

PETTICOATS & PISTOLS PRESENTS

Pink Pistol MAGAZINE



VOLUME 3 - MAY, 2023

FEATURING
AN EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW OF
BULLSEYE BRIDE
BY KARI TRUMBO

DISARMING HIS HEART
BY WINNIE GRIGGS

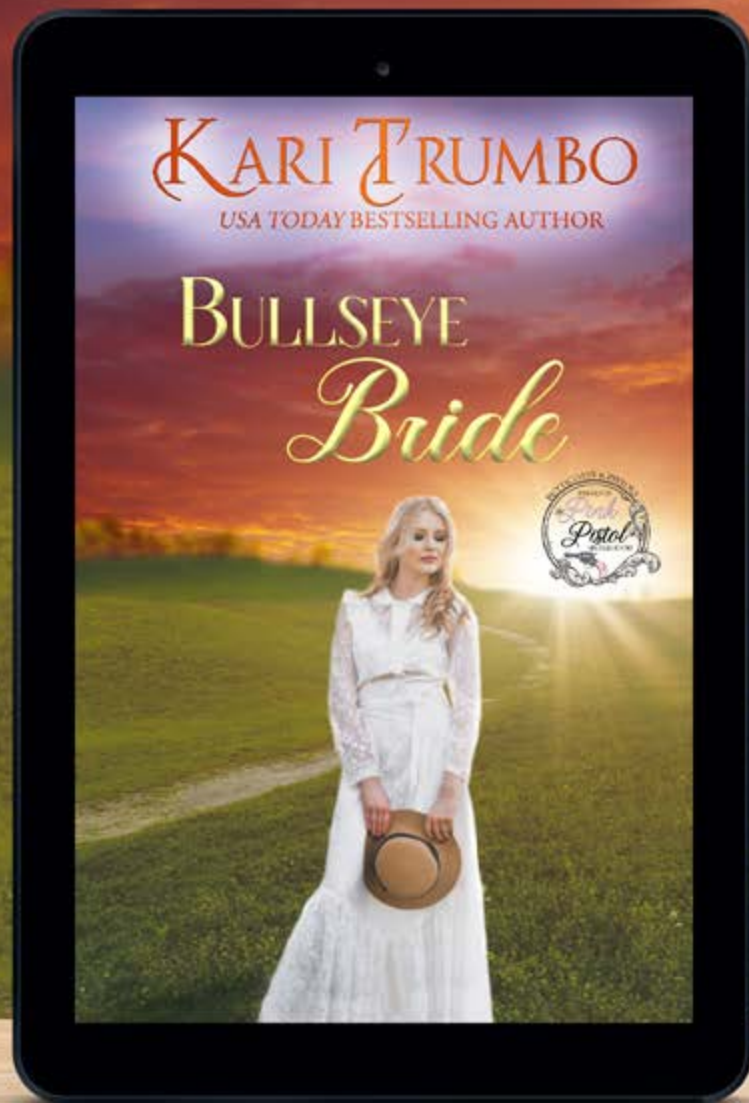
ONE SHOT AT LOVE
BY LINDA BRODAY

RECIPES, GAMES
AND MORE



BULLSEYE *Bride*

KITTY MUST WIN THE MEN'S SHOOTING TOURNAMENT
IN ORDER TO SAVE HER FAMILY FROM HER RUTHLESS UNCLE.
TROUBLE IS, SHE'S A WOMAN.



COMING MAY 10, 2023
A SWEET WESTERN ROMANCE BY
KARI TRUMBO



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Pink Pistol MAGAZINE



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Pam Crooks, for her tireless work behind the scenes and the time she so graciously gives to make our endeavors a success.

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And, of course, the fillies at Petticoats & Pistols, for their books and sisterhood.

Welcome

Welcome to The Pink Pistol Sisterhood Magazine!

It has been hugely gratifying to see the enthusiasm for these issues of the Pink Pistol Sisterhood Magazine. The number of downloads have been exciting, and we are thrilled that the books are lined up and finally starting to release. We know you've been waiting. So have we!

In this issue, we're featuring:

[BULLSEYE BRIDE](#) by Kari Trumbo

[DISARMING HIS HEART](#) by Winnie Griggs

[ONE SHOT AT LOVE](#) by Linda Broday

Just click the links to Preorder!

Newly Released! Karen Witemeyer's heartwarming novella starts the pink pistol's journey with the help of the legendary Annie Oakley. [IN HER SIGHTS](#) released on March 30th, and if you don't have your copy yet, you can get it [here](#). Available in Kindle Unlimited and paperback.

Newly Released! The ever-popular Shanna Hatfield's book, [LOVE ON TARGET](#), keeps the whimsy alive and has also been released. If you don't have your copy yet, you can get it delivered to your Kindle now by clicking [here](#). Also available in Kindle Unlimited and paperback!

[LOVE ON FIRE](#) by Cheryl Pierson, and [BULLET PROOF BRIDE](#), by Kit Morgan, will be releasing in just a few days. Watch for them to land in your Kindle.

Don't forget! We have only more issue left, coming May 10th, and it will be FREE, too!

She who possesses this pistol, possesses an opportunity that must not be squandered. Cast in the tender dreams of maidens from ages past, the steel of this weapon is steadfast and true and will lead an unmarried woman to a man forged from the same virtuous elements. One need only fit her hand to the grip and open her heart to activate the promise for which this pistol was fashioned—the promise of true love. Patience and courage will illuminate her path. Hope and faith will guide her steps until her heart finds its home.

Once the promise is fulfilled, the bearer must release the pistol and pass it to another or risk losing what she has found.

Accept the gift . . . or not.

Believe its promise . . . or not.

But hoard the pistol for personal gain . . . and lose what you hold most dear.



Excerpt from

BULLSEYE *Bride*

by Kari Trumbo

A shiver ran up Kitty's spine as she touched the cloudy glass of the pawnshop's front window. Beyond it, barely visible, was a dark wooden case with the items that would be available for sale in one week if the owner didn't pay back their loan. Even though she had only one dollar to her name, she wanted what was in that wooden case more than almost anything.

She shook the desire from her shoulders and straightened her spine. How childish. She should want her father's return more than the beautiful pearl-handled pistol nestled within the wooden box. He'd been gone for over two months and Ma speculated he was dead, not that his loss seemed to change her day much.

Other than the fact that they couldn't pay to live there.

Her threadbare coat, borrowed from Ma, did little to keep

out the chill of the wind blowing over the Black Hills and down into Deadwood valley. Spring was on the way, but not quite there yet. Summer would mean she could hunt more easily and they wouldn't need so much wood for the stove. Her brothers were a big help, but without Pa there to provide, their storage of store-bought staples was gone. No money left for a pink pistol, no matter how purdy it might be.

No, her pocket held just enough to enter the Deadwood Annual Shooting Contest. Thad Easton's printed poster hung inside the window, just out of the way enough to still see the goods. That fact mattered little because she knew what the sheet said by heart. The competition was in a week and she hadn't signed up yet. Mainly because she'd had to find the time to do odd jobs around town until she could earn the

highly expensive entry fee of a whole dollar.

She clenched her fist and reached for the door just as a large masculine hand did the same. It brushed across hers, making her shiver slightly and jump. Where had he come from? Looking up, her vision caught and held on to the man she'd just been thinking about. Thad smiled at her and held the door open.

"Kathrine, good to see you in town."

She swallowed hard. How was she to reply to that? She only came into town to go to church and to sell the pelts of the rabbits she caught for food around their house. The few pennies they brought in were barely enough to buy flour. "Good to see you, too." She swallowed hard. The man was far too handsome, and wealthy, for her to go all doe-eyed, but her heart raced all the same.

Her words made his smile grow even more. "Are you here to sign up for the contest? None of the other ladies will bother if you don't. There is no competition without you."

He'd noticed? Warmth spread over her cheeks.

"Now, Thad, don't you let your words go to Kitty's head. That sheriff's wife from over in Belle Fourche has already signed up and I hear she's a crack shot."

Kitty rushed to the front to look at the signup sheet. Sure enough, her friend Hannah Longfellow had signed up to compete. Hannah had teased her husband Blake for years about driving a car instead of riding a horse, but that very thing allowed Hannah to have friends in other towns.

"I couldn't compete against Hannah," Kitty bit her lip. Well, she could, but she wouldn't want to. Especially since there was no prize for the women's competition. Hannah was her closest friend, and it was a measly thirty yards. Barely a challenge.

"You mean you're not going to enter?" Dalton, the pawnbroker, leaned over the counter and smacked his lips, shoving his wad of tobacco deeper into his cheek with his tongue. "You out of money, ain't ya?" Greed narrowed his eyes. "I'm sure we could find something in that hovel worth the dollar entry fee."

Thad held up his hand. "Dalton, don't put words in her mouth or start taking an inventory of her goods before she needs your unique . . . services." His lip curled, making Kitty wonder why the signup was only in the pawn shop if Thad didn't want to come in there.

"Maybe you have some money?" He poked her arm hard enough to shove her back into Thad. He righted her immediately, but not before the flutters in her stomach took flight. Dalton growled like she'd moved intentionally and pushed the sheet toward her. "I don't think Hannah would mind a little friendly competition."

She took a step back away from the counter and his poking finger. "Honestly, I only came in to look more closely at the pistol in the window. Mine has seen better days." Not that she could replace it. Ma had warned her, if she didn't win the

shooting competition, they would have to go live with Pa's brother, Damion Horwath. He was their only living relative. Ma had purposely hidden their situation as long as possible, but he would find out about Pa soon enough.

"That pistol ain't for sale just yet. The owner was in need of ticket money to get to Texas and promised he'd be back in time to claim it. His date isn't up for two whole days yet." Dalton snickered. "If you have money, might as well put it to good use. That dollar will help fund the—" He stopped talking as she held up her hand.

"I can read the sign." She stored away the information on the pistol for later. She couldn't afford it anyway. Especially with the entry fee that had to be paid or she would lose everything. "Why are there never any women in the elite competition?" If they wanted her to join the women's so badly, why couldn't she shoot against the men and win the prize money needed to save her family?

"A woman?" Dalton laughed and slapped the counter so loudly Kitty jumped. "You think a woman could beat out Thad or Amos? Not likely. Those two bring all the money. Every year we wait to see who's a better shot."

Thad flattened his lips. "Or to see which shooter the wind favors that year. I think Amos and I are equally matched. Maybe adding in a new contender would bring about a little excitement? It couldn't hurt. The project from the proceeds is huge this year. We need all the entries we can get."

Dalton snorted and tugged the sheet out of reach. "But not by contending against a woman. There's no way to win that. Either the man will claim he let her win to either honor her or to save face, or they would just drop out of the running and refuse to compete. I can promise you, put a woman's name on that elite shooter list and no one will come because they'll assume there won't be a contest at all." He slammed his finger down on the entry sheet for good measure.

Kitty tried to school her features and prayed neither man could read how she felt on her face. Dalton could've just as well punched her. Without that money, her home and her freedom were gone. She raced for the door before either man could see her tears. In a blur, she took in the shiny wooden box and beautiful pearl-handled pistol once more. It would never be hers.



[BULLSEYE BRIDE](#)
*will be released on May 10, 2023,
but it's available now for [Preorder!](#)*

Author SPOTLIGHT



Late in 2021, Kari Trumbo was asked to fill an open position on the Petticoats and Pistols blog. She respected and admired so many of those authors, the decision to join was easy. Since joining, she's enjoyed deepening friendships with those same authors.

Kari Trumbo is a USA Today bestselling author of historical and contemporary Christian romance and romantic suspense. She loves reading, listening to contemporary Christian music, singing when no one's listening, and curling up near the wood stove when winter hits. She makes her home in central Minnesota—where the trees and lakes are plentiful—with her husband of over twenty years, two daughters, two sons, a few cats, and a bunny who's the star of one of her books.

<https://karitrumbo.com/>

Preorder [Bullseye Bride](#) by Kari Trumbo on Amazon.



Kari’s Spanish Rice

“I know that there is a “real” Spanish rice recipe that is a side dish. It doesn’t include meat. This is my family’s recipe for Spanish Rice (or what my mother and grandmother called Spanish Rice).”

- INGREDIENTS
- 1 pound ground beef
 - 1 can of Rotel or 1 jar medium salsa/picante sauce
 - 1 medium onion, chopped
 - 1 ½ cups rice
 - 1 tablespoon cumin
 - 1 tablespoon Chili powder
 - 1 tablespoon Chipotle seasoning
 - 1 teaspoon seasoning salt

- DIRECTIONS
- In skillet, fry ground beef and onion.
- In a separate saucepan, cook rice to desired firmness following package directions (the oil in the hamburger often prevents the absorption of the water in the hamburger, so I don’t do this in the same pot).
- Add seasoning, rice, and salsa to hamburger and stir over medium heat for 3-4 min until combined and hot.
- Serves five.

Find more recipes at [Petticoats & Pistols](#)

To stay up on the preorders and releases, visit our *Pink Pistol Sisterhood* series page [here](#).

COWBOY QUIZ

Can you figure out which statements are true and which are false?
Answers on page 36

1. The first cowboy boots were made around 1870.
2. Estimates are up to ten percent of the first American cowboys were freed ex-slaves.
3. Cowboys on cattle drives would travel at least 25 miles a day.
4. One of the cook’s jobs was to make sure the tongue of the chuckwagon faced the North Star.
5. The Stetson hat could also be used as a cup for a cowboy and/or his horse.
6. The first professional rodeo occurred in 1878.
7. Cowboys were often paid \$5 a day.
8. A cowboy could wear out three or four horses in a day.
9. Ranch owners supplied cowboys with the horses they needed.
10. Cowboys worked around 10 hours a day.



Get to Know the Author

KARI TRUMBO

1. *What would you buy first if you won the lottery?*

A “she shed.” I currently don’t have an office that is mine. I work out of my bedroom. A specific get-away to write would be Heaven.

2. *What gets you excited or gives you energy?*

Traveling. I really love getting out and seeing new things. I love visiting museums or touring towns. I love finding out-of-the-way shops and spending a day walking.

3. *What is the oldest item in your closet?*

I have a long-sleeved tee that I bought from Bethel College (before it became Bethel University). It didn’t fit for a long time, but now that I’ve lost weight again, I’ve been able to wear it. The shirt is 26 years old.

4. *Do you have any tattoos or piercings?*

My ears are pierced but I’ll be completely honest with you. I’ve always wanted a nose ring. I may never get one, but I’ve always wanted one.

5. *Name three things that make you happy.*

Knitting a pretty project, reading by a warm fire, and traveling somewhere I’ve never been before (or back to a place I love).

6. *Do you prefer scary movies or happy endings?*

Happy endings. I like reading suspense, but I don’t like watching it.

7. *How tall are you?*

I am 5’5” (and a half, and that half inch is VERY important).

8. *What is your biggest kitchen fail?*

I’d been married for about 3 years when I tried to change things up in the kitchen. I was also working full-time, so I didn’t have extra time in the evening to devote to experimentation. Enter: the crock pot. I whipped some canned sauce and hamburger into the crockpot along with a box of noodles. I figured I’d have this wonderful hot dish type meal when I got home. I didn’t. Slow cooking noodles makes them decompose. Like, seriously. They smelled rotten.



9. *What don’t you spend enough time doing?*

Reading. I do read about 70-75 books a year, including a read-through of the Bible, but I wish I could make more time to read.

10. *Do you like to keep background noise on, or do you work in silence?*

That depends on the book. I do get distracted easily, and because I have three children at home and one off at college, plus my father lives here half the year, I always have one ear tuned to the rest of the house. But when I need to be deeply “immersed,” I pull up YouTube and listen to water sounds for sleep and relaxation. They don’t put me to sleep but they do seem to focus my mind.

Bonus Answer:

I also love writing retreats because then I get a break from being mom and can avoid splitting my focus.

A SHARPSHOOTER HIDING HER IDENTITY.
A PREACHER WITH A GUILTY PAST.
WILL SECRETS RUIN THEIR SHOT AT LOVE?

DISARMING HIS *Heart*

COMING MAY 20, 2023

A SWEET WESTERN ROMANCE BY

WINNIE GRIGGS



available at
amazon & **kindle**unlimited



Excerpt from

DISARMING HIS *Heart* by Winnie Griggs

*Larkin, Missouri,
June 1911*

Violet Taylor sat in the storeroom of Adeline’s Fashion Emporium trying not to bite the fingernails on her good hand. It was a bad habit, one she’d worked hard to overcome.

But when she was really anxious, like now, the urge came creeping back. Violet shifted, adjusting the fit of the sling she wore around her neck. She could hear the murmur of voices on the other side of the storeroom door. But neither voice was Lily’s. One of the voices was Adeline’s and the other must be a customer.

After seven months, it was still hard to think of the dress shop owner as Aunt Adeline. The seamstress was more Lily’s aunt than hers. Although since she and Lily were twins, it meant Adeline Clemmons was related to her as well.

The ringing of the shop bell alerted her that the shop door had opened. Was someone leaving or entering? A moment later she heard the unmistakable sound of Lily’s breezy voice greeting her aunt. Violet’s stomach fluttered, and she stood, no longer able to sit still. No matter how much Wyatt said this plan of his was going to work, she still wasn’t sure asking Lily to do this for her was the right thing.

A few minutes later, her sister entered the storeroom. And halted on the threshold.

“Violet! Oh goodness, you’re hurt.” Lily quickly closed the door behind her. “What happened, and how bad is it?”

Violet envied the presence her sister had. The two of them might be identical twins, but Lily merely had to enter a room to instantly draw all eyes to herself—and it was all the more remarkable because she seemed completely unaware she had that effect. Violet, on the other hand, was a wallflower, easily overlooked and dismissed.

But Lily was still studying her in some concern, so Violet brought her thoughts back to the current situation and raised her right arm, sling and all. “It’s not serious, just a sprain. But it’s actually the reason we’re here.”

Before she finished talking, the back door opened, and Wyatt stepped inside to join them. Wyatt Gleason had been a part of Violet’s life for almost as long as she could remember. He was her best friend and her confidant. They looked after each other—in short, he was like a brother to her.

But Lily cast him an accusatory glance. “You didn’t tell me she was hurt.”

He shrugged and crossed his arms. “I thought it best to save all explanations until we could speak freely.”

Violet didn’t understand the friction that crackled between Wyatt and Lily on the few occasions they’d been together. Somehow the two of them had gotten off on the wrong foot from the very beginning.

But now was not the time to ponder that, so she quickly grabbed the conversational reins again. “I sprained my wrist two days ago.” She took her seat. “Doc said if I ever want to shoot with any degree of accuracy, then I have to wear this sling for at least four weeks.” Which was a serious consideration since she made her living performing as a sharpshooter with a traveling circus.

Lily finished crossing the room and touched Violet’s uninjured arm. “I’m so sorry. Regardless of what you said, this does sound serious. But it’s not the end of the world. If you do like the doctor said, The Masked Marvel will be awing the crowds with her skill again in no time.”

The Masked Marvel was the name Violet used when she performed her sharpshooter routine. It came from the fact that she wore a mask and kept her identity secret.

Violet grimaced as she slid over on the bench to make room for her sister. “I agree. But it’s not quite that simple.”

Lily arranged her skirts as she sat. “Why not?”

“The Masked Marvel is a big draw for the circus.” She

usually spoke of her circus act identity in the third person. “She needs to make an appearance whether she performs her act or not. She’ll ride in the opening parade and maybe walk through the crowds a time or two.”

Lily didn’t seem convinced. “So you just add the sling to your costume for the next month.” She waved a hand airily. “It’ll just make you seem all the more dangerous and mysterious.”

Surely that wasn’t a touch of envy in Lily’s voice? “But if The Masked Marvel and Violet Taylor both appear with slings at the same time it won’t take long for people to start figuring out they’re the same person.”

“Oh. I see.” Lily’s expression took on a thoughtful cast. Then she smiled brightly. “Well then, you get someone to pretend to be The Masked Marvel without the sling.”

It was Wyatt who answered this time. “Good idea. But it won’t work for two reasons. One, the accident happened while she was in costume so lots of people know The Masked Marvel was injured. And two, even if that wasn’t the case, if The Masked Marvel isn’t injured, then whoever is wearing the costume would be expected to shoot.”

Lily grimaced. “I’m sorry, you’ve obviously already thought this out before you came here.” She turned back to Violet. “You said you need my help—what can I do?”

Violet shared a look with Wyatt, wondering how to ask such a big favor of the sister she’d only reconnected with seven months ago. For a moment neither of them spoke.

In the meantime, the storeroom door opened again, and Aunt Adeline walked in, leaving the door slightly ajar behind her. “Mrs. Givens finally left, and I put a “Gone to Lunch” sign on the door so we can have some privacy.” She looked from one to the other of them. “So what did I miss?”

Adeline Clemmons was a petite, white-haired woman with a charming smile and grandmotherly demeanor. But Violet had come to sense an unexpected inner strength and determination in her. Based on her appearance she could be any age from forty-five to sixty-five. And though Lily called her Aunt Adeline, she was really their great-aunt, the sister of their grandmother.

It was Lily who answered her question. “You haven’t missed much. Vi and Wyatt were just about to ask me a favor.” She turned to Violet with an impatient toss of her head. “Oh, for goodness sake, Vi, whatever it is just ask.”

Violet stood and gave Adeline her seat. Then she took a deep breath, locked gazes with Lily, and blurted out her request. “I want you to swap places with me.”

Lily sat up straighter. “What?”

Violet saw their aunt put a gentle hand on Lily’s skirt. But she kept her focus on her twin. It was so important that she make Lily understand. “I know it’s a lot to ask, but it would only be for a few weeks.” Violet resolutely held her sister’s gaze. “It’s the perfect solution, the only solution really. You can wear the sling when you’re in costume so no one will expect you to do any shooting. And when you’re being just plain old Violet, you can use your arm freely. It’ll also have the added benefit of completely throwing off any suspicions.”

“But I can’t just drop everything and head off to whatever town your circus is parked in. I have responsibilities here.” She waved toward her aunt. “I can’t ask Aunt Adeline to run this place on her own.”

But their aunt blithely waved off that concern. “Don’t let me hold you back.”

Violet shot a quick, grateful smile her aunt’s way then turned back to Lily. “She wouldn’t have to. While you’re pretending to be me, I’ll be right here pretending to be you.” She grimaced self-consciously. “I know I don’t have your fashion expertise, but I do know how to wield a needle. And I can help in other ways.” She cast a rather shy glance at the lady sitting beside Lily. “And it’ll give me a chance to get to know Aunt Adeline a bit better.”

Her aunt’s expression softened. “I would like that as well, my dear. We’ve lost so many years.”

That seemed to give Lily pause. “If I agree to do this,” she said slowly, then held up a hand. “And I’m not yet convinced I should. But if I do, what would I need to do?”

Some of the tension eased from Violet’s shoulders. She hadn’t been at all certain Lily would agree to the plan, but at least she seemed willing to consider it.

“Nothing too extreme. You would wear The Masked Marvel costume to make an appearance in any parades when the circus arrives in a new town and at the opening of the show. But my act won’t be performed until my arm is healed so you won’t have to handle any firearms.”

“Good.” While Violet was an expert marksman, Lily absolutely refused to even hold a gun. Not due to any moral or societal constraints, but because they terrified her. “And what about when I’m not in costume?”

“I have some other minor duties with the circus that you’ll be expected to take care of. Wyatt can make sure you know all the wheres, whens and hows. Otherwise, your time is your own. And you would live in my wagon. It’s not very large, but it’s comfortable and private.”

Lily nodded then turned to her aunt. “What about you? Do you truly think you can manage the shop on your own

for a month?” She glanced her sister’s way. “No offense, but I don’t think you know much about fabrics and trims, not to mention taking measurements and making alterations.”

Aunt Adeline jumped in before Violet could respond. “We’ll be just fine. I’m sure Violet is a quick study. Besides, many of our customers know just what they want, so it’s only a matter of taking their orders. And she’ll have her sling as an excuse not to be too hands on with the customers.”

Lily turned to Wyatt. “What about you? Do you really think we can pull this off?” Her tone and expression held a note of challenge.

He spread his hands. “Being as this was my idea, I’d say I’m pretty sold on the plan.”

“Where is the circus right now?”

“We’re getting ready to tour several towns in Texas.”

Lily gave a mock pout. “I suppose it was too much to expect some place exciting like New Orleans or New York.” Then she turned serious again and met Violet’s gaze. “How soon would this swap need to take place?”

“The sooner the better. Wyatt has train tickets in hand for tomorrow.”

“And just how long is a few weeks?”

Violet cupped her right elbow with her left hand. “Doc said it would probably take about four weeks for my arm to heal properly.”

“Oh.” Lily infused a wealth of disappointment in that one syllable.

Did that mean she wasn’t going to agree to their plan? “What is it?”

Lily traced a circle on the seat of the bench. “I’ve been working with Pastor Davis on a children’s program for the church’s twenty-fifth anniversary celebration. The performance is scheduled to take place on June twentieth.”

Violet’s heart fell. That was just a little over three weeks away. And she knew Lily had formed an attachment for the town’s preacher. There was no way she’d want to miss such a big event.

She was just about to tell her sister she understood and would find another way to tackle her problem when Lily straightened.

She gave Violet a determined look. “So you’ll not only need to take my place leading the practice sessions, but you’ll also have to direct the actual performance.” Then she grinned. “But you’re used to performing in front of crowds so perhaps you’ll do a better job of it than I have.”

Violet wasn’t particularly excited about taking over that aspect of Lily’s life, but she was too relieved to worry about that at the moment. “Does that mean you’ll do it?”

Her sister nodded. “Of course. I know how much keeping your identity secret in your act is to you. And I know you’d do the same for me.”

“I truly would. Oh, Lily you’re so generous to disrupt your life to help me this way.”

Lily grinned. “To be honest, I’m actually looking forward to it. I’ve barely been outside of Larkin since I moved here as a little girl.” She waved a hand. “But you get to travel freely around the country. And almost nightly you receive admiration and accolades from the audiences you perform for.”

Violet grimaced. “It’s not nearly as glamorous as it sounds.”

Her sister was undeterred. “I guess I’m about to find that out.” Then her eyes narrowed slightly as she shot Violet a stern look. “Just make sure you don’t let the preacher down. Everything has to go perfectly.”

“You have my word.” Violet gave Lily’s hand a squeeze. “I know how much he means to you.”

They shared a meaningful smile which was interrupted when Wyatt cleared his throat.

“Now that that’s settled, we need to lay out a plan.”

Lily wrinkled her nose. “What kind of plan?”

“Like Violet said, you and I will board the train headed to Jefferson, Texas, tomorrow to meet up with the circus. I can fill you in on most of what you need to know about living Violet’s life during the trip. And I’m certain your Aunt Adeline can do the same for Violet. But I figured you ladies would want to spend what time you have to answer any questions you might have of a more personal nature, things that are likely to come up when you’re pretending to be the other.”

The sound of someone knocking on the shop door interrupted their conversation.

Aunt Adeline popped up from her seat. “Oh dear, I forgot Edda Rodgers had a twelve-thirty appointment for a fitting.” She placed a hand on Lily’s shoulder as she started to get up. “You stay right here. I’ll take care of her. Or better yet, why don’t you take Violet and Wyatt to our quarters upstairs where you’ll all be more comfortable. Just give me a few minutes to get Edda in the fitting room.” And with that Adeline bustled out, carefully closing the door behind her.

As Lily stood, she glanced from Violet to Wyatt and back again. “You two have obviously had more time to

think this through than I have. What do you see as the obstacles we’ll have to overcome? Other than the obvious, of course.”

Wyatt raised a brow. “The obvious?”

“Yes. I won’t know any of the people in Violet’s world, and she won’t know any of the folks in mine. There are bound to be references in conversations that we don’t understand.”

Violet nodded. “Yes, well, we’re hoping that you’ll stay close to Wyatt, and I’ll stay close to Aunt Adeline so they can help smooth over any of those awkward moments.”

“Is there anyone we’ll want to let in on our secret?”

“Just a handful. We figured for this to work it would be best to keep the circle as small as possible. Do you feel differently?”

“I’m thinking we’ll want to let Dr. Matthews know.”

Violet frowned. “Why? I don’t expect the arm to give me any trouble.”

“You can’t be certain of that. But there’s another reason. If you walk around town wearing that sling, he’ll wonder why he wasn’t involved in putting it there.”

“Oh, that makes sense. Can the good doctor be trusted to keep our secret?”

“He’s very discreet.” Then Lily’s lips curved in a mischievous grin. “Besides, he’s a widower, and I think he’s a bit smitten with Aunt Adeline.”

Violet filed that little nugget of insight away as she returned Lily’s smile. “Is there anyone else you think will notice anything amiss?”

Her sister seemed to ponder that a moment, then finally shook her head. “You wouldn’t be able to fool Gertie, of course. She’s my best friend and knows me almost better than I know myself. But fortunately, she’s out of town visiting her sister in St. Louis.”

“But will she be gone for the full four weeks?”

“Oh, good question. She’s due back in about two weeks.” Lily waved a hand. “But if it becomes necessary to tell her, you can do so with the assurance that she’s entirely trustworthy.” She straightened. “I think we’ve given Aunt Adeline enough time. Follow me, and I’ll escort you upstairs.”



Order your copy of
[DISARMING HIS HEART](#)
[on Amazon!](#)

Author SPOTLIGHT



Multiple award-winning author, Winnie Griggs, has been writing for as long as she can remember. She saw her first book published in 2001. Nine years and ten contracted books later, she received an invite from Cheryl St. John, one of the Founding Fillies, to join Petticoats & Pistols as a member. She was both thrilled and honored. She was also nervous – Winnie had no idea how to be a blogger. But the Fillies were wonderful, warmly welcoming her into the group and holding her hands until she got past that first post (you can see it here: <https://petticoatsandpistols.com/2009/05/11/history-of-wristwatches/>). And she has loved every minute of being part of this fabulous, fun, supportive group ever since!

Winnie grew up in a rural area of South Louisiana in an undeveloped area her friends thought of as the back of beyond. She spent many an hour with her siblings cutting jungle trails, building forts and looking for pirate ships on the nearby bayou. Once she 'grew up' she found other outlets for dealing with all those wonderful, adventurous, imaginary friends by filling notebooks with their stories. Eventually she adventured far from home and found her very own Prince Charming. He turned out to be a cattle rancher who rides a tractor instead of a steed and whose kingdom is situated in a small rural NW Louisiana community that she loves to call home. Together they built their own storybook happily-ever-after that includes four children who are now pursuing their own adventures. Her kingdom has recently expanded to include two adorable grandsons who rule over her with pudgy fists and dimpled smiles.

Winnie holds a BS degree in Mathematics as well as an advanced degree in the art of procrastination. Her hobbies include browsing estate sales, cooking and her ongoing search for fun new tea flavors.

And as always, Winnie loves to hear from readers. You can contact her at winnie@winniegriggs.com.



Winnie's Cowboy Gumbo

I actually love to cook—it's the cleaning up after part I hate! I also like to experiment in the kitchen. I call it being creative. My less generous friends call it my inability to let well enough alone. I especially like dishes that I can make a big batch of and freeze portions of for later use. The recipe below is one such.

For this version of gumbo, I've added a few extra elements to give it a little western twist (not entirely my idea—I saw the concept in a magazine and then added my own spin to it). As with any gumbo, you can just use whatever meats you have on hand. (For instance, it's a great way to use leftover turkey from holiday meals!)

So without further ado, here is my take on a Cowboy Gumbo.

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup butter or vegetable oil
2 tablespoons flour
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 small onion, chopped
1/4 cup green onions, chopped
1/3 cup chopped bell pepper
1 stalk celery, finely chopped
4 cups water
1 can (14-15 oz) diced tomatoes
1 can (6-8 oz) tomato paste
2 bay leaves
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
2 teaspoons chili powder
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon ground pepper
1 pound sliced okra (sautéed with ½ teaspoon vinegar until 'slime' is gone)
4 pounds meat

DIRECTIONS

Use flour and oil or butter to make a roux. Do this by combining them in a heavy saucepan and cooking over a low heat, stirring constantly until the mixture is a medium brown color (about 10-15 minutes). Add garlic, onions, green onions, celery, and bell peppers. Cook until tender. Add remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and cook for 30 minutes. Add okra. Return to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for another twenty minutes. Remove bay leaves, skim excess oil, and serve over rice. As you can probably guess, this makes a very large batch. Leftovers (if there are any!) can be frozen for later consumption. NOTE: You can get away with less, but I like to be generous with the protein. Meats that work well in this gumbo are sausage (I like andouille sausage), deboned chicken or turkey, pork, or game meats. You can use any one of these or a combination of two or more. Tabasco sauce or liquid crab boil to taste (optional)

Find more recipes at [Petticoats & Pistols](https://petticoatsandpistols.com)

Get to Know the Author

WINNIE GRIGGS

1. *What don't you feel guilty spending money on?*

My grandkids! I love buying things for them, especially things I can enjoy with them.

2. *Could you live off the grid?*

Not for very long. I have so many friends and family members scattered across the country, and without my phone or the internet, I'd have no way of keeping in regular contact. Aside from that, I'm a total wimp. Living in the south, without electricity to run things like AC and other amenities, would make me miserable.

3. *What is the oldest item in your closet?*

Last year my mom was cleaning out her closet and pulled out a green sleeveless dress made of cotton. As she was setting it on the 'give to Goodwill' pile, she told me it was the first garment she ever made for herself—a Home Ec project. You better believe I snatched it up, and it now holds a place of honor in my closet.

4. *Name three things that make you happy.*

My family.

My friends.

A book that surprises me (in a good way) that can wring both tears and laughter from me, and that I continue to think about long after I've read the last page.

5. *Can you cook? If so, what's your specialty? If you don't cook, why not?*

I love to cook. As for specialty, my go-to is gumbo. The dish most requested by my family is beef tips, and at every holiday gathering, I'm expected to bring a cheeseball, the recipe of which I developed sort of by accident.

6. *Do you collect anything?*

LOL. If you asked my husband, he'd say I collect EVERYTHING. Books, of course. My keeper shelf is more of a floor-to-ceiling bookcase. I've collected trinket boxes since I was a teen and have over 50. I have enough Christmas ornaments to fill a large closet and still have overflow (I have a whole selection of reader/book-themed ornaments and of teapot-themed ornaments). I also collect teapots and tea mugs. And if any of these also have a dragonfly or Winnie-the-Pooh theme, it is almost certainly an auto-buy for me.



7. *If you could learn one skill today, what would it be?*

I've always wanted to learn to play a musical instrument. Sadly, I didn't have the opportunity as a kid and never took the opportunity as an adult. But they say it's never too late...

8. *Would you rather be able to fly or be invisible?*

Fly, definitely. It would make travel—visits with friends and family, trips to writer and reader conferences—soooooo much easier (and cheaper!).

9. *There are now 25 hours in a day—how do you spend the extra hour?*

Sleeping! No matter how much I try, I often only get 4-6 hours a night.

10. *How did you meet your husband?*

At college. Through mutual friends. A whole lot of things fell exactly into place for it to happen, but that's a story for another day

The Courtship of Medicine Paint

An American Indian Historical Short Story

by KAREN KAY

© Karen Kay

*For my sister on the Blackfeet Reservation,
Patricia Running Crane Devereaux*

This is a work of fiction inspired by three different,
yet true stories from the long ago past.



*Indian Territory, 1810
The Southern Blackfoot Pikuni Tribe*

Medicine Paint shook his head as yet another luckless suitor for the hand of Runs-with-elk-woman paced dejectedly away from the lodge of her father, Makes Afraid. What was this now? Seven suitors all turned away in the space of only three moons?

Runs-with-elk-woman, or Elk Woman, was well known to prefer the more masculine chore of hunting over a woman's work of tanning hides and making a home for her future husband and his children. But, though her competence in the hunt was well known, her beauty and her happy spirit kept the men of the Pikuni Nation enchanted with her. And, ever hopeful, these men (some of the most honored in their tribe) dressed themselves in their best and made their bids for her hand.

But, though she never mocked these suitors, and though she turned them away graciously, it was yet a blow to the men's pride to be sent away.

Medicine Paint had known her since the day she had been born, eighteen snows ago. He had been six winters old then, but he remembered it well, since his father and hers were partners in the hunt; this, alone, had allowed Medicine Paint to be often invited into Makes Afraid's lodge. He remembered seeing Elk Woman as a baby, recalled again reaching out his finger toward her tiny hand and recollected her strong grip upon his finger. And, looking down at her then with her tiny head sprinkled with black hair, she had gazed up at him with her big dark eyes and had smiled at him.

Unfortunately for him, the incident, innocent though it had been, had forged a bond between them, even then. It was "unfortunate" because she had gone on to become one of the best hunters in the Pikuni village, even besting him. She had even won foot races, beating both him and the other boys. And she, five years younger than he!

Always she laughed about it, and, though she never ridiculed him for his losses against her, he yet resented her prowess.

He recalled the day when her father had brought her along to be part of their morning hunt. She had been eight winters old then, and he fourteen, and in his young man's consideration, he was a fully grown man with manly duties. Wasn't he already a well-respected hunter?

"Why is she here?" Medicine Paint had asked his father. Hadn't he, his father and hers formed a threesome? Indeed, Medicine Paint resented her presence here; he did not wish another person to be added to their successful hunts, and this was particularly so with her because she was a girl. Wouldn't the other boys mock him and ask him if he preferred dresses to breechcloth and leggings?

"Son, do not speak so loudly against her. Know you that her father has failed to produce a son. Know you, also, that he has long trained her to the hunt. And, despite her young age, her accuracy in bringing down game has been often commented upon by the elders in our tribe. Consider, too, how much meat it takes to feed a family of five sisters. She will be a great help to her father in this endeavor. Given time, it is my hope you will allow her to become your partner."

"But, Father, a girl?"

Medicine Paint's father had laid his hands on his son's shoulders,



and, bending down (because Medicine Paint had yet to attain his full height), had said, “Do this for me, my son. Her father, my friend, needs her help, and she has proven herself to be a good hunter. I ask you to please not turn her away.”

Ashamed of himself for speaking to his father so vehemently, Medicine Paint hung his head, nodded and said, “Áa, yes, Father, I will try.”

That had been ten snows ago. Over time, he had lost some of his animosity toward Elk Woman, simply because they hunted together every day and they spoke together and planned their hunts every evening. This alone kept them in one another’s company for many hours every day.

It had helped that she often wore boys’ clothing when they hunted together, allowing him to pretend she wasn’t really a girl. And, despite himself, they had become close; so close were they, he often found he knew her thoughts before she even had a chance to speak them.

Eventually, he had accepted her...except, always at the back of his

mind he held a little resentment toward her because she could sometimes best him. Until...

Medicine Paint remembered the day well. Elk Woman had been seventeen, and he twenty and three. It had started out like any other day. They had been hunting upon the wide green plains that day. The morning had yet been young, and he recalled her laughing at him because he’d killed an old bull, whose meat was useless except for its tongue, while she had taken down two young calves, whose meat was entirely good for eating. Of course, he had killed other game besides the old bull, more than she had killed. Yet, her laughter at his expense had grated upon him.

It had happened as they were kneeling upon the ground, butchering their kills quickly, knowing that soon the women would follow upon their trail, leading their pack horses to pick up the meat.

He didn’t notice at first when the old bull, the one he had assumed was dead, suddenly found life again and rose up onto all four feet. Injured and angered, perhaps out of his mind with pain, the old bull looked forward.

Medicine Paint cast a quick glance at the animal, but saw no immediate harm from the bull, knowing the animal was injured beyond repair and would soon fall again. However, as he continued the butchering of a calf, he saw sudden movement from out of his peripheral vision and beheld the awful sight of the old bull racing toward Elk Woman, who, with her back turned, was unaware of the danger.

Medicine Paint sprung up to his feet and burst into a race against the bull. Could he get to Elk Woman in time? She was some distance ahead of him.

He didn’t have a moment in which to think, and, as Medicine Paint sprinted across the

plains, he reached behind him for his bow and his arrows which were secured in the quiver upon his back. It was an almost impossible maneuver to grab both bow and arrows given his speed. But, he accomplished it, perhaps because of his need.

The bull was almost upon her when he let his arrow fly, straight at the upper ribs of the bull. The weapon pierced its side, but still the animal raced on. Another arrow quickly followed from his bow, this time aimed directly at the heart of the animal.

Elk Woman had now become aware of the danger, but, turning, instead of rising into action, she looked to be frozen in place. Never would Medicine Paint forget the utter look of terror upon her face.

With a cloud of dust and green grass shooting up into the air, the bull crashed to the ground, coming to a halt only a few arms’ distance away from the spot where Elk Woman stood frozen. But, Medicine Paint was already in action, and, before the bull had landed, he had run to Elk Woman, had picked her up in his arms as though she were as light as a prairie flower and had sprinted away with her, not

stopping until he reached a short tree that stood all alone upon the wide plains.

And, there he stood, holding her body closely against his breast, his arms wound tightly around her. An emotion he didn’t recognize rose up within him: he wished to protect her always; he wished to keep her close to him and couldn’t imagine ever letting her go.

I love her, he realized all at once. I have always loved her. Perhaps this was why he’d always resented her agility in the races, in the hunt and in all the other activities considered to be the realm of a man. For all these years, he had wished to impress her. Yet, he’d been unable to do so because she could accomplish these feats as well as he.

And, then Elk Woman looked up at him with her beautiful dark eyes, and he witnessed a look of such admiration for him, he knew he was hers—had always been hers.

She gasped out, “You saved my life.”

He responded to her then in a hoarse voice, saying only, “I did what you would have done for me.”

“Saa, no. I would have never been able to carry you as you have done with me, carting me along with you while running as though you were in a race with the bull. Nor am I certain I could have hit the animal twice while sprinting as fast as you were. I...I...”

She reached up toward him then and kissed him, and he thought the Creator, Himself, had suddenly endowed him with a joy like no other.

Quickly, he set her feet on the ground, leaned her back against the tree and took control of the kiss, his lips opening hers, there to play with her tongue.

And, she kissed him back.

As his breath came in quick gasps and his heart beat fast and loudly against his chest, he knew he had better approach her father at once and ask permission to marry her. He would give her father ten of his horses and ask for her hand; her father would say yes, and they would marry and be happy forever.

But, his dream crashed as soon as they returned to camp, Medicine Paint realizing there was a problem, a rather large problem.

No sooner had he and Elk Woman entered into camp when he encountered another young man waiting for her; the man was seeking her hand in marriage. Startled at the unwelcome competition, Medicine Paint held back from asking anything of her father, awaiting Elk Woman’s response to the suitor.

That had been thirteen moons ago. At present, as Medicine Paint looked at Elk Woman, he wondered why he’d never really been aware of her natural beauty until that day upon the prairie. And, all this past year, he’d watched as one young man after another had asked for her hand, only to be turned away. Perhaps she would never marry. After all, what need did she have of a man in her life when she could easily obtain her own food? She could probably even enlist one of her sisters to do the cooking and the tanning of skins for her lodge.

What chance did he have?

Still, over this past year, they had continued to hunt together, and always did his gaze linger upon her when he knew she wasn’t looking. Now and again, their hands would accidentally touch, and his body would respond to her as though he’d been shot straight in his heart by an arrow.

But, pride kept him from approaching her father to ask for her hand in marriage. What if she were to turn him away as she had the



others?

Now on this bright day in the Moon of Flowers, early summer, the two of them met as they did each morning. Over a quick early meal, Elk Woman told him of her plans, seeking his agreement.

Today she wished to venture into the mountainous glacier country because one of her sisters required the skin of a bighorn sheep. Nothing but the skin from this animal would do for the robe her sister was planning to make. And, since these agile creatures were only to be found within the upper crags of the mountains, this is where Elk Woman said she wished to hunt.

He asked, “You know, of course, of the unpalatable taste of the meat of these creatures?”

“I know,” she answered. “Yet, my sister has dreamed of making a robe from the skin of this animal, and we can do much more with the meat and bones. None of it will be wasted.”

“Then,” he said, “this shall be where we will hunt this day.” She smiled at him, and he looked longingly at her lips until he realized what he was doing and then gazed away from her.

The hunt had gone well this day, and, with the sun beginning its descent into the western sky, they were hurrying back to camp, their pack horse piled with the skins and flesh of their kills. They had barely entered the warm and pleasantly scented grove of elm trees, when suddenly Elk Woman’s horse bolted and veered to the left, throwing her to the ground.

Before he could run after her animal, Medicine Paint heard her shout, “A bear! A bear is after me!”

Looking around, Medicine Paint saw the grizzly reaching up to tear at Elk Woman’s moccasins as she scrambled up a young tree. But,

the tree was no protection; even now it was bending down toward the ground.

As fear engulfed him, he felt his heart sink. It was up to him. And, he knew if he lost her, he would lose himself, also.

Quickly he took out four arrows, placing three of them in his teeth while the other he set against his strong bow. Aiming for the bear’s heart, he took care, for the bear was almost upon Elk Woman and his shot had to be perfect.

Whoosh! He let the arrow fly. His aim was true, direct and it pierced straight into the bear’s heart. Yet, despite all this, the animal did not fall and instead turned away from its pursuit of Elk Woman to come straight at him.

Though every part of him screamed to turn and run, he forced himself to stand still, and, swiping one of the arrows from where he’d put it in his teeth and placing it directly against his taunt bow string, he let the arrow fly into the bear’s eye. Then another and another arrow followed, all aimed at the animal’s heart.

Yet, the bear came on and on. Medicine Paint was drawing the last arrow from his quiver when the bear fell over, headfirst. Slowly, with great caution, Medicine Paint approached the bear.

Using his foot, he nudged the animal. It was dead.

Glancing up at Elk Woman to assess any damage done to her, he was surprised to see her running toward him, her pace so quick that when she burst into his arms, she knocked them both to the ground, she landing atop him.

“You...you saved me again! Does this mean you love me? If you do, why have you not asked to marry me? Why do you hesitate? Do you not know how much I love you? As I have always loved you?”

Medicine Paint could hardly believe that what his ears were telling him was true. Did she really love him?

For a moment, he felt incapable of speech. But, after only a short pause, he said, “I have always loved you.” He spoke calmly enough, though everything within him was awake and ready to battle again, should the need arise. “I have been afraid to ask for your hand.”

“You? Afraid? You, who have risked your life to shoot a bull and a bear so I might live, expect me to believe you have been afraid to ask for me as your woman?”

He grinned up at her. “I have feared your lack of love for me more than the most dangerous of all animals.”

She laughed, then said, “My father will be happy to cease having to turn away all my suitors.”

“He will? He is aware of your love? Of mine?”

“Of course! He knows I have been waiting for you all my life. Only you. It has always been you.”

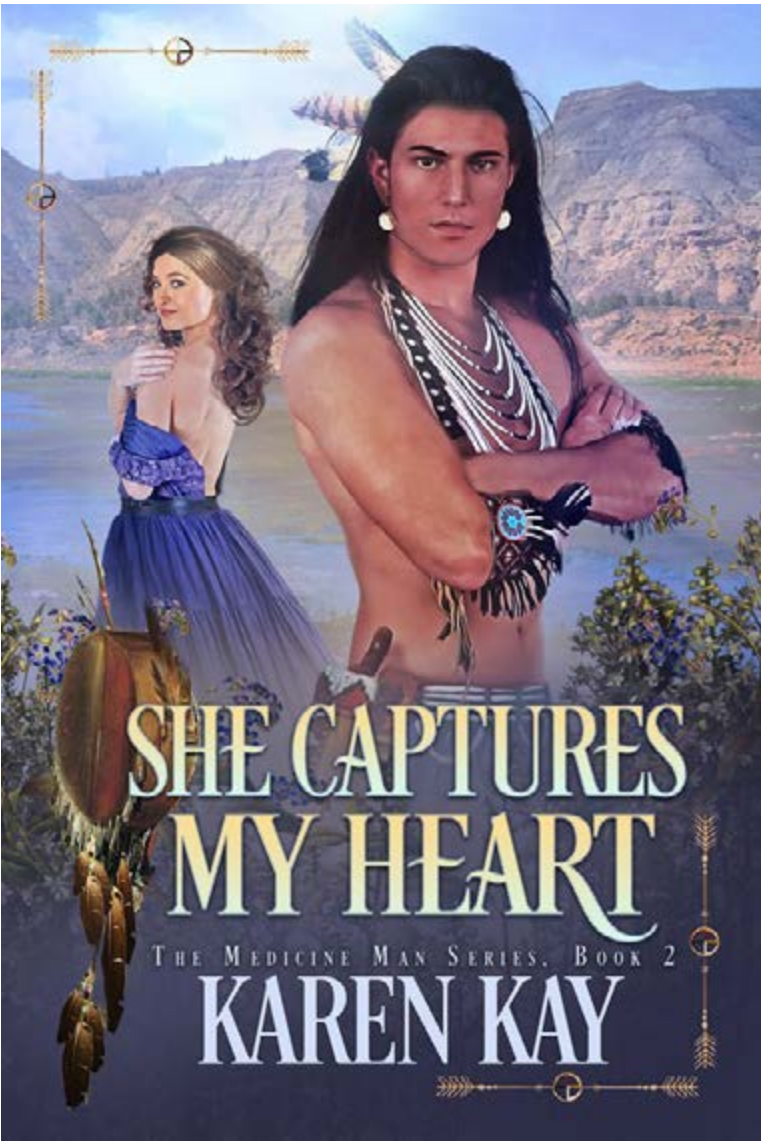
And, then it happened. Medicine Paint laughed and laughed until his ribs hurt, and then, turning Elk Woman over so she lay beneath him, he kissed her with all the pent-up passion and love in his heart.

After a while, they gathered together their horses and paced slowly back to camp. And, as the sun set into a red-and-golden burst in the western sky, they walked casually into camp, and all those who saw them were glad to see that these two were holding hands.

It is said Medicine Paint and Elk Woman lived long and happy lives and had many children. Indeed, all the people rejoiced to witness, at last, these two brave people had come together as one.

Yes, the tribe would go on.

THE END



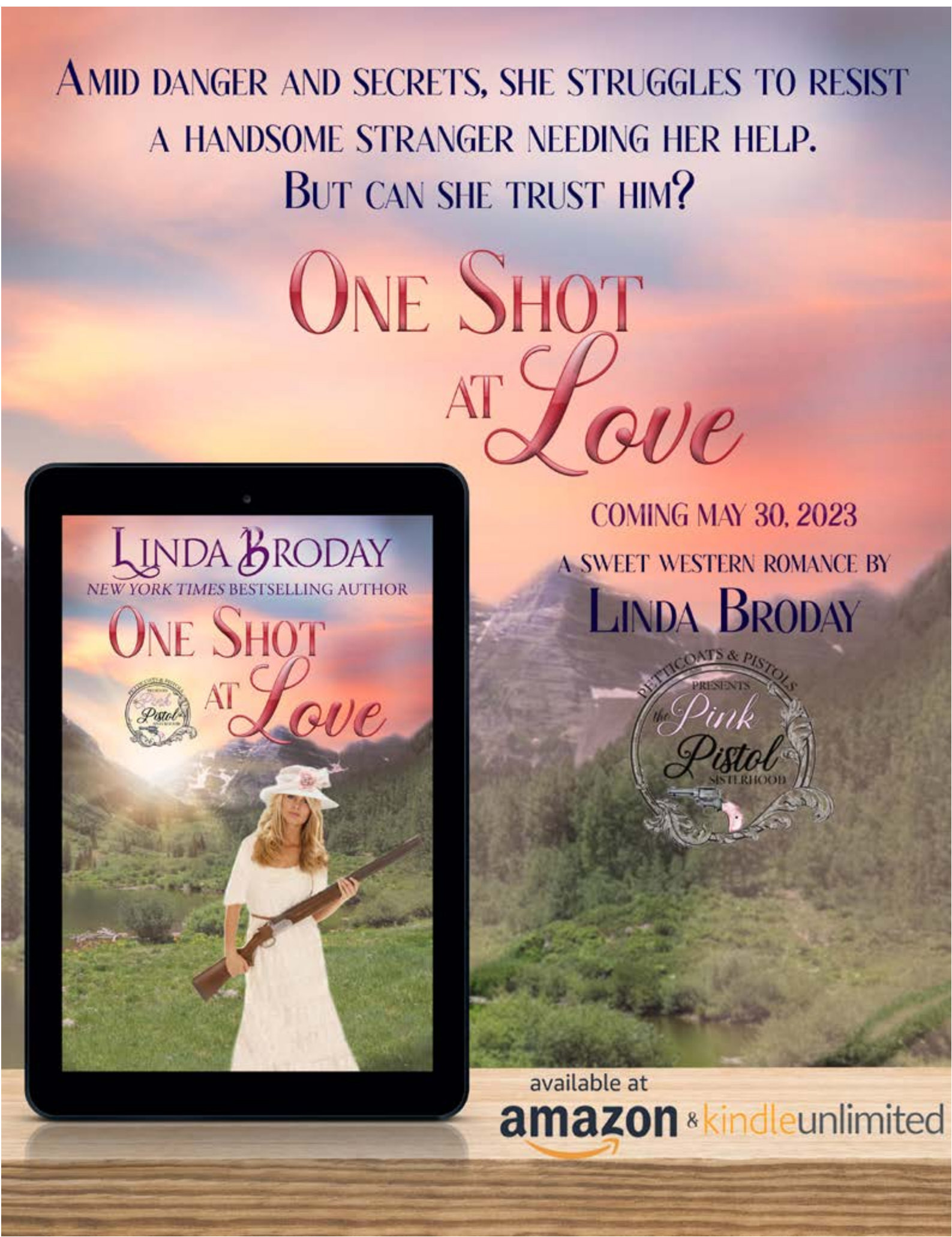
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Excerpt from

ONE SHOT AT Love

by Linda Broday

*Panther Creek, Colorado
1939*

The tall pines surrounding Panther Creek, Colorado, stood silent, weeping for what once was. The summer of 1939 began slowly, in no rush to go anywhere. Once a thriving community, it was now home to the defunct Gun-barrel Mine. Ghosts and a few hardy souls continued to call it home because they have nowhere left to go.

Mariah Bartee sighed and stared out the window of the small general store where she worked, sadness gripping her heart. She still missed her parents who’d both flown home to Glory, leaving her to raise her younger brother and sister.

Her father perished three years ago in a bad mining explosion. Her mother followed a year later after a horrible fall from a cliff during a blinding snowstorm. Gone. Just like that.

On the mountain, death could come in an instant. Life seemed fragile at best.

She glanced toward her shotgun propped beside the door. Rough men inhabited these steep trails and danger lurked, both from the two-legged as well as the four-legged animals.

It paid to keep her wits about her.

The train whistle blew as it came to the small station. Mariah wondered how many hobos would get off and cook themselves a meal before getting back on. They were harmless, and her brother Robby and little sister Sweet Sue dearly loved to sit with the hobos around their fire, listening to their stories. Some folks might disapprove but the kids could do far worse.

At the very least, they’d see what not to become, and maybe the lessons in life would do them good. The Depression that started in 1929 didn’t affect mountain people like them too much seeing as how they were poor to start with. But she heard people in the cities had it bad, and some had committed suicide according to newspaper accounts. For the most part, Mariah and her siblings had already learned to do without.

Mr. Freeman, the owner of the store, came to stand beside her, his thumbs in his suspenders. “The train’s on time.”

“I wonder what it would be like to climb aboard and ride away with no destination in mind.” In fact, Mariah day-dreamed about going to the city just to see different scenery. “I hear they have moving picture shows and dance halls.”

“Pshaw!” Freeman blew out a breath and scratched his bald head. “I took the wife to Boulder, and we couldn’t wait to get back to the mountain. The noise about drove us batty and people honked their horns at us all the time for holding up traffic. Then our Model A died in an intersection, and everyone yelled their lungs out, threatening to shoot us. I told the missus it would be a long time before I went back. If ever.”

The Freemans owned one of the few automobiles, and to Mariah that made him rich. She was fine riding a horse or a mule. Vehicles were always breaking down or running out of gas. They didn’t seem very dependable.

She was about to turn away and finish dusting the shelves when an old Model T, trailing smoke, pulled up in front of the store, coughing and sputtering.

Mr. Freeman chuckled. “That tin lizzy’s seen better days.”

“I wonder who he is.” Mariah took in the young man’s brown vest and fedora. He climbed out and kicked a tire. “Whoever he is, he’s not happy.”

His white shirt sleeves rolled to the elbows, the stranger strode into the store. His smile looked a little forced. “Howdy. Can I trouble you for some water? My motor needs cooling.”

“Of course. There’s a hydrant outside. Help yourself.” Freeman shook his hand. “We don’t often get visitors through Panther Creek, so you’ll have to excuse us for staring. I’m Joe Freeman, the owner of this store. And Mariah here runs it.”

The stranger passed a curious gaze at Mariah and nodded, taking Freeman’s offered hand. “Dax Talon.” He scanned the shelves. “Nice place you have here.”

“Thank you. It suits our needs and serves the few remaining people left. Most moved away when the mine shut down, but we have about a hundred or so stubborn hangers-on.” Freeman dropped Talon’s hand and glanced out at the car. “Your lizzy ain’t faring so well in the high altitudes of the mountains.”

“No, sir. She runs well down below, and I can’t complain but here I might as well have a horse.” Talon turned to Mariah. “I’m looking for someone—my sister. A young lady about your age. I heard I might find her around here. I’ve been searching for Roseanna ever since she was taken a year ago.”

Freeman scratched his head in thought. “Roseanna. Roseanna. What does she look like?”

“She’s slender, not as tall as your helper, and has reddish-brown hair. Her disappearance has left our parents in poor health, so it’s fallen to me to find her. I promised my father.”

“What makes you think she’s here on our mountain?” Mariah asked quietly.

“Ma’am, I’ve pretty much followed the path the abductors took to Denver. There it went cold.” He paused and glanced out the window. “Then I recently got a letter from a man saying I should look for Levy Tyler in Panther Creek so here I am.”

The name Levy Tyler sent chills over Mariah. The man scared her with his violent ways. Everyone on the mountain with half sense steered clear of the Tylers.

“I don’t know what you’ve heard, Mr. Talon, but ... I hope you brought a gun.” Mariah hated the hardness of her tone, but Talon needed to be aware of the danger.

Freeman scoffed. “Now, Mariah, don’t go scaring him.”

“Just laying out the facts. The Tylers are moonshiners, and they shoot anyone who come near their still. Folks around here don’t bother them. If Levy took your sister, she’s not had it easy.” Mariah pitied Dax Talon. She truly did. Even if he got his sister back, she’d never be the same. “I recall a girl with Levy quite a while back. She looked scared. Never heard her name spoken so I don’t know if she was your sister.”

The young girl’s sunken eyes and pale face had haunted her for days. Mariah’s gut had told her something wasn’t right. But they had no law to turn to in Panther Creek.

“When exactly did she disappear?” Freeman asked, rocking back on his heels.

“September 15th.”

“That was Roseanna’s birthday.” Talon swallowed hard. “Thank you, Miss Mariah. This gives me something to go on.” He looked away. “This has taken such a toll on our family.” He stepped toward the screen door.

She patted the sides of her hair that she’d pulled back and tied with a string then instantly dropped her hands. She didn’t trust men, especially ones with pretty faces.

Yet Talon seemed different. It was his sincere eyes. A man could lie about everything, but his eyes always gave him away.

She lowered her lashes and studied him through the dark fringe. What she could see of his hair under his hat appeared to be the color of freshly plowed earth. His sleeves rolled to his elbows revealed thick veins along his muscular arms. Lean waist, broad shoulders.

Nice.

For some reason, Mariah felt compelled to add, “Good luck in your search.”



He swung around with a smile and tipped his hat. “Thank you, ma’am. It was nice meeting you and Mr. Freeman. I’ll be around until I find what I came after. If you think of something, I’ve rented a room at Miss Nancy’s.”

The door shut behind him. He raised the hood, strode to the hydrant where a hose was attached and proceeded to cool his radiator.

“What do you think of him?” Mariah asked.

“He’s a nice young man, and his mother taught him manners.” Freeman released a loud breath. “If Levy Tyler, or any of the Tylers, has his sister, I feel sorry for her. She won’t be the same person he once knew.”

“It’s sad.” She brightened. “Maybe she’s not with the Tylers. Please for her sake. I want to help Talon find her.”

“Mariah, watch out, and don’t let your guard down.”

“For goodness sakes, Mr. Freeman, I’m not crazy.” She went back to dusting the shelves but couldn’t help glancing out the window once in a while.

When Talon finally finished and drove off, an odd feeling of loss came over her. Shrugging, she tackled the back room and unpacked a box of pickles, forgetting all about

the handsome stranger who’d come to their mountain. He wasn’t for her.

No one had his sights set on Mariah, and that’s just the way it was.

It was a few minutes to five when the screen door slammed, and she heard her brother Robby yelling, “Mariah! Where are you, Mariah?”

Her heart pounding, she stepped from the storeroom. “What is it?”

Her nine-year-old sister, Sweet Sue, burst out, “Come quick! We found some bones!”



[ONE SHOT AT LOVE](#)
is available for preorder on [Amazon!](#)

Author SPOTLIGHT



I’m one of the original Fillies of Petticoats and Pistols when it became a blogsite in August 2007. My husband had passed a year earlier, and I was still climbing from deep grief. I remember how terrified I was. I hadn’t a clue what a blog was and had never seen one, much less knew how to write one. There were few sites like ours back then. It was a steep learning curve.

We only had half the number of Fillies, and everyone had to write two blogs a month. Man, that was hard! But I’ve never regretted coming on board. The rewards far outweigh the work. I’ve made some amazing friends and fans over these seventeen years. You follow your heart, and though you might be scared to death, you embrace new things. I live in West Texas, and though I might gripe and complain about the weather, I really love it.

www.lindabroday.com

Preorder [One Shot at Love on Amazon](#)



Linda’s Applesauce Cake

INGREDIENTS
1 cup white sugar
1 large egg
½ cup butter
1 cup chilled applesauce
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
½ cup chopped walnuts or pecans
½ cup raisins, optional

DIRECTIONS
Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease and flour an 8-inch cake pan or medium loaf. Beat sugar, egg, and butter together in a large bowl with an electric mixer until creamy. Add applesauce; beat well. Stir in flour, baking soda, cinnamon, and nutmeg until just combined. Fold in walnuts and raisins; spoon cake batter into the prepared pan. Bake in the preheated oven until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 40 minutes. Dust with powdered sugar and serve warm. Add coffee and YUM.
NOTE: Does not need oil, and it works well without the egg too. This was perfect for those during the Depression. The applesauce was the magic ingredient.

Find more recipes at [Petticoats & Pistols](#)

The whimsical journey of a legendary pistol and the women who use it to find love.



Get to Know the Author LINDA BRODAY

1. Do you enjoy the outdoors?
There is nothing like being outdoors, and that love started when I was a child. The Pecos River wasn't far from where we lived so we spent a lot of weekends there. I found a freedom that I never really understood until I was older. That soft breeze against my face, the fragrant smell of cedar, and jumping in the river on a hot day to cool off created special times with family that I'll always cherish. I still love sitting around a campfire, looking up at the stars, and feeling God's closeness. There's nothing like it.

2. What is the oldest item in your closet?
The oldest thing in my closet is a decorated leather shawl that I bought in Reno, Nevada the year I published my first book. I was at a romance conference with my husband, and soon after we got there, I hopped into a cab and went to a western store. I bought a pair of boots, the leather shawl, and a necklace. My husband wasn't very happy that we had to buy an extra suitcase. But I wore them at every booksigning until I decided it was too much trouble to haul them around. The shawl is simply so beautiful and has lots of memories attached so I have to keep it. Right?

3. What is your biggest kitchen fail?
Seems every time I'm in the kitchen, there's failure. I'm a horrible cook and only do enough to get by. There was the time I was making a cake, and I kept adding the mix a little at a time. The consistency was a little thin, but I thought I'd added all the mix only to find after I put the pan in the oven that I still had a good bit left in the package. Needless to say, it was very gooey. That was only one instance. Another time, recently I was going to make French toast because I hadn't had it in years. I got my egg beat up in a bowl then grabbed the garlic instead of the cinnamon and shook it liberally. Thank goodness I saw what I'd done. The color and smell gave it away. So I had to wash that down the drain and start over. Wasting an egg really hurt because they're so darn expensive. At holidays, my kids ask me not to cook. They put me in charge of the paper goods, the foil paper and plastic wrap, etc.

4. If you could instantly learn one skill what would it be?
That skill would be languages. I would love to be able to speak fluent Spanish, French, German, Italian. I've always envied people who have language skills. When I was in High School, I took a German class. Why German? My brother had just come from the army and a year spent in Germany. He had a letter from a girl written in German, and I wanted to know that it said. (I think I had a serious problem.) I think I wound up with a D in the class, and I never knew what was in that letter. Lord have mercy! I was a lost cause.

5. What don't you spend enough time doing?
I dearly love to dance – especially two-step and waltz. Growing up, no one in my family danced. So when I was in my twenties and married, I took a continuing education class in ballroom dancing with a little country thrown in. It was so much fun, and I excelled. Only one

problem. I couldn't drag my husband onto a dance floor. Nope. He dug them heels in like a Missouri mule. So it did me no good. My second husband was the same way. No dancing. But now that I'm on my own, I refreshed the lessons and go pretty often to a dance for seniors. I have lots of partners, and it's really fun. Good exercise, too.



6. What life experience taught you the most?
I've a lot of experiences in my years of living, but I think the one that stands out most was the F-5 tornado in 1979 in Wichita Falls, Texas. That was a doozy. I was married to my first husband, and we had three children. The oldest was six, and the baby was eight months. At a little past five o'clock in the afternoon, the sirens went off, and we had nowhere to go. We grabbed the kids and laid down in a long hallway. My heart must've been beating a million miles an hour. I just knew we were going to die. I heard the front door go, then the roof. The walls collapsed on top of us. I had my eyes clenched shut and was praying we'd be spared. And we were. When we crawled out from under all the rubble, the only one with a scratch was the baby with a cut on her head. The wind had taken the two oldest one's shoes right off their feet. But we'd survived. What I learned through all that was to make the most of every second and live a meaningful, fulfilling life. At the time I wasn't that serious with my writing, but afterward, I really knew that's what I wanted to do and started trying to learn more. I also learned how fleeting life is and that material things could vanish in an instant. My spiritual well-being became far more important and still is.

7. Are you a spender or a saver?
I'm pretty much a saver – unlike my youngest sister. When we were kids, I was in charge of the little bits of money we got here and there. If I thought my sister didn't need whatever she was begging for, I wouldn't let her have her part. Yet, she thanked me when it came to something big, and she had the money for it. It's funny that we're still the same today. I save, and she spends. Except now she's on her own.

8. What gets you excited or gives you energy?
Surprises that come in the stories I'm writing. I love when something I'd never thought of pops from the blue and always excites me. Usually, it's something that turns the story in a whole new direction. Love it!



Mail-Order Surprise

© Shanna Hatfield

Anxiety-induced trembling left her fingers so unsteady, Amelia Valmont nearly impaled her head when she reached up to adjust the pin holding on her beribboned hat. What insanity had possessed her to agree to marry a stranger?

Now that she was nearing her destination, she wanted to race the other direction. Instead, she braced her feet as the train ground to a screeching halt.

She glanced outside at the dusty platform. An array of crimson and gold leaves skittered across the scarred wood in a raucous greeting.

Resolved to meeting her fate, Amelia nervously tugged on her gloves, gathered her bags, and rose to her feet.

“Be safe out there, miss.” The porter’s friendly tone didn’t mask the worry in his voice or the concern on his eyes. He glanced from her to the platform, then back to her. “Are you sure this is where you want to get off the train? I’d be happy to take you to the next station. There’s a good-sized town there.”

“Thank you for the offer, but I’ll get off here.” Mustering every ounce of her determination, Amelia worked up a smile. “I’ll be perfectly fine.” If only she could convince

herself of that.

The porter gave her a hand as she stepped off the train. Wind whipped her skirts and blew grit in her face until it coated her lips and scratched her eyes.

She tipped her head, hoping her hat would shield her face, and saw three men step onto the platform. Her gaze traveled over each of them.

A farmer who surely raised pigs, or perhaps slept with them, wore the filthiest pair of overalls she’d ever seen. The breeze carried stench emanating from him as he leaned against the wall of the small depot office, scratching his rotund belly, to where she lingered at the edge of the platform.

The second man appeared to be just a few days younger than Methuselah. The few wisps of white hair remaining on his head fluttered like tufts of milkweed about to take flight. Between his bowed legs and bent back, he stood no higher than a half-grown child. Surely, he was far too old to have sent for a mail-order bride.

Her gaze fell to the third man, standing a head taller than the other two. Shoulders as wide as an axe handle topped a broad chest. A hat shadowed his face until he slowly pushed up the brim with his finger, as though he sensed her scrutiny.

A gasp of surprise escaped through her parted lips. The

cowboy was the most handsome man she’d ever seen.

Square jaw, straight nose, and the dark shadow of whiskers added to his rugged appeal. Deep blue eyes, the color of the sapphire brooch she wore pinned to her collar, seemed to peer right through her traveling suit and take a glimpse of her soul.

Flustered by his intent perusal, she wanted to turn around and step back on the train where she’d felt relatively safe. Before she had the chance to surrender to the urge, the filthy farmer took a step forward.

“Ain’t ya a purty lil’ thing, missy.” The man flashed a grin that revealed several missing teeth. Those that remained looked like they’d never seen a toothbrush.

By sheer will, she held back a grimace as he took another step closer to her. Despite her fervent prayers that this man was not her soon-to-be groom, the sinking weight in her stomach told her otherwise. “Mr. Randall?”

The toothless man nodded and closed the distance between them. “I’m Cecil Randall.”

Out of self-preservation, Amelia took a scented handkerchief from her reticule and held it to her face, pretending to wipe the grit from her eyes.

“Are you Miss Valmont?” Cecil started to reach out a grubby hand to touch, but his arm stopped mid-air.

Both Cecil and Amelia looked down at the gloved hand





that wrapped around his wrist.

“Keep your hands off her, Randall.” The cowboy’s glare held a warning.

Cecil jerked his arm out of the cowboy’s grasp but took a step away from Amelia. “Ya mind yer own business, Buck. This here gal is gonna hitch up with me.”

“Not while I’m still alive to stop you,” the cowboy said. He moved forward, placing himself between Amelia and her eager groom. “The least you could’ve done, if you planned on wedding this lady, was take a bath.”

34 “Aw, heck, Buck. I been lots dirtier than this. Sides,

I jes had a bath back in May.”

Shocked by that declaration and the proud look on Mr. Randall’s face, Amelia felt faint for the first time in her life. What on earth had she done, traveling to this forsaken place to wed this filthy beast?

The malodorous farmer tried to maneuver around the cowboy. “Git outta my way, Buck. I’m right anxious to marry up with Miss Valmont and git her home.”

Thoughts of that smelly, dreadful man claiming her as his bride forced her to take a step back, then another.

The old man cackled and wagged a gnarled finger her direction. “Nobody’s gonna get hitched today if the bride isn’t here. She’s making a break for it.”

Buck and Cecil both turned to look at her when she took another step back almost to the step of the car she’d just exited. The train blasted the whistle and chugged away from the platform before she could lift her foot. For a fleeting instant, Amelia considered running to catch it.

Legs wobbling with fear as her future married to Cecil Randall flashed before her eyes, she teetered on the edge of the platform.

“You foolish woman. Step away from there or you’ll end up under a train instead of on it.” Gently, the cowboy pulled her back to safety with a tender smile, belying his rough tone. With his hand still on her elbow, he turned to face Cecil. “How much did your bride cost

you?”

“Cost me seven for her ticket and five more for incidentals.” Cecil ogled Amelia and rubbed his hands together in anticipation. “I’m thinkin’ she’ll be worth every penny.”

A shudder wracked through Amelia in response to the man’s lecherous grin. Perhaps she could refund his money and catch the next train to anywhere but there. She dig into her reticule to see if she had enough funds remaining in her dwindling supply, but the sound of coins

clinking together drew her gaze to the cowboy as he dropped three gold pieces into Cecil’s filthy hand.

“There’s thirty dollars, Randall. I’d like to purchase your bride.”

Cecil looked from the coins to Amelia, appearing to consider his best option. After a long moment of deliberation, he shoved the coins into his pocket and slapped the cowboy on the back. “She’s all yers, Buck.”

Relieved she wouldn’t be forced to wed the filthy Mr. Randall, Amelia wasn’t certain she wanted to be left with the handsome, yet somewhat gruff cowboy whose name she didn’t even know.

“Miss Valmont? Is that what I heard Cecil call you?” The cowboy asked, looking down at her with those mesmerizing blue eyes.

“Yes,” she said, staring up at him, noticing his dark eyelashes and a scar below his left cheek. “I’m Amelia Valmont.”

“My name’s Buck Brody, but most folks just call me Buck.” His glance held interest and admiration as he studied her face. She wanted to fidget beneath his gaze, but instead raised her eyes to his.

He nodded at her once, as though in approval, before he turned to the old man still waiting on the platform. “Well, Pastor John, Cecil dragged you over here to perform a wedding ceremony. I’d hate to think you wasted your time.” Buck looked back to Amelia. “If you’re still of a mind to marry a stranger, I’m willing to be the groom.”

Although her stomach now felt weightless instead of filled with rocks, Amelia hesitated. Why would a man like Buck Brody want to marry her?

The pastor cackled again and smoothed a hand over his wispy hair. He pulled a small bible from his pocket and straightened the collar around his neck.

“I’m ready when you are,” he said, grinning from Buck to Amelia.

“Miss Valmont?” Buck’s eyes probed hers. “Will you marry me?”

“Why do you want to marry me?” she blurted, unable to contain her questions.

The grin that creased Buck’s face crinkled his eyes at the corners, as if he either laughed often or spent too much time squinting at the sun. It also transformed his countenance from slightly formidable to appealingly boyish.

“Well, shoot, ma’am. We don’t get very many women arriving in this area, especially not a single woman looking for a husband.” Buck leaned down to whisper in her ear. “And we sure don’t get any as pretty as you or who smell so like a spring flower garden.”

Unsettled by his proximity, Amelia raised her gaze to his again. “But that still doesn’t…”

“I could use a wife. You need a husband. Besides, I just spent thirty dollars for you. That seems like as good a reason as any to wed.”

Disappointed by his practicality, Amelia nodded her head. When Buck removed his gloves and took her elbow in his hand, guiding her over to where the pastor waited near the office, Amelia went without a fuss. Even if she’d wanted to protest, the heat emanating from his fingers through her jacket to her skin left her so disconcerted she felt her thoughts scatter in a hundred different directions.

“We need a witness,” the pastor said, shuffling inside the depot office. Buck and Amelia followed. The ticket agent served as a witness while the couple exchanged vows.

“Do you have a ring?” the pastor asked.

Buck shook his head. “Not at the moment, but I’ve got one at home that will work.”

“Good enough,” the pastor said, grinning again. “You may kiss your bride.”

“With pleasure,” Buck said. Heat blazed in his eyes as he lowered his head to hers. He wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close to his solid chest.

Amelia dreaded the thought of kissing a stranger, even if he was a devilish handsome one. However, the moment their lips connected, she realized he wasn’t a stranger, after all.

Her heart had finally found its forever home.



Find more sweet romances from Shanna Hatfield on [Amazon](#) or her [website](#).

Cowboy Quiz Answers

1. True. Reports differ on whether the boots were first made in Kansas or Texas, though.
2. False. It's estimated 25% of the first American cowboys were freed ex-slaves.
3. False. They traveled an average of 15 miles a day. More and the cows arrived too skinny.
4. True. This helped everyone know which way to head out in the morning.
5. True.
6. False. The first professional rodeo was in Prescott, Arizona in 1888.
7. False. They were often paid only \$1 a day.
8. True. Riding the cattle trails and over a vast ranch's wore out horses but not the cowboy!
9. False. Cowboys raised or bought their own horses.
10. False. Cowboys often worked 15 or more hours a day, much of which they spent in the saddle or doing physical labor such as fixing fences and buildings.



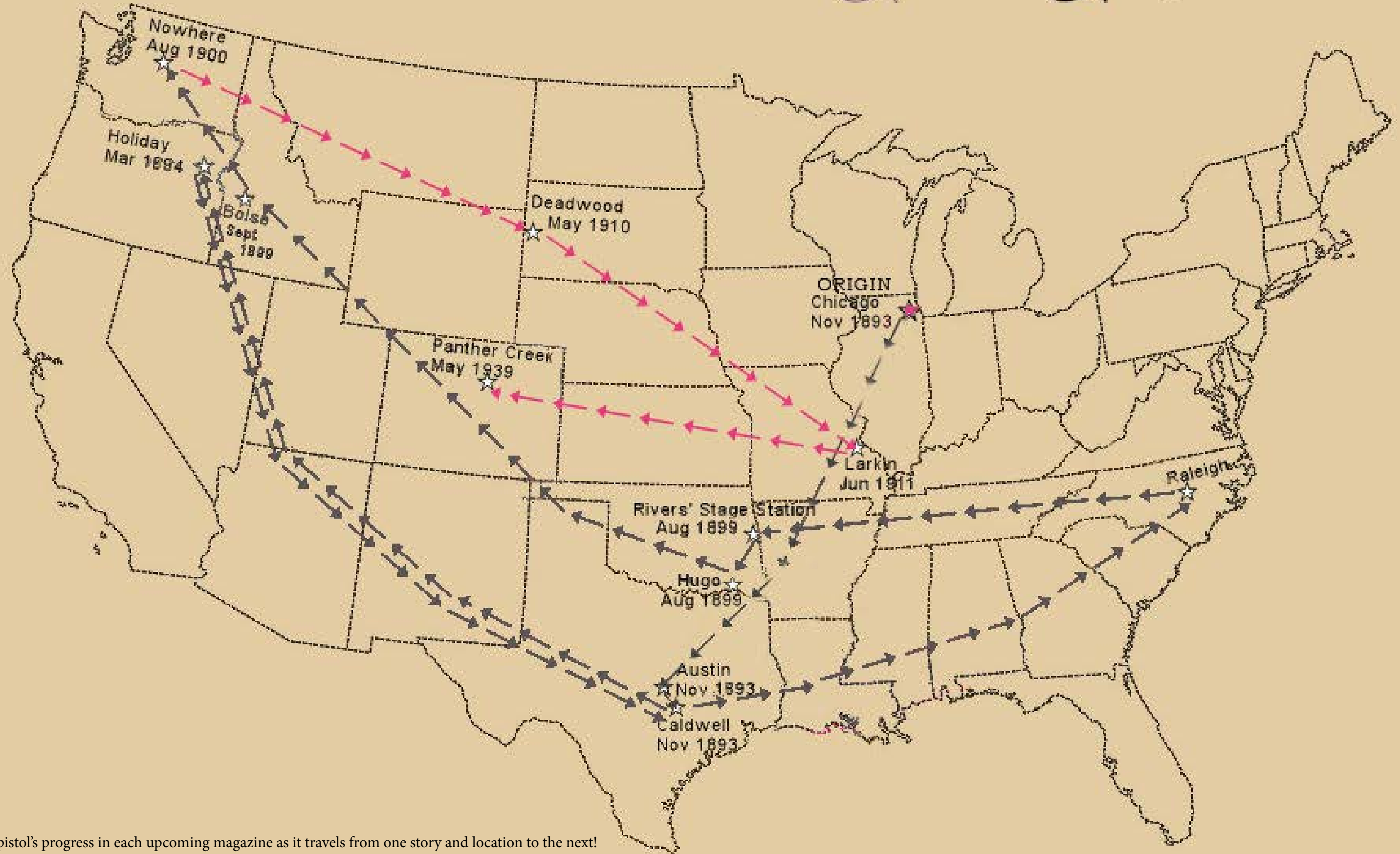
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the Pink Pistol SISTERHOOD



In Her Sights

1893 - Caldwell, Texas

Tessa James secretly loves Jackson Spivey, but trying to gain his favor only pushes him away. Since Jackson's life revolves around guns, Tessa decides to take up shooting. Seeking lessons from famed markswoman Annie Oakley provides more than technique instruction, however. Tessa comes away with a pistol that will change the course of her life forever.

[Available March 30, 2023](#)

Love on Target

1894 - Holiday, Oregon

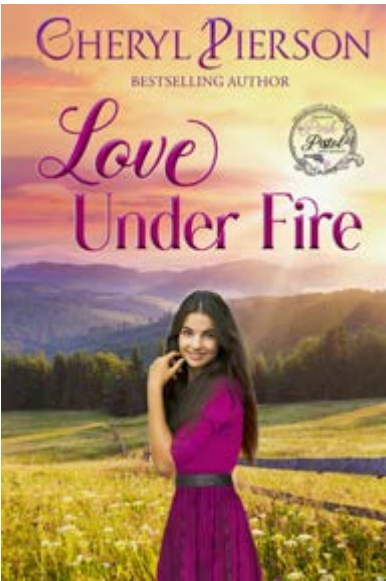
A pistol, a mule, and a promised mining job lure Rena Burke to Oregon. She might wear trousers and work with men, but Rena secretly longs to be appreciated as a woman. Too bad the man she admires believes her to be a dangerous influence on his young daughter.

[Available April 10, 2023](#)



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Love Under Fire

1899 – Indian Territory

Drawn to Indian Territory because of her father’s reckless promise, eastern sharpshooter Krissy Donovan is forced to accept the protection of a cynical cavalry captain. With a killer stalking them, Johnny Houston can’t afford any distractions, especially an attraction to his stubborn charge that could end up compromising his heart.

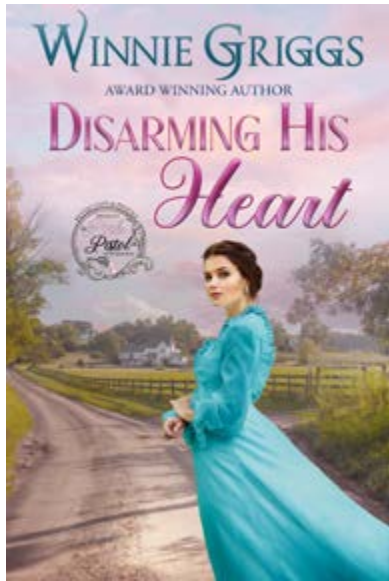
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Disarming His Heart

1911 – Larkin, Missouri

To protect her livelihood after an accident, Violet swaps places with her twin, assuming Lily’s role as children’s church program director. Struggling to hide her deception, Violet fights her attraction to the local preacher, knowing he’s the object of Lily’s affection. But Carson is harboring secrets of his own.

[Available May 20, 2023](#)

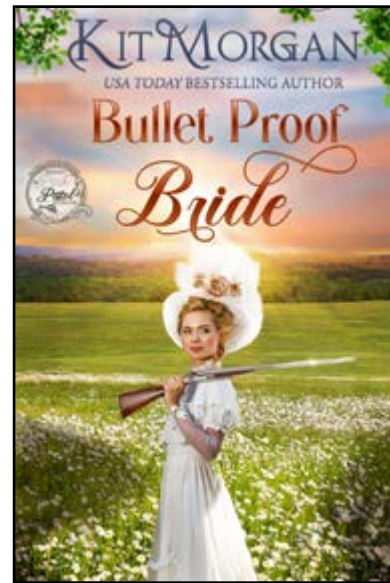


Bullet Proof Bride

1900 – Nowhere, Washington

When mail-order bride Goldie Colson gets stuck in Nowhere, Washington, she has no idea danger lurks nearby. All she cares about is finding a job and the love she so desperately needs. Will she find it with Rhys Miller, a local banker, or will danger find her first? When tragedy takes away her one chance at love, will another help her find it?

[Available April 30, 2023](#)

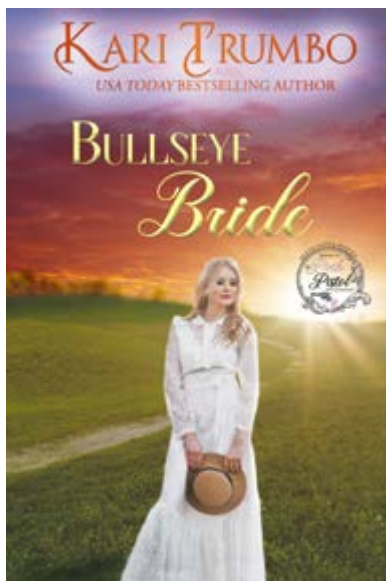


ONE SHOT AT Love

1939 – Panther Creek, Colorado

The struggle to raise her siblings is one Mariah willingly bears. She’ll keep them together at all costs. But when a handsome stranger appears on the mountain asking for her help, the stakes are raised. Can she trust him with her life? Her heart is definitely off limits.

[Available May 30, 2023](#)



BULLSEYE Bride

1910 – Deadwood, South Dakota

Kitty has one goal--to save her family by winning a shooting contest. Thad can’t allow women to compete. He’d be a laughingstock. She must choose between her growing love for Thad and saving her family. Can a special pistol help her choose?

[Available May 10, 2023](#)

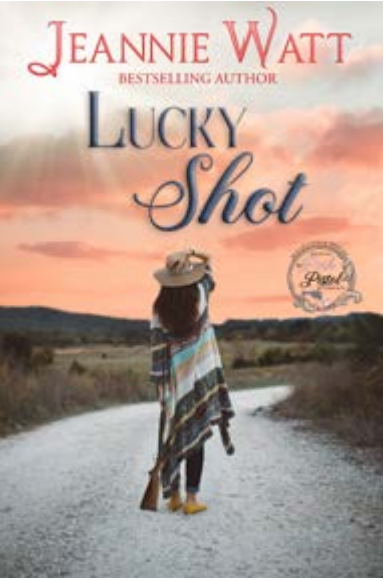
ARMED & Marvelous

1955 – Wallace, Kansas

After a terrible tragedy, wild game hunter, Rexanna Brennan, returns to her family’s ranch to heal, only to learn a Hollywood cowboy has taken her place, and he has a few troubles of his own.

[Available June 10, 2023](#)





LUCKY Shot

1970 - Moscow, Idaho

After returning from Vietnam, Scott Garrison retreats to his Idaho farm, only to discover a trespasser. Jenny Willow was scammed into renting the place and she's not leaving. Jenny uses the farm to rescue abandoned animals, and soon realizes that she may have to rescue the stubborn owner as well.

Available June 20, 2023

AIMING FOR HIS Heart

Modern Day - Loksi, Oklahoma

When Jade Buchanan returns to Oklahoma, she reconnects with her first love, Dalton Kelley. Needing money thanks to cattle rustlers, Dalton hires on to renovate Jade's recently inherited house. Will working together drive this city girl and country boy crazy or into each other's arms?

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PISTOL Perfect

Modern Day - Sweet Water, North Dakota

When three young girls need a home, Mabel Lefrak finds the perfect farmhouse - owned by the man she rejected years ago. James isn't looking for houseguests, but he can't refuse Mabel's offer, regardless of their history. Can love create a family, despite kids, chaos and the broken heart between them?

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