



The Unlikely Lavender Queen: A Memoir of Unexpected Blossoming

Jeannie Ralston

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“I couldn’t help but question how I’d gotten to this strange spot in my life, so far from what I’d expected for myself. Yes, there had been a heady romance a few years back. Then a slew of subsequent decisions, fueled by love and yearnings I didn’t even know I had. But I never, ever would have suspected that this was where the sum total of them would bring me. That afternoon a new doubt dripped into my mind. When do you know, I wondered, whether the choices you’ve made were the right ones?”

In 1990, Jeannie Ralston was a successful magazine writer and bona fide city girl—the type of woman who couldn't imagine living on soil not shaded by skyscrapers. By 1994, she had called off an engagement, married Robb, a National Geographic photographer, and was living in Blanco Texas, population 1600.

The Unlikely Lavender Queen is the intimate story of a woman who gives up a lot for the man she loves – her beloved blue state, bagels and all-night bodegas—only to have to wonder: Was it too much? Ralston offers a lively chronicle of her life as a wife, new mother and an urban settler in rural Texas. As she labors to convert a dilapidated barn into a livable home, deal with scorpions and unbearably hot summers, raise two young children while Robb is frequently away on assignment, she realizes her ultimate struggle is to reconcile her life plans and goals with her husband’s without coming out the proverbial loser. And just when it seems like she might be losing that fight--and herself-- a little purple bloom changes her life.

For centuries lavender has been a mystical herb, so valuable to ancient Romans that a bushel would cost nearly a month’s wages. But when Robb returns from a trip to Provence with a plan for growing lavender on their land, Ralston is not convinced—in fact the last thing she needed or wanted was to take up farming on top of everything else. Then, much to her surprise, she slowly but surely falls in love with lavender, and in the course of growing and selling blooms, hosting the public at the farm, and creating lavender products, she discovers a new side of herself. A few short years later, Ralston had built *Hill Country Lavender*, a thriving commercial enterprise that transforms both her little corner of Texas and her life.

The Unlikely Lavender Queen will resonate with all women who have faced the tough choices that come with “having it all” and secretly (or not so secretly) hoped for great adventure to come along and surprise them. Ralston’s honest, funny, and poignant memoir is a testament to the fact that such adventures await us around every bend in life.

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