



Ready or Not

Melissa Brayden

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Sometimes wrong is extra right.

Mallory Spencer is in charge. As the face of Soho Savvy, the advertising firm she owns with her three best friends, it's important that she's poised, polished, and put together. However, as she watches her friends couple up and settle down, she wonders about her own happily ever after. One thing's for sure. It's not going to happen with that blue-eyed bartender from Showplace. It's irritatingly clear they couldn't be more wrong for each other . . . or have more chemistry.

Hope Sanders wants nothing more than to keep her head down and craft a better life for herself running everyone's favorite nightspot. That means ignoring the groupies that flock to the bar to stare at her all night. However, an uptight brunette has snagged Hope's attention and she knows a challenge when she sees it.

A Soho Loft Romance

Ready or Not Details

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Author : Melissa Brayden

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From Reader Review Ready or Not for online ebook

P. Industry says

If you're here reading this, then you've probably read the other two books. So here's the reassurance – this is a damn fine book, and you're going to like it. Read it and enjoy it, okay? This is a solidly four-star book, with only minor problems, and it's going to leave you feeling warm and snuggly inside for the rest of the day.

Mallory is the final member of her group of friends; slightly pretentious, she has a good heart to go along with her fair chunk of old-American money (and is a super hottie to boot). It's this last trait (the hottie business, not the money) which first attracts the attention of Hope – a barback at the Savvy girls' favourite watering hole, Showplace. But Mallory and Hope are from fairly dissimilar backgrounds as these things go. Will they fall in love, etc etc?

Yes. Yes they will.

Brayden actually writes fairly angst-free novels. The tensions which normally drive a romance like this forward instead resolve themselves here without unbelievable conflict or overly dramatic displays of emotion. Brayden has always written dialogue which trends towards the believable, or downright witty in some places, and communication is actively encouraged. The use of the "Midnight Chocolate" trope (wherein the author brings all the characters together to ritually talk) gets all the characters moving together in a natural way, as well as acting as exposition for the reader.

Although the previous two novels set up each of the Savvy girls with different personalities, those differences don't shine in "Ready or Not." The recognisable speech patterns from the previous books are not repeated; Sam sounds like Hunter, sounds like Brooklyn, sounds like Mallory. This actually caught me off guard – with all the groundwork laid in the previous two novels, it broke me out of suspension that the characters would suddenly behave and speak like clones of the same person. So weird.

Mallory, although not immune from this new fad for having dialogue interchangeable with anyone else, has the advantage that we as readers are seeing through her eyes. That saves the novel, frankly, because Mallory is a sympathetic character – no small feat of writing considering she is openly a snobby control-freak. (view spoiler) It is a high compliment when a writer builds a character with pressing flaws which are then worked through properly and slowly over the course of the novel. The easement of those flaws (and their subsequent diminishing impact on her ability to love) felt so natural I barely noticed it was happening.

Although many reviewers probably disagree with me, the best novel in this series was the second one. Hear me out! I've got a point here. Hunter and Sam fall in love slowly and believably, because they both knew (and fully understood) the personality of the other. They were friends, and you can see that at work in their romance. It was believable, sweet, and created the kind of low-key 'drama' most people can empathise with. It created a depth to their love. They were people who understood every quirk both positive and negative, who lived together and worked together, and who fell desperately in love because of, and despite that.

"Ready or Not" lacks a lot of that depth. Hope has a crush on a pretty lady at the bar. They meet outside work once or twice, go on one date. To be honest, they actually spend very little time together – the good portion of this book is spent with them apart brooding about things. That brooding, by the way, never really goes anywhere. Hope's sister kind of just... is there. (view spoiler) Not much really happens on the work

front (view spoiler). Where is that which elevates this connection above raw lust and basic curiosity? Where is the profound, shared, tender affection?

I suspect I am not meant to find the love and life as rich and fulfilling as that in "Just Three Words" but after such a crackerjack second novel I suspect I had unreasonable expectations. So it's kind of churlish of me to gripe, and I know this. But... it felt hollow in comparison. Like being served candy-floss for dessert. Fine, you know? And sweet enough, but lacking depth.

But like I said - churlish. This is a damn fine book. Mallory is a damn fine character, who is easy to barrack for, and watching her fall in love is damn satisfying. It probably won't go on my "read again" pile (where "Just Three Words" has sat continuously for the last six months) but it was a great book, a fine conclusion to a pretty excellent series.

Diane Wallace says

Wow! let me dive right in and say that this was another one of her greatest out-put in this series and i know i am grading from the 1st book..this had it all..relationship issues, family problems, drug problems, friendship topics and the lifestyle of the rich and poor: how they live and treated each other, the inside of how they live. Now to the writing-grade A+ and the chemistry between the main characters was just telling and passionate...awesome back and forth dialogue between the main characters(Mallory & Hope)..people please go out and pick this book up when it hits the bookstore..its very good..nice touching moment at the end..highly recommend

Sprinkles says

There's something so satisfying, yet sad about finishing a series. Melissa Brayden's writing style and I may have our ongoing tiffs, but it'd be dishonest to leave out the laughs, smirks, and omg's I've experienced with the Savvy ladies. It's awesome to have a well-written series such as this in our lesbian bubble of fiction.

'Ready or Not' is my favorite of the three books. Mallory has an ice queen-ish veneer going on and I'm a sucker for that nine times out of ten. I enjoyed the family drama for the most part and Mallory's chemistry with Hope was believable and a pleasure to follow.

May I point out the "-y" names for guys in this book? Timmy, Freddy, Robby, Teddy, Benny, oh my! The word 'picturesque' was used a noticeable number of times, which isn't the worst, but I highlighted it whenever it showed. I also kind of wish Hope and Mallory had different color/types of eyes because all the references to "big, blue eyes" lost their sparkle when both characters thought it often.

Oh, and I have a tiny personal beef:
(view spoiler)

Regardless, I can say that 'Ready or Not' is chock full of memorable quotes. The epilogue tugged at my heart. That was the "oh crap, this is the end" moment for me. I'll revisit my favorite moments of the Soho Loft series whenever I need a diabetes-inducing dose of fluff or, of course, midnight chocolate binges. Nice job, Brayden!

Tara says

So! I have to admit I kind of dragged my heels with this one. I was afraid I wasn't going to like it because I don't like it when a main character's family drives drama, so everything about Hope's sister and her issues, particularly how that was set up, turned me off at first. But really, I should know better. I read every book by Melissa Brayden for a reason.

Hope and Mallory are great. The way they get together is super cute, especially how Hope brings Mallory around to it. They also each have satisfying arcs, which I appreciated, and I totally believed them as a couple by the end. I also liked seeing the rest of the Savvy crew again and their new dudebro clients.

Keep plenty of chocolate handy, and maybe a little of booze for this one. If you liked the other books, you'll like this one. It can be read on its own, but I have no idea why anyone would want to when the first two books are so good, especially Kiss the Girl.

Lex Kent says

4 1/2 Stars. Melissa Brayden, really is one of the better romance authors out there. This book was great. Book one is still my favorite, but this is a very close second. I was excited to finally read Mal's story. Shes always been the character that held the most mystery. As the book unfolded, it revealed more and more of her character and she became more and more likeable. I liked Hope character also, though she was a bit annoyingly stubborn towards the end of the book. I was not that crazy about the story-line with Hope's sister, but it didn't take away from the enjoyment of the book.

I was also happy how Brayden dealt with the other characters, we have grown to enjoy so much. I am definitely content with how she wrapped up this series.

If you have not read book one and two, read them first. This is a wonderful series for romance fans and I'd recommend it in a heartbeat.

Irene (Functioning LesFic Addict) says

Rating: 3.85 /5

Vanilla is not so bad afterall...

POV: 3rd

Sex: Not explicit, but sensual.

Pace/Writing: Neighter slow, nor fast. Doesn't bore you with lengthy desrciptions or long inner monologues.

Love: Gradual

Triggers: None

Editing: No issues

Age: Early 30's

Price: \$9.99

SYNOPSIS

Hope is an open, down-to-earth hardworking bartender (also major eye-candy to all the local lezzies), Mallory is an uptight, semi-closed off, hardworking businesswoman (also major eye-candy)—a match made in Sappho's right? Wrong. At least not until they both do some major midlife soul searching. But will they realize that they're better off as friends, business associates, or more?

PROS

(1) So far, after all of the lesfic reading I've done, I've found this line to be one of my favorites:

“That’s how you know it’s worth fighting for,” Sam whispered and handed her a tissue. “If it isn’t capable of ripping your heart out, it isn’t love.”

I mean, DAMN! Can we put this in the Urban Dictionary under “love” or nah?

(2) Out of the 3 books in this series, I thought that this was the most realistic. Neither character was perfect. Even the ending wasn't the stinkingly cute, chickflic-esq ending we saw in the previous books. Don't get me wrong—it was sweet, but 100% believable. Also believable was what led up to the ending. Like grown-ups, they (eventually) looked love in the face and did some soul-searching. There was no dramatic catalyst or sudden epiphany that had the MCs running into each other's arms. It was gradual and natural and, as a disliker of vanilla romance, I really appreciated that.

(3) Both MCs had their own side storyline that was actually unpredictable and added balance to the predictable girl-meets-girl storyline.

(4) Mallory is a stud in the bed. I was not expecting that at all.

(5) I expected this to be a butch/femme dynamic but it was more of a femme/femme one which threw me off, but in a good way.

(6) The narrator of the audiobook is awesome. She should do a mic drop at the end of her reads.

CONS

(1) As per usual in vanilla romance, the main storyline was predictable.

(2) ~~The banter became a little too much for me. I can't believe people, even good friends, joke THAT much.~~ On second thought, I probably just need to get out more...LOL.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This is a must-read if you are into vanilla romances. If not, I think most would still enjoy it (this coming from a lover of angst-filled and dramatic romances). I'm grateful to Jae's Bingo contest which led me to find this series. I was sad to see it end.

Jem says

The world of lesbian romance readers is divided into two: those who've read the first two books in this Soho Loft series (Kiss the girls, Just Three Words), and those who haven't. For the former group, you can skip the rest of this review and just order the book. As our Savvy ladies are wont to say, the universe just won't be complete without it. :) Now for the other group, either you're a newbie to lesfic or you've been living under a rock for the past couple of years. :)

In every Soho Loft book, there's a very appealing pattern to the love matches: rivals, polar opposites, rich girl/poor girl. The guaranteed conflicts/angst from such pair-ups form the basic backbone of the storylines. None of which are particularly original by themselves (as if anything in the romance genre can feel original), but applied with an overall tone of hip and lighthearted fun, and you have a very enjoyable romantic lesbian chick-lit. That pretty much sums up the appeal of this series.

Anyway, so we've come to the last but most important character in our little Soho loft universe. Mallory, the face, the brains and the financial brawn of Manhattan boutique advertising firm Savvy is the only one left of the Soho gang of four friends who is still unattached. Driven, ambitious and singularly-minded, she's completely focused on Savvy's success in the very competitive advertising market. In the eight years she's been running the firm, she simply doesn't have the time or the inclination to even think of dating seriously. But times are a-changin', as one by one, her partners and friends are coupling up and finding true love, leaving her as the awkward fifth wheel in any get-together. When your business partners are also your best friends, that's like being around lovebirds 24/7. Who wouldn't feel left out?

The ladies' favorite watering hole is manned by a hot bartender Hope, who seems to be the top attraction at the bar, and not just for her considerable bartending skills. But Hope only has eyes for that sexy, enigmatic regular who rocks power suits and Jimmy Choos. A set-up sees them meeting in an informal social setting. But that only highlights how far apart their social standing is, as far as Mallory is concerned. While the physical attraction is there, she just can't imagine spending the rest of her life with a bartender.

The central character Mallory isn't very likeable at the start. It's refreshing that the author chose to portray her realistically. For once, we have a rich girl who acts like one. She can be snobbish and patronizing, when she's not minding her manners. (view spoiler) In fact, that's one of the things I like most about Ms. Brayden's characters. They're human. They behave like real people. They have common sense. They fight, they offend and they misunderstand, but they reach out and communicate and apologize. Like adults. No contrived or needless angst just for the sake of angst.

But then again, the whole book would have been exceedingly dry if it were mostly about Mallory. Perfection does not an interesting story make. Fortunately, love interest Hope has a more compelling backstory, plus some disreputable family and hangers-on help to liven up the proceedings. Most of the little kinks to the development of their romance (I mean the hurdles, not the bedroom stuff!) are not that surprising. When the author brings something up, I felt myself mentally waiting for the other shoe to drop. So, plotwise, it's nothing we haven't read before. And the sappiness (the couples from the first two books) occasionally borders on toothache-inducing. But the snappy dialog and clever comebacks, the warm and fuzzy friendships, and the sizzling sex all contribute to make this a fitting end to what is arguably the most enjoyable series in all of lesbian romance.

4.75 stars

Advanced Review Copy received from Netgalley

Pin says

Ready or Not is a great final book of the Soho Loft trilogy, but for me the first book (Kiss the Girl) is still the best. Anyway, I'm definitely sure I'll re-read the entire trilogy many times.

Megzz says

2.5

Well I hate (like, really hate) to be the one to break the Brayden spell but... What was that??

By far my least favorite novel by this author. Of course, the writing is great, it always is (although I have to admit I got tired really fast of all the way-too-perfect banter that is way too unrealistic and way too similar between what are supposed to be very different characters), but the content, ugh.

Let's see. There is absolutely nothing exciting about Ready Or Not.

Nothing like falling in love at first sight with the worst person possible, like Jessica and Brooklyn.

Nothing like realising you're in love with your best friend, like Hunter and Sam.

Hope and Mallory are doing it the really traditional way. (view spoiler)

I was bored. I nearly didn't make it to the end. And it's **Brayden**. So I forced myself. But my favorite scenes were the ones where I got a glimpse of Hunter and Sam together and when you're *that* interested in a secondary couple, you know something's not right!

This one is just too stereotypical for me. The laid back sexy bartender/owner from a poor background with the rich workaholic control freak. The drama surrounding Mallory's parents, as if marriages were never about love in the wealthy world. Hope's sister who does a complete 180 the moment she meets a guy she falls madly in love with and runs off with. I didn't remember Melissa Brayden's novels to be *that* cheesy.

Now I just want to read Just Three Words again :(*sigh*.

Luce says

4.5 stars. Previous read - 4 stars.

If you are thinking of re-reading or even just starting the series for the first time, I would recommend listening to the audiobooks. The narrator really added to the pleasure of this series. When I first read this book, it was my "least" favorite of the three, but upon reread I enjoyed it more but not quite enough to up it to a 5 star book. But only because it dragged a bit around 2/3 mark but then it quickly picked up steam again. A very satisfying ending to a fabulous series. (Just Three Words is still my favorite, maybe because Hunter

& Samantha are my favorite characters.)

Agirlcandream says

Like all great romantic trilogies, a smart author saves the best for last. I might be in the minority but Ready or Not, Mallory's chance at love is as good or IMO the best book of the trilogy.

I love a strong woman. Sure, Mallory is a trust fund baby and yes, maybe she is a snob. I loved the contrast between her privileged upbringing and successful career path and Hope's scramble to succeed on her own ambition and entrepreneurial skills. It is a pleasure to watch the controlling and uptight Mallory find herself off balance around Hope. Hope's confidence, playfulness and just plain goodness keep Mallory guessing and add so much to their relationship. Hope brings out the softer side of Mallory, the side she rarely shows in public. We readers get to watch a regimented woman learn to adapt and open herself to new love. How great is that?

I thought the author added a lot of depth to the family drama experienced by both leading ladies in Ready or Not. These details made the expected breakup/strain in their relationship feel real and possible. Their differences would eventually become an issue and they did. How Mallory dealt with the events presented showed once again her ability to grow and adapt.

The other members of Soho Savvy, the couples from the first two books receive enough page time to entertain without taking the spotlight away from the Hope and Mallory storyline. One of my favourite scenes in the book involves a final M-C gathering with Brooklyn, Sam and Hunter high-fiving like their Big Top clients. As always, Brayden writes brilliant and entertaining dialogue. She brings her characters to life and I appreciate how effective she is at keeping each player in character. That continuity is what makes the romantic trilogy work. We readers get to revisit the couples we have come to know and love while enjoying the new couple and the challenges they face.

This Soho trilogy will be difficult to top but I do hope this will not be the last series penned by Ms. Brayden. Ready or Not is a worthy addition to this series. Well done.

ARC provided by publisher via NetGalley

Just a man's point of view says

I read it, but I rushed a bit, so I read it again.

This made me think about the right way to read a Melissa Brayden's.

The first time I was hungry because I wanted to see what was going to happen and, as a result, I didn't like the book so much.

But the second time I read it slowly, I tasted every detail, and this time I loved it.

I researched every peculiarity that came up through the reading. For example I head to translate "burgundy" (Mallory's matching underwear was black and burgundy) to discover it was the english translation of Bourgogne wine.

I believe these Brayden books have to be "meditated" as a good glass of red burgundy to be really

appreciated. Sipped, not gulped down.

I also "googled" every place of NY and there are many which I want to see sooner or later.

Above all, I took time to consider every feelings and emotions this story "elicited" both in the lead characters and in myself. The result, as always with this author, is delicious.

I loved each and every character in this series, but my favourite ones are Hunter and Mallory, because of the contrast between strength and vulnerability. I found it really charming.

~ * K E L L I E * ~ says

It's a Melissa Brayden book - need I say more?! ;-)

I had mixed emotions when finishing the final page of Ready or Not. Whilst it was another outstanding novel by Ms Brayden, it was the end of an era - the final book in the Soho Loft trilogy... No more Savvy ideas and no more reaching for chocolate to participate in the 'midnight chocolate' gatherings!

Oh well, all good things must come to an end... and the Soho Loft series was an amazing journey!

Bring on August 2016 (anticipated release date of Ms Brayden's next book First Position)!

Tiff says

POW! BOOM! SMASH! Melissa Brayden strikes again. The women is a superhero with a pen. She literally can write dialogue like no one else. "Ready or Not" was unbelievable. The final book in the Soho Series may actually be its best, and that says a lot.

Mallory Spencer, I could not be more excited to see her journey. In the past two novels she was a character that I always thought was fascinating. All business, high society and a heart of gold. Mallory puts the needs of her friends and the needs of Savvy above everything. She is very much the backbone of her the company.

Hope Sanders is the Hot Bartender. We were briefly introduced to her in "Just Three Words", sending free cocktails Mallory's way. Hope is the proprietor of Showplace, the Savvy ladies go to after hours bar. She has not had anything handed to her, and has to work her tail off for every one of her successes in life. Hope is nothing like Mallory, but everything she needs.

The chemistry is off the charts. The swoon factor is high. I promise you this book will make you smile. I had such high hopes for this book, and Melissa Brayden leapt right over them.

Note: This ARC was provided to me by Netgalley & Bold Strokes book in exchange for an honest review.
[https://theromanticreaderblog.wordpress...](https://theromanticreaderblog.wordpress.com)

Elizabeth says

Note: This ARC was provided by NetGalley & Bold Strokes Books in exchange for an honest review.

Find the following review posted on my blog - FarNerdy.

Okay, first off - we should all know by now that anything Melissa Brayden writes is pure gold. This is fact, not opinion. Glad we got that out of the way.

Now on to the review:

OH MY GOODNESS!! This is such a bittersweet review to leave as I am SOO sad to see the Soho Savvy series come to an end! (Okay, fangirling tendencies will cease now) I even admit to shedding some tears when I read the final line in this novel. I mean, I knew it would happen, and therefore not ashamed to admit it. But, despite that feeling, Melissa Brayden has done it yet again and gone out with a bang with her final novel in this trilogy, Ready or Not. After watching her three best friends find love, Soho Savvy leader Mallory Spencer is beginning to feel like the fifth wheel. In walks Hope Sanders, "hot bartender" and owner of the Savvy ladies' favorite chill spot, Showplace. Pursuing Mallory until she finally caves after a bet is won, Hope and Mallory begin a relationship that blossoms into the unexpected for both women. While her friends watch the relationship pan out from the sidelines (with copious amounts of encouragement no less), Mallory and Hope tentatively step out of their comfort zones to pursue it to the utmost extent.

Aside from the obvious, let me explain what I loved about this novel. I'll be upfront and honest in saying that Mallory hasn't exactly been my favorite character amongst the Savvy novels, or the women involved for that matter. Truth be told, my absolute favorite character in the entire series is Jessica Lennox, Brooklyn's love interest and eventual girlfriend. (view spoiler) However, that does not mean that I wasn't extremely happy with this story and the conclusion of the Savvy series. Mallory's story was just as important as the rest of them, and the novel exuded the same charm, character development, wonderful dialogue, and quirky backdrop that graced the rest of the series. I enjoyed learning more about Mallory as I had the other Savvy ladies, as well as learning her faults. And Hope was a fantastic character - all tough and hardy when first examined, but eventually seen as a softie with a big heart that was her true form. I thoroughly enjoyed this book, especially seeing as it lived up to my, admittedly, high expectations when going in to the novel. Ms. Brayden has ended the series on such a high note, that I could only hope to see other series of similar caliber like this one from her in the future. In truth, I loved how the romance build-up between Mallory and Hope wasn't the ONLY plot line to the novel. Though I understand it was the primary one, it was nice to see other events play out in the background, but yet not out of the spotlight. I would have loved to have an entire novel (view spoiler) However, witnessing Mallory and Hope's relationship unfold over "mundane" things such as lobster rolls and business suits was still unique and beautiful in it's own, and in such a way that I have come to realize only Melissa Brayden can convey.

I'm sorry, but I do have to take a moment here to gush about Melissa Brayden for a second. If you haven't read any of her novels, and somehow this one is the one that caught your eye - don't hesitate. Read it. I do think it is important to read ALL of the Soho Savvy novels, but Ms. Brayden makes it entirely possible to read them out of order if you feel the need. However, if you're considering reading all of Brayden's novels - I couldn't recommend it more. Take the time out of your life and really sit down with her books. Melissa Brayden is an author that can truly capture your soul with her words. It genuinely feels as if you're listening to one of your best and closest friends tell you the story of her life when you read her works. Her dialogue is funny and light, yet still important and essential to the story plot. The women she writes about are unique, personable, completely relatable, and entirely crush-worthy in so many ways for any "type". Her character development, her real-life situations, even the pets she writes about to some of her characters! - everything is spot on. There is no question that Ms. Brayden really deep-dives the novels she writes, spending the time necessary (plus some) to get it right. Not just for her as an author, but for her readers as well. Melissa Brayden has quickly become my favorite author of this genre, and has even inched up to one of my favorite

authors of all-time, sharing with other top contenders such as Jane Austen, J.K. Rowling, and Louisa May Alcott.

Bottom line: the book is fantastic. And honestly, was there ever really any doubt that it wouldn't be? :)

Rating: ????
