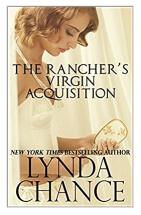
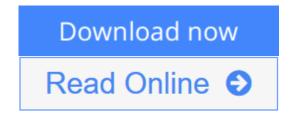
The Rancher's Virgin Acquisition



By Lynda Chance





When the stagecoach that is carrying Emma Martin to her new job in Denver is attacked and robbed in the wilds of Colorado, she is the only survivor. Alone and terrified, she is rescued by Luke Butler, a rancher who knows only one way. His way.

When Luke Butler finds Emma Martin, he has no other choice but to bring her back to his ranch. Soon, his life is turned upside down by a female who doesn't know how to mind and who doesn't know how to stay put.

The battle that follows is a clash of wills, a test of tempers, and a lesson in love.

Excerpt:

Luke glanced at Emma and gave her a pointed look that meant she was to stay where she was. Then he turned and escorted the sheriff out the door.

"You're not using your brain, man," the sheriff argued.

"Not your concern," Luke responded sharply.

"She's too soft, Luke. She needs people around her, not just a bunch of rag-tag ranch hands. Let her go back to town with me. I'll keep her safe, I'll see to it that Emma has--"

Luke cut him off. "Stop talking," he growled in a hiss. "She's not up for discussion. You lost your chance to keep her safe when you sent me out there to find her. You need to forget she's here. Emma doesn't exist for you anymore. Don't say her name, don't even think about her."

"Jesus Christ, Luke. You're not even acting sane."

"Don't push me. I'm the only help you've got this side of Silver Creek. You need to move on about your business. You know I'd never hurt her. Soothe your goddamn conscious with that and finish the job you need to be doing. Find the scum that did this. Find 'em and hang 'em high because I don't like the thought of them being alive after seeing her face."

The two men glared at each other before the sheriff turned and mounted his horse.

Luke hesitated only a moment before he slammed back into the house and prowled to the chair where Emma was still sitting. He pulled her up and with a jerk, she stumbled against him.

His arms reached out and encircled her.

"It'll take half an hour before the sheriff is too far away for one of my men to chase him down and bring him back. So you've got that long to decide." One steely arm was wrapped around her back, the other traced a line down her spine and then up again in a smooth caress.

"I thought I'd already decided."

"You need a little more understanding of the situation before you can make a proper decision."

Emma was pleasantly shocked by the intimacy of his touch and held enthralled as she stood in the circle of his arms. She remained mute and concentrated on her breathing that seemed to be rushing in and out of her lungs as if she were completely out of oxygen.

"Fair warning, Emma-girl," his smooth voice was brutal.

"Warning?" she managed to ask.

"I feel inclined to make sure you understand how it's gonna be while you still have the opportunity to leave. Like I said, in half an hour or so, that option will be taken away from you."

"I'm sure." Her voice was hesitant and didn't sound sure at all.

"Yeah?" His gaze slipped to her mouth and his already dark eyes grew stormy. "Let's hear you repeat that in a few minutes."

Emma had no other warning before his mouth fell on hers.

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