

A NOVELLA

*where*  
LOVE  
*is planted*

SARAH ANNE CROUCH



*To Michael, Elizabeth, Lily, and Peter.  
I choose you.*



## Chapter 1



**H**ow many flower shops could there possibly be in a town the size of Trammel, Texas?

More than one would think, apparently. Grant Keller drummed his fingers on his desk as the search engine results finished loading on his phone. He didn't have time to waste ordering a bouquet for his mother, but ten minutes calling a florist was better than an hour apologizing to his mom. Or—even worse—making a trip out west to Trammel.

Grant selected the first business to materialize on his screen and pressed call.

“Aaronson Flowers and Gifts, this is Ivy. How may I help you?” The voice on the other end sounded a little raspy, but not old. He guessed she was in her twenties or thirties.

“Hi, Ivy, I'd like to order a bouquet.”

“Of course. What's the occasion?”

“A birthday.”

“Sure, we have plenty of selections appropriate for a birthday.”

Grant immediately realized his mistake. “Sorry, it's not actually for a birthday.” He ran his fingers through his hair. He

was wasting precious time. Why could he not accomplish such a simple task?

“Oh, okay.” She was understandably confused.

“It’s my birthday. The flowers are for my mom.”

“Ahh.” She dragged the word out, and he sensed they were finally getting somewhere. “Kind of a ‘thanks for giving birth to me’ present?”

“Yes. Something like that.” More like a *please don’t be mad at me present*, but she didn’t need to know that.

“Well, does your mom have any favorite flowers?”

Grant racked his brain. He should’ve figured out what he wanted to buy before he called. He was about to tell her to pick something when he remembered. “Sunflowers. She always decorates with sunflowers.”

“Hmm.” Grant deflated a bit at the tone of her voice, but she continued. “We don’t get many of those big yellow sunflowers in March, but I can order some. It’ll only take a few days.”

“Oh, no. I can’t wait that long.” He should’ve called sooner, but he just came up with the idea of an apology bouquet.

“Okay. I think I can come up with something just as sunny and vibrant. We’ve got some gorgeous gerbera daisies in the shop right now. They’re *my* favorites.”

“That sounds great.” He’d never heard of a gerbera whatsit, but he’d agree to pretty much anything she suggested at this point.

“What size bouquet would you like?”

Grant poked his head out of his office. No sign of his boss. He ducked back inside. “How about a dozen?” A dozen flowers sounded like a generous amount.

“And a vase? We typically include those in our arrangements, unless told otherwise.”

His mother must have a vase somewhere in the house, but

he hated to make her go on the hunt for the perfect container when the flower shop could just provide one for her. “Yes, please.”

“What name should I put on the order?”

“My name is Grant, but my mom’s name is Lisa.”

“Okay, Grant. And will you be picking it up in the shop?”

“No, I need it delivered.”

“Sure thing. When would you like the bouquet sent?”

“Today?”

Ivy paused on the other end. He winced and waited for her to tell him she couldn’t make the delivery.

“I’ll make sure she gets it.”

Grant breathed a sigh of relief. “Oh, thank you so much, Ivy.”

“Sure thing. But next time, give me at least a day’s notice.”

“I will.” Although no one was around to see it, Grant smiled.

“What would you like on the card?”

He hadn’t thought through that part either, but Grant was an excellent extemporaneous speaker. “Mom, I’m sorry I can’t give these to you in person. Thank you for twenty-seven years of putting up with me. I love you to the moon and back. Grant.”

Ivy’s pen stopped scratching on the other end. “That’s lovely.”

Grant’s cheeks warmed. “Thank you.”

He’d finished giving his credit card information right as a knock sounded on his door. Grant held up his finger and motioned to the phone. “Thanks for your help, Ivy. I appreciate it.”

“Thank you for your business, Grant. I hope you think of us again when your mom’s birthday rolls around. Maybe we’ll have some sunflowers for her.”

“That’d be great. Thanks.”

“Have a blessed day.”

Her statement caught Grant by surprise. Not many business owners in the metroplex offered benedictions. “Oh, um, you too. Thanks.” He punched the screen to end the call.

“You get that email from Hughes?” Marcus Thacker, Grant’s coworker and fellow associate at Packer, Hughes, and Price, stood in the doorway.

Grant sat in his desk chair and swiveled to face his computer. In bold letters at the top of his inbox “Darby Hearing Date.” He skimmed the body of the message.

He groaned. “The hearing’s been moved back.”

“What’s the problem? Now you’ve got more time.”

“I know, but I’ve been putting off my parents about a visit home, and now it’s too late. I couldn’t possibly make it there and back in time for work tomorrow.”

“So go over the weekend. Your parents are in-state, right?”

Grant leveled his gaze at his friend. “Did you know that if you left Dallas for Los Angeles today, when you’d arrived at the halfway point you’d still be in Texas?” He’d made the drive many times while shuttling back and forth to see his college girlfriend. She’d attended a more prestigious—and much more expensive—law school, while he’d opted to stay in-state and closer to home. Funny, that decision hadn’t translated to more time with his family.

“What’s your point?” Marcus raised an eyebrow.

“My point is, Texas is a massive state. And my parents live three hours away, plus it’s nearly rush hour. While it is technically possible for me to drive all the way to middle-of-nowhere West Texas, I can’t make the trip and catch up on the briefs I have to finish for Jenna.”

Marcus shrugged and pushed off the doorway. “Suit yourself.”



*Where Love Is Planted*

A reminder pinged on Grant's digital calendar as Marcus walked away. He had five minutes to read over his files before meeting Jenna in her office.

As Grant reached for the papers he needed, a framed photo caught his eye. The last family vacation he'd taken with his parents and siblings was at least four years ago. Will and Hailey hadn't had any children. And his sister, Addison, was going through her platinum blonde phase. Grant missed spending time with his parents, he really did. But everything he did—working long hours, spending nights and weekends reviewing cases, and barely surfacing to see fellow humans at church services once a week—was all for the greater good.

He was making his father proud by dedicating himself to his career. And he was providing for another family, a future wife and potential children. He just hoped all the effort was worth it someday. And he prayed that his mom would be satisfied with some flowers while he climbed the corporate ladder.

For the sake of family.