

EXCERPT
ESCAPE FROM RUBY'S RANCH – RUBY'S RANCH SERIES BOOK 1
RHONDA FRANKHOUSER

Excerpt:

Katherine opened her mouth to agree, but she froze, her attention drawn over Casey's shoulder toward the door.

A masculine silhouette stood in the doorway, the moonlight from outside outlined his strong, athletic frame.

Her feet stilled even though the song played on.

Casey backed away to look at her.

She went quiet as everyone around her stomped and twirled.

Even as she sensed Casey's dismay, Katherine couldn't help but stare.

"What do we have here?" she whispered, unable to look away from the tall cowboy.

"I've never seen him before, but I have a feeling I'm gonna regret seeing 'im now," Casey grumbled as he stepped away to give her room to gawk.

Katherine studied the handsome stranger without a care she was being rude or forward.

He stood a good foot taller than her 5'4" inch frame. His short hair was the color of clay dirt under the brown, flat-brimmed cowboy hat. The snakeskin headband said a badass dwelled beneath. She chewed up the sight of him like he was one of Momma's gingerbread cookies.

His well-worn Wranglers were snug against his long, muscled legs and tight backside. His white, fitted shirt clung to his broad shoulders, a tuft of dark hair peeked out above the top snap.

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He was older than her, maybe twenty-three or four, but she didn't care. She was eighteen now! What might have been illegal yesterday, were just some numbers tonight.

The large silver buckle at his waist looked like it could maybe be a roping trophy or the like, she couldn't really tell. It took everything she had not to walk over to get a better look.

The square-toed Frye boots were the most expensive thing about him other than the guitar he had slung over his back by a woven strap. He exuded class and restraint and some kind of pheromone that had her hypnotized.

Katherine hadn't realized she was holding her breath until Casey nudged her. "Come on, Kat. You look ridiculous. We've gotta go."

She ignored him and kept staring. She'd never been struck so by another person in her life.

The stranger's eyes, shadowed by the brim of his hat, now fixed on hers. They were dark and mysterious, obviously as curious about her as she was him.

"Oh, my," she whispered when he flashed a broad, playful smile. His closely trimmed goatee would surely tickle during a kiss. She prayed silently to feel that tickle in the very near future.

"Oh my, really?" Casey muttered, as he moved off the dance floor to gather his friends.

The lead singer of the band spoke out over the microphone. "I'd like to welcome Mr. John Lattrell to the stage. Come on up, John, and sit in."

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Everyone, including Katherine, watched the tall, handsome stranger walk toward the stage to join the band. He moved with a manly grace, telling her he'd be talented at anything he tried. Riding, dancing, lovemaking. Anything.

"Oh, my," she whispered again. She pushed her shoulders back when he headed toward her on his way to the stage. She regretted re-buttoning that top button.

She was stunned when their eyes met, like she'd been paralyzed by Blue Coral snake venom. He smiled again, obviously appreciating her reaction.

"I hope you're not leaving. You haven't even heard me play yet." His voice was deep and rhythmic. A sensual song without music.

Katherine didn't have words. She couldn't make her mouth move. She stared at him, smiling stupidly, wondering how his full lips would taste against hers.

"You all right, Miss?" He pushed the hat back on his head and leaned in for a closer look.

A low moan escaped when she caught the scent of his earthy cologne. His concerned gaze held her until the announcer again requested his presence on the stage.

"Miss?" He smiled again. "Are you gonna be okay?" He steadied her with a strong hand against the small of her back. She quivered from the heat of his touch.

When their eyes locked, a breath caught in Katherine's throat. The smile on his ruggedly handsome face, turned now to an expression

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of curious longing. The seconds that passed between them felt like hours. Just as he started to speak, Casey pressed his energy between them and broke the spell.

“She’s fine,” Casey interrupted, frustration evident in his tone. He grabbed her elbow and ushered her away. “And she’s late getting home. Her *momma’s* gonna give us hell if we don’t get back home right now.”

John held Katherine in his gaze as Casey and the boys escorted her out of the town hall. Her eyes stayed on him, memorizing his face, until she could see only his hand reaching for her through the open door.