeed natural, I'm going to ask you to do something else natural. Breathe."

"I think I'm breathing," she said. Now that was smart-alecky, pure and simple. She had an idea what he meant. She'd taken enough meditation classes and done enough yoga. He meant breathe intentionally. Think about it.

"Breathe in," he said. She did. "Breathe out. In. Out. Good. Keep that rhythm. Concentrate on that; focus on it. And yes, I'm going to hit you. But keep doing it anyway."

She breathed. A couple dozen leather tails flew against her back, more a caress than a blow. Was it the breathing that caused that? She looked behind her and saw that he was swinging the flogger with only a fraction of his strength. He had said something about warming her up. She relaxed. She could take this. She didn't need any special breathing techniques. It was even pleasurable, although she wouldn't admit it to Remy. She was still pissed at him.

"Sophia," Colby said sharply, "keep paying attention to your breath. Your mind has wandered."

He was right. She breathed. He kept up a rhythm thudding against her back and started talking to the crowd again. "This is one way to use breath to help process pain, and it works pretty well, but in part it works because it moves the bottom's focus away from the pain itself. Now, if the top gets off on just swinging a flogger, that's one thing. I sometimes tell people who think I'm all about pain that I'm a sensuous player. The feel of the whip handle, the cool metal of clamps. Sensuous, right?"

People laughed.

"Well, it *is* sensuous on my end. But if it was really all about that, I wouldn't need to play with another person. I could just happily caress my floggers at home. So there's something else going on, which is that I enjoy the effect I'm having on my bottom. So if the way my bottom is processing what I'm doing to her is to ignore it or to feel it less, that defeats the purpose. It's a good thing for a bottom to have in his or her toolkit, when things get too difficult to process any other way, but it's not really the point of the exercise."

What a nice way to say you're a sadist.

"So, what I want you to do now, Sophia, is to continue to breathe, but rather than focusing on your breath, focus on the sensations you're experiencing. Focus on the way the flogger tails feel on your back. And while I want you to breathe in and out the whole

time, I want you to gather the image of each touch of the flogger building on the last, each time you inhale, and when you finally feel you've absorbed as much as you can, imagine yourself exhaling it all out. Can you do that for me?"

Sophia nodded. Colby had the kind of voice that made her want to please him, but what he was saying made some sense to her too. He might be a sadist, but he'd obviously thought a lot about what the people he played with were experiencing. Had he ever been on the other end of the whip?

"Good girl. Here we go."

He built up intensity, and while he kept talking, it wasn't to her. He was speaking to the tops now, describing the different ways to swing the flogger efficiently. She didn't really pay much attention to what he said, although it seemed as much about saving wear and tear on the top's muscles as it was about maximum force.

The flogger thudded hard against her back, and she decided it was time. She exhaled, but it wasn't quiet. She told herself she hadn't screamed. It wasn't that the last blow had been so hard, although it had been the hardest, but that everything had built up, just like Colby had said.

"This is energy work," Colby said to her. "Energy building up, energy releasing. That was lovely. You held all that within you and let it go. How'd it feel, letting it go?"

It felt good, she realized. It was more than just that it felt good to have the building-up stop, although that was part of it. It was like a weight off her shoulders. She didn't know how to describe it, though. "Good. I think."

Colby smiled. "Does that make you a masochist?"

She shook her head. "I don't think so."

"You're right. There are people who just enjoy the pain, but they are the minority. Well, in most crowds." He grinned. "Maybe not this one. But most people enjoy the release. They can learn to enjoy the energy. And that's what this is about. We did it with breathing, but there are other ways, although I think it's important to maintain even

breathing through a scene regardless. Some bottoms wiggle the whole time, and that's how they are letting off the energy."

"Like dancing," said Sophia, although she wasn't sure she was supposed to talk. She wiggled against the post. She didn't know if he intended to demonstrate, but she was interested if he did.

"Yes, like dancing. Any bottoms here like to do that?"

A few people in the audience raised their hands.

"It can be sexy to watch. I get that." He stepped back. "Actually, rather enjoying watching Sophia right now myself."

Sophia blushed, suddenly aware of all the attention, but especially Colby's. She wondered whether Remy was getting jealous. She kind of hoped he was. It would serve him right.

"But I want to suggest another approach. Try staying still, and then releasing that energy all at once when you need to. Don't spend that energy as you get it, but save it up and spend it all at once. When you do, it will be more intense. And if you need to move, visualize that you're moving not to release the sensations but to capture them, as if some of the pain is just to the left of you and one good move of the hip will get it and keep it contained. Try it, and I think you'll get more out of your scenes." He turned back to Sophia. "Do you think you can stay still, Sophia?"

"I can try."

"Okay, let's do this. And this time, rather than letting it go when you're ready, if you can, hold on to it until I say to let it go."

He flogged her in silence. She turned away and couldn't see his face, but it felt different. The fact that he wasn't lecturing made her feel like he was focusing his energy on her. *Or maybe he's just whacking me harder.* But it all felt more spiritual than she'd expected.

And it felt something else too. There was a pleasant tension in her core. And moisture between her thighs. *I am so turned on. Pain doesn't turn me on. I'm not a masochist. What's going on?*

She visualized not only holding the pain but pushing it around her body. Into her breasts. Into her belly. All the way to her pussy.

"Now, Sophia." He accentuated the word with a hard thud against her back that almost knocked the wind out of her. She grabbed the post hard and shook it. She moaned. The release that flowed through her body was almost like an orgasm, although it left a tension behind that still needed to be satisfied. *Oh, I'd love to be made to come right now.* But still, it felt good.

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