

PETTICOATS & PISTOLS PRESENTS

Pink Pistol MAGAZINE



VOLUME 4 - MAY 2023

FEATURING
AN EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW OF
ARMED & MARVELOUS
BY PAM CROOKS

—
LUCKY SHOT
BY SHANNA HATFIELD

—
AIMING FOR HIS HEART
BY JULIE BENSON

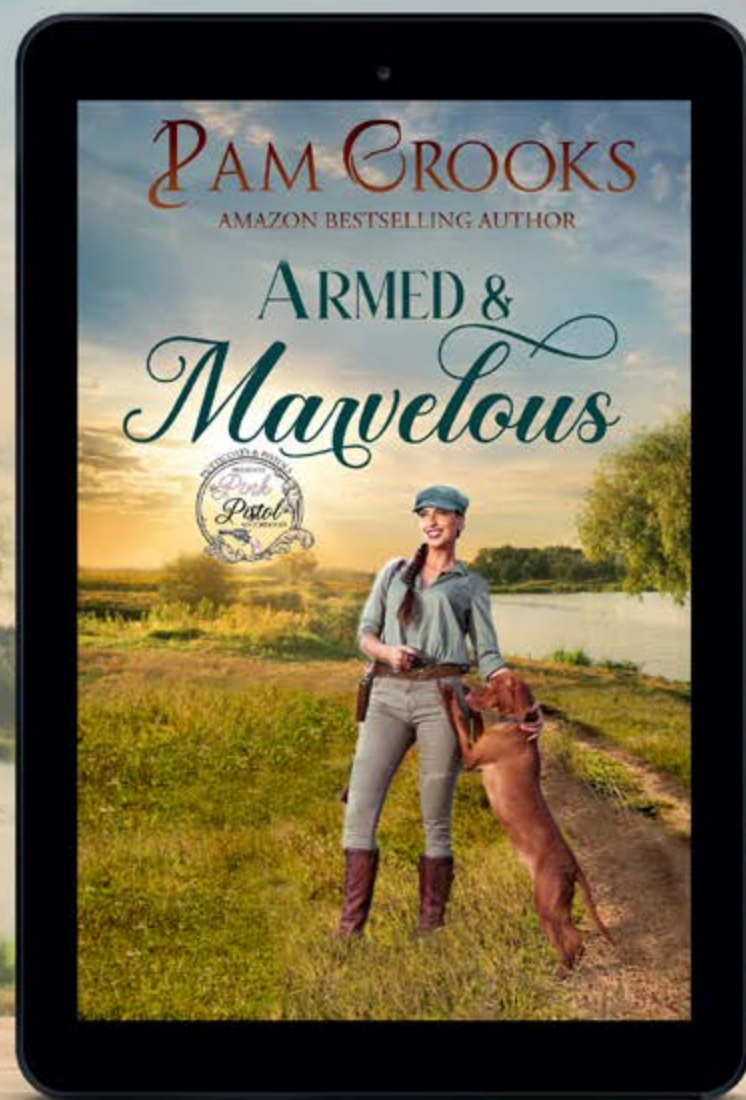
—
PISTOL PERFECT
BY JESSIE GUSSMAN

—
AND MORE!



A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY SENDS HER HOME TO HEAL.
WILL HIS UNEXPECTED LOVE CONVINCING HER TO STAY?

ARMED & *Marvelous*



COMING JUNE 10, 2023

A SWEET WESTERN ROMANCE BY

PAM CROOKS



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Pink Pistol MAGAZINE



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Acknowledgments

We can't present the Pink Pistol Magazine without first acknowledging the incredible effort that went into it. Our deepest thanks to:

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

Shanna Hatfield, for the generous sharing of her creative vision and expertise to make this magazine happen.

Jessie Gussman, for providing us with the means to distribute the magazine.

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



Welcome to The Pink Pistol Sisterhood Magazine!

Well, here we are. Our last issue of the Pink Pistol Sisterhood Magazine. We hope you've enjoyed each one as much as we've enjoyed putting them together for you. Judging by the exciting number of views and downloads, many of you have!

Our series continues with the final four books:

[ARMED & MARVELOUS](#) by Pam Crooks

[LUCKY SHOT](#) by Shanna Hatfield

[AIMING FOR HIS HEART](#) by Julie Benson

Jessie Gussman will wrap up the series beautifully and in a way you won't expect with her book, [PISTOL PERFECT](#).

Just click the links to Preorder!

Be sure to check out our map of each story's locations. One look, and you can see that our pink pistol has been a busy little pistol! Thanks to Winnie Griggs for compiling the progressive maps for us for each issue.

Our series page on Amazon shows the Pink Pistol Sisterhood books that are now available. Click [HERE](#) to see a complete list.

If you haven't already joined our reader group on Facebook, it's not too late! It's [HERE](#) where we celebrate each preorder and release with fun and prizes. Sign up for our daily blogs, too, where we chat about all things western. Without Petticoats & Pistols, the Pink Pistol Sisterhood would never have been born. www.petticoatsandpistols.com

It has truly been a joy to meet so many of you and feel the love for this series. You, dear readers, are why we do what we do.

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

ARMED & *Marvelous*

by Pam Crooks

PROLOGUE

Uyak Bay, Kodiak Island, Alaska

May 10, 1955

If there was anything more exhilarating for Rexanna Brennan than wild game hunting in Wyoming or an exotic safari in Africa, it was bear hunting in Alaska. On a luxury yacht, no less. With her redbone coonhound, Mack, snoozing at her feet and her trusted friend and fellow guide, Damien LeNoir, to assist, and well, a hunting expedition didn't get much better than that.

But this was the thirteenth day of their trip. Tomorrow, they'd have to pack up, disembark the *St. Brendan*, and return to California. Two days after that, Rexanna would start all over again with a new group of clients in a whole new location, as eager to shoot wild game as her current clients, wealthy air-

line executive Stuart Langford, and his wife, Patrice, from Los Angeles.

Rexanna needed to find one more bear. Just one that their college-age daughter, Annie, who had accompanied them, could claim as a trophy. For her, for everyone, then the expedition would be a success.

Seated in her folding chair next to the main deck's wood-burning stove, Rexanna lifted the binoculars again to scan the forested mountains of Kodiak Island. As the owner of her own outfitting company, she understood the need for patience in scouting for game. Cruising the shoreline of the bay with its breathtaking vistas would be relaxing on any other day, but time was ticking.

Then, in a blink, something moved among the trees. A dark shape little more than a blob this far off the beach, and had she imagined it?



“Coffee, Rexanna?”

She ignored Damien. The more she stared through the lenses, though, the more convinced she became she'd mistaken the dark shape. Probably just wishful thinking and more like a shadow among countless others on those hills. The sun, the beautiful blue sky, the clouds, all combined to play tricks on her hopes to find Annie her Alaskan Kodiak bear.

Whatever Rexanna saw, it was gone, and she lowered the binoculars. Damien held out a porcelain mug, steaming from strong coffee, sweetened with sugar and cream. Smiling her thanks, she took the mug and sipped. The warm liquid, just shy of hot, caressed her throat going down.

“St. Brendan is ignoring us today, eh?” Damien said in his faint French accent, crinkling his dark eyes over the beach and hills, and searching, too.

Rexanna set her binoculars in her lap and curled her fingers around the mug. “St. Brendan is the patron saint of boatmen. St. Hubert is the guy we need right now.”

Damien grinned. “Ah. The patron saint of hunters. We could use his help today, yes.”

Rexanna sobered. “It'll be dusk in a few hours.”

“Then too dark to hunt. She will be disappointed.”

In somber unison, their gazes slid toward the young woman, seated on a vinyl-covered bench with her pants-clad legs tucked under her, a magazine in one hand. With her stylish pixie haircut, brown tweed hunting jacket, and pricey boots, Annie Langford reflected the affluent upbringing her parents gave her. She was a decent hunter with enough experience to want bragging rights and the proof of a bearskin rug to show off to her friends.

Rexanna understood what being twenty-one meant. She was only six years older, but she'd made her own way in the world without parents to pave her way. Counting pennies and earning her stripes in the hunting world garnered her a stellar reputation. Pride in her outfitting company produced plenty

of sympathy for the young woman. What guide and outfitter wouldn't want the perfect hunting experience for their clients?

Perfection led to success, and Rexanna wasn't giving up on that bear just yet.

“Keep watch, will you?” she asked Damien, handing him the binoculars. “I'm going to talk to Annie for a minute.”

She leaned down to scratch Mack behind his floppy, rusty-red colored ears; she rose and stepped around him to approach Annie. Stuart and Patrice, wearing matching wool buffalo-checked jackets, leaned their chubby bodies against the yacht's railing and marveled at the scenery. Both were tolerant of their daughter's need to shoot her own bear; but then, they'd both shot their own and had the bearskins to prove it. For them, the pressure was off.

“Mind if I join you?” Rexanna asked, easing onto the cushion before the young woman even looked up from her reading.

“Nothing else to do, is there?” Annie sounded petulant, but she swung her legs to the deck floor, giving Rexanna more room.

“The day isn't over yet. We're not giving up.” She gestured toward Damien surveilling the hills with a skill honed over the years. “If there's a bear, we'll see him and hustle ourselves right off the boat. This is the time of year they come out to feed. They're out there.”

“I know.” She angled her head toward the lush green mountain. A slight 40-something-degree breeze ruffled her wispy bangs.

Her disappointment pulled at Rexanna. If she could produce a ten-foot brown bear out of thin air and give Annie the thrill of the shot, she would in a heartbeat.

“What are you reading?” Hoping to keep her from dwelling on her disappointment, Rexanna indicated the magazine.

Annie closed the pages to reveal the cover and the red logo

for the popular entertainment magazine, Film Star Scoop. “Oh, just some article about Roan Bertolotti. Ever hear of him?”

“Sure.” Rexanna nodded with a small shrug. She didn't often have time to go to the movies, but Roan had a face most women couldn't forget. “What about him?”

“Well, he was having an affair with Janie Adams. You know, one of the actresses in his latest western? She says when she wanted to break up the relationship to save her marriage, he got mad and pushed her down the stairs.”

“Really?” Rexanna's eyes widened in shock.

“Really. Here's proof.” Annie opened the magazine again, found the page she was looking for, and thrust it at Rexanna. “The article with a photo of her injuries.”

Rexanna gaped at the black-and-white image of the young actress with her beauty marred by a swollen eye and puffy lip. “That's terrible.”

“I feel so sorry for her. The rat.”

“Well.” Rexanna straightened with a disgusted cluck of her tongue. “I'm done with him and his movies. He doesn't deserve my time or money.”

“Mine, either.” Annie closed the magazine and tossed it aside, turning her pleading expression full force onto Rexanna. “Can we at least go ashore and scout the hills? Just because we can't see any Kodiaks from here doesn't mean they aren't out there.”

There they were. Back to the bears, and Rexanna couldn't blame Annie for persisting. Rexanna had been much the same when she was Annie's age—impatient to experience the most life could offer. When again would she get a chance to go on an Alaskan hunting expedition, with or without her parents?

Rexanna smiled and stood. “Of course. Why not? Let's go break some sticks, shall we?”

Annie brightened at the suggestion, used by hunters to make some noise in hopes of spooking game into the open. She stood, too. “Oh, hurry, Rexanna! It won't take me long to get ready.”

“I'll just grab my coat and hat from my cabin. Don't forget your rifle, and make sure you're dressed warm enough.”

But Annie was already headed to the bench where a pile of guns were kept, sheathed in their carrying cases. Rexanna headed across the main deck, pausing only long enough to let Damien know the plan and to take her binoculars back. She kept her stride swift as she entered the galley and left her coffee mug in the sink, then kept going through the saloon to her cabin at the back.

Briskly, she donned her hunting coat and billed cap, then unsheathed her custom .416 Rigby big game rifle, strapping it over her shoulder. Dropping her binoculars into a roomy front pocket, Rexanna headed out of the cabin and met Damien rushing through the saloon.

“She left already. Better hurry, Rexanna.”

Her step faltered. “Annie left? By herself?”

His mouth thinned. “She took Mack with her.”

Rexanna's teeth clenched. It was bad enough Annie dis-

obeyed Rexanna's orders to wait, but to leave the St. Brendan unaccompanied and to take Mack was enough to warrant some strong scolding.

Her dog had a lot of spirit and speed, and once he caught scent of game, big or small, he'd be off on his own on the mountain. Annie would never be able to stop him. A tendril of fear, of simmering anger, burned through Rexanna's chest, and she broke into a sprint toward the deck.

“Where were Stuart and Patrice? They just let her go?” she grated.

“They told her to wait for you, but once they lowered the boat and she climbed in, she just took off.” His booted steps clamored behind her. “Sorry, Rexanna. Wish I could go, too.”

“Just help me with the boat. I can't let her climb that mountain by herself.”

Damien's responsibility lay with manning the yacht and staying with Annie's parents, both looking concerned from their daughter's disobedience. They worked quickly to lower the outboard into the frigid water.

“I'll come with you,” Stuart said.

“No.” Rexanna spoke sharply. The past thirteen days convinced her he would only slow her down, his age and lack of athleticism more of a detriment on a mountain than help. “She's not far ahead. I'll catch up with her.” She settled on the wooden seat. “We'll be back soon.”

With the motor revving, she took off, guiding the boat into a wide turn at high speed. They weren't so far off the shore that she couldn't see Annie pull up on the rocky beach and cut the power. Energized by the prospect of a hunt, Mack jumped out, ignoring Annie's call to come back.

Seeing her prized hunting dog lope up the mountain and disappear into the tree line only tightened Rexanna's belly with more worry. By the time she reached the beach and hopped out, Annie had disappeared, too.

Annie's determination to brag about her hunting prowess to her friends and her headstrong selfishness compelled her to ignore every rule Rexanna and Damien instilled in her and her parents the past thirteen days. Her bravado had completely overtaken her common sense. If Rexanna couldn't get to her soon enough...

Rexanna took precious moments to pull her binoculars from the jacket pocket to survey the mountain. Her ears pricked to the baying sound of Mack's barking, and then the lenses found Annie, stepping into a small clearing. In the shadows, her rifle in one hand, she waved at Rexanna with the other. She pointed into the trees, a sign of the direction she intended. Obviously, Annie had seen something, maybe the bear she wanted so desperately, and she was heading into the same area where Mack was.

If an animal was close enough to incite barking from Mack, then he'd be close to Annie, too. Gripping her .416, Rexanna

Author SPOTLIGHT



In the spring of 2007, Pam Crooks met an author friend for lunch, and by the time she paid the bill, *Petticoats & Pistols* was born. In the years following, she's worked tirelessly both on the blog and behind the scenes to promote—and write about—cowboys and happy endings, but it's been the friendship with the dedicated authors who playfully call themselves the fillies that she treasures most.

She grew up in the ranch country of western Nebraska, and it was inevitable she'd eventually write lots of books about cowboys. Pam still lives in Nebraska with her husband (who is not a cowboy), four married daughters and a whole slew of perfect grandchildren. She loves to cook, hang out at her lake cabin, and decorate birthday cakes for anyone who will let her.

To see other books Pam has written, visit www.pamcrooks.com and sign up for her newsletter!

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hurried up the hill with her boots clomping over sand and gravel left behind from age-old glaciers. The higher she climbed, the cooler the air got, and it occurred to her, oddly, that Annie hadn't even taken the time to grab her coat.

A shot cracked through the mountain, then another, and Rexanna froze in mid-step. The sounds were close, and her brain strove to discern the precise direction, even as a horrible fear burst through her veins that Annie might have made a mistake. A terrible, frightening, amateur mistake, of shooting uphill and not down...

Then, the roar, filled with rage and blood-curdling ferocity, shook the mountain and chilled Rexanna to her bones. Lifting the .416 to her shoulder, she tread stealthily over the rough terrain, around the trees, snapping twigs and pine needles, her ears peeled to the lumbering footsteps she could hear and not quite place. She had no fear for her own safety, only that of a young woman and of Mack, too. If Rexanna could do anything, if she'd gained any skill at all during her years of skillful hunting, she had to get to the bear before he got to Annie.

And then, there he was, crimson staining his chest. Teeth bared, eyes glittering, his growl terrifying. Ten feet tall if he was an inch. One thousand pounds, easy. Trophy worthy. Focused on the young woman he intended as revenge.

Annie stood silent, mouth agape, paralyzed in shock. Rexanna shouted to take another shot to save herself, to run if

nothing else, but she did nothing, nothing, and Rexanna braced the .416 against her shoulder...

Hampered by the tangle of trees and branches, she needed precious time to sight the bear in her scope and pull the trigger. Every second counted. She couldn't miss. Annie's life depended on it. Mack's, too. Barely feeling the rifle's kick, she shot again and again, but the crazed bear, still powerful, lunged for the terrified young woman, the adrenaline firing through him like bullets into the Rigby's barrel. His mammoth arm swung outward in one savage swipe and flung her through the air like a wet rag. His claws tore her clothes and skin and splattered blood.

Rexanna shot again. Only then, did the bear succumb, falling hard on top of Annie, dulling her scream under his roar... until the terrible sounds ended, and the mountain fell silent.



Armed & Marvelous

will be released on June 10, 2023,
but it's available now for [preorder!](#)

Get to Know the Author PAM CROOKS

What don't you feel guilty spending money on?

Air conditioning. I grew up in the days when no one had central air, at least no one we knew. We didn't even have a window air conditioner. We got through hot Nebraska days with fans which only seemed to blow the warm air around the house. At night, we'd sleep on the floor in my parents' room. My mother would put a big pan of ice water in front of a fan, which would blow the tepidly cool air right at us. After I got married, we built a house with central air conditioning, but money was so tight, we used it sparingly to save on utility bills. And now, I've reached the point in my life where I've earned the right to run the air conditioner every day without shutting it off. Thankfully, we can afford it, and even my husband says it's more efficient to keep it running to keep the house at a consistently comfortable temperature.

If you could make one rule for one day that everyone had to follow, what would it be?

Shut off social media. Talk to one another face-to-face or pick up the phone and have a real conversation. Many times, I rue the day social media was ever invented. Granted, we're all on Facebook at this very moment, and there's some good things about Facebook (reconnecting with old friends or sharing valuable information for two). But there's been so many ways social media has been misused especially by young people who are too immature to resist peer pressure or understand the gravity of their actions (dangerous Tik-Tok videos). Maybe if everyone tried good old-fashioned communication for one day, they might realize it's time to cut back on social media and the time it can waste.

I can hope, right?

What is a holiday that does not exist that you would like to create?

Go to Church and Pray Day. If everyone would take the time to enter the solitude of a church and pray in whatever religion they hold dear, then maybe they would grow closer to God (or their own deity) and be inclined to practice more love and kindness to mankind. If hearts are softened and hate obliterated, our world would definitely be a better place.

If you had unlimited storage for one thing, what would it be?

Dishes. Full sets. I love beautiful dishes, and I even have a Pinterest board with gorgeous china designs - hand-painted flowers on tea cups and so on. I have four sets of dishes--Christmas dishes in festive poinsettias, my grandmother's china in maroon and gold (purchased from a leather salesman when my grandfather had a shoe repair shop), blue and silver china I purchased piece by piece from a grocery store decades ago, and my current Corelle in black and white. None of them are jewelry-store fancy, and I use each set throughout the year. It'd be a shame to leave them in storage sight unseen. One day, each of my four daughters will inherit a set.

Do you like to keep background noise on or do you work in silence?

I definitely need music playing softly in the background. Instrumental. I also like a candle burning to accompany the music.

When I'm on deadline to finish a book, I definitely need caffeine and chewing gum. I've discovered chocolate-covered coffee beans, which gives me the jolt I need. And I never start a writing session without going for a short walk to breathe in oxygen and sunshine. Works every time to inspire me.



If you had a time machine (backward or forward) where would you go?

This probably won't be a surprise for you, but I'd go back to 1880s Old West. A cattle ranch, definitely. A land where cowboys abound and they lived by a code that respected women, animals, and the privilege of their land. There's just something about watching a man on a horse, throwing a rope or chasing an ornery calf.

If you could instantly learn any skill, what would it be?

Master gardening. Oh, I hold my own with my little postage stamp-sized garden plot. I can grow tomatoes and zucchini with the best of them. But there's more to gardening than plunking plants into dirt, and I'd like to erase the mystery of which fertilizer to use, how to banish insects and fungus, that sort of thing.

What would you like to be known for?

Wisdom. I'd love my epitaph to read "Pam, who was amazingly wise." LOL. Seriously, as the oldest in my family, I have turned into a matriarch of sorts after our mother's death, and my siblings look to me for family decisions and organization. Sometimes, I'm proud of that stature, and other times, it's a burden. As our family grows in size and age, issues are becoming more diverse and complex. It's hard to know what the right answer is.

If you could be famous, but poor forever, would you do it?

When I first read this question, the person who popped into my mind was Mother Teresa. She was certainly famous, but lived a poverty-driven life, despite the millions that were donated to her to care for the poor. So I guess it would depend on what I was famous for. If I was famous for doing good works, then material riches likely wouldn't be as important. Unless I gave away all my riches for said good works. But there's certainly more honor in being famous for helping our fellow man than to be rich for ourselves, so to answer the question, yes! I would be famous and poor.

Pam's Chicken Quesadillas

I must have made these a thousand times, they're that easy. And so good!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large can chunk chicken breast in water, drained
- 1 can Rotel Diced Tomatoes and Green Chilies, drained
- 8 oz shredded cheese (4-cheese Mexican, Colby-Jack, Cheddar—your choice)
- 1 package 10-inch tortillas

DIRECTIONS

Place drained chicken breast in medium mixing bowl and flake. Add drained Rotel tomatoes. Add shredded cheese and blend well. Lay out 5 tortillas. Spoon quesadilla mixture over each one until gone. Top with remaining 5 tortillas. Place one chicken-mixture topped tortilla in large skillet or griddle over medium low heat. Top with second tortilla. Heat until cheese is melted and tortilla is lightly-browned, turning once. Slice into 6 wedges with pizza cutter. Serve with salsa and sour cream.

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

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

Annie Oakley Quiz

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. What was Annie Oakley's real first name? | 7. How old was Annie when she first shot a gun? |
| Jane | 5 |
| Martha | 8 |
| Phoebe | 10 |
| Emily | 13 |
| 2. What state was Annie born in? | 8. Annie was involved in a libel lawsuit begun by William Randolph Hurst when he printed a false story about her being arrested for stealing. She battled the papers that printed this story for how many years to restore her good name? |
| Texas | 6 |
| Ohio | 8 |
| Indiana | 10 |
| Arkansas | 15 |
| 3. As a young girl, Annie was "bound out" to a cruel family that she later referred to as these animals: | 9. In 1898, Annie offered the services of women sharpshooters to President McKinley if the U.S. should go to war with Spain. How many lady sharpshooters did she mention in her letter to the president? |
| The bears | 1000 |
| The wolverines | 100 |
| The hawks | 50 |
| The wolves | 25 |
| 4. Annie met her husband-to-be, Frank Butler, at this event. | 10. Throughout her career, how many women did Annie teach to use a gun? |
| The county fair | 1500 |
| Church | 1,000 |
| A shooting competition | 8,000 |
| Her sister's wedding | 15,000 |
| 5. Annie was given the nickname "Little Sure Shot" by this person. | |
| Sitting Bull | |
| Buffalo Bill | |
| Calamity Jane | |
| President William McKinley | |
| 6. Annie and Frank had how many children? | |
| 0 | |
| 1 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |

Look for the answers
on Page 38

WHEN A WOUNDED SOLDIER
TUGS AT HER HEART,
WILL SHE TAKE A
SHOT AT LOVE?



LUCKY Shot

A SWEET WESTERN ROMANCE BY
SHANNA HATFIELD



available at
amazon & **kindleunlimited**



Excerpt from

LUCKY Shot

by Shanna Hatfield

*Boise, Idaho
May 1972*

Ribbons of sunshine gliding through the leaves of the trees around her caressed Grace Marshall's cheek. Eyes closed, she tipped her head back to accept the gift of warmth, and breathed deeply of the fresh air.

Thankfully, no one else was currently in the area the nurses at the Boise Veteran's Administration Hospital used on their breaks when the weather was pleasant. Without the scent of cigarette smoke filling the air, and the peaceful quiet of a spring day surrounding her, it was easy for Grace to block from her mind the challenging morning she'd endured, assisting an egotistical doctor with two impossible patients.

Grace turned on the transistor radio on the table where she sat and listened as Otis Redding sang about sitting on the dock of a bay. She could sure use a vacation. What would it be like to head south, somewhere that already felt like summer,

and dangle her feet in the water? Maybe spend an entire afternoon doing nothing but bathing in the sun and indulging in fruity drinks.

Then again, she could always head home to Holiday and sit with her feet in the water of one of the lovely lakes in the area. Her mom had a great strawberry lemonade recipe, and there was the pineapple punch she'd made for a birthday party last August that everyone still talked about.

Just thinking about her family in the Eastern Oregon community where she'd grown up made her lonesome to see her parents and brothers. Only Micah remained at home, helping with their dairy farm, though. Jared was in goodness only knew where with the Marines in Vietnam while Jason was off at college in Corvallis, in his third year of working toward a degree in agribusiness.

As Grace bit into the roast beef sandwich loaded with pickles and celery her roommate had made for her that morning, she thought about how much she missed her mom's cheese-

burger pie and chicken casserole. Grace had the recipes and could make them, but they never tasted quite the same.

She shook her head, attempting to dislodge her homesickness. She'd lived in Boise for three years, but there were still moments she longed to be back in Holiday where the air smelled like Christmas and most everyone seemed like family.

In Boise, Grace often felt lost in the crowd, but she was finding her way and, she hoped, making life a little better for the patients she helped at the VA Hospital.

She glanced at the assortment of magazines on the table. Elizabeth Taylor and her grandson graced the cover of Ladies' Home Journal, along with promises for sew-and-go fashions that could be made in a day, if one had time for sewing. She glanced at an article about an opportunity to win a free vacation.

"Not likely," she muttered, took another bite of the sandwich, then picked up the latest copy of McCall's magazine. It offered nostalgic needlework ideas and had one of her favorite features—a bonus historical romance story. Grace loved to read, she just didn't get much time to enjoy it.

Quickly opening the magazine to the story, she was soon engrossed in the tale. It wasn't until she heard a chair squeak that she realized she was no longer alone.

"Hey, Susie. How are things going for you today?" she asked as she dabbed her mouth with a paper napkin, then took a drink of Coca-Cola. Little droplets of condensation slid along the neck of the glass bottle she'd purchased from the vending machine in the indoor break area as she tilted it to her lips.

"As good as can be," Susie said, reaching for the Cosmopolitan magazine and flipping it open before she folded back the waxed paper on her cheese sandwich and took a bite.

Grace returned to the story and her lunch, enjoying both before she glanced at the watch on her wrist and knew it was time to head back inside. How she wished she could yank off the white stockings she wore and bask in the sunshine this afternoon. Instead, she had plenty of patients to see and important work to do.

"See you later," she said to Susie, then gathered her things and returned inside.

An hour into her afternoon shift, she wished she'd stayed outside. One cranky patient had yelled at her when she'd tried to check his pulse, and one downright nasty man had threatened her just as the doctor walked in. Thankfully, Dr. O'Brien asked her to send in one of the older nurses to deal with the unpleasant patient.

By the time her work wrapped up for the day, Grace was exhausted and more than ready to head back to the apartment



she shared with her best friend.

She and Cindy Milton had been friends since they were old enough to walk. They were in the same grade in school and even had crushes on the same boy their junior year of high school. However, Caleb had returned Cindy's affection. The two of them had been engaged to wed before he got himself killed in Vietnam.

Thoughts of the war always made Grace's heart feel as heavy as one of the anvils Cindy's grandfather kept in the old livery building in Holiday. She hated that so many young men had died. Almost as tragic was the way the returning soldiers were treated by so many; like they had single-handedly caused the war. Political views aside, Grace thought anyone who fought for America deserved to be treated with respect.

She knew how hard it was on a soldier to go off to war, and not just from the men she treated at the hospital. Her father had fought in World War II, as well as her Uncle Theo. While her father had survived his time spent in the Pacific battling the Japanese, Uncle Theo had been killed by a German bullet

in France, leaving behind a wife and two children who missed him still. Although her father rarely talked about the war, Grace knew her father still occasionally had nightmares that would wake them all in the stillness of the night.

The dark thoughts circling like vultures in her mind weren't appropriate for such a lovely day, Grace concluded as she stepped out into the bright spring sunshine when her shift ended.

"Do you and Cindy have plans this evening?" Susie asked, falling into step with Grace as they walked across the lot where the staff parked.

"No. At least none of which I'm aware," Grace said with a grin. Cindy, who was full of fun, often talked her into spur-of-the-moment adventures.

"Well, after a busy day like today, on our feet at the beck and call of the doctors, I think we deserve a quiet evening to rest." Susie sighed as she set her purse inside her car and then unpinned the hat from her short hair. "However, I have no doubt my husband will expect dinner on the table as usual."

"I hope you have a nice evening. See you tomorrow." Grace waved at Susie, then continued walking to her car, a hand-me-down from her oldest brother. Micah had bought the sporty two-door Chevrolet Impala brand-new out of a showroom six years ago, but last fall, he'd purchased a new pickup and asked Grace if she'd like to have the car, no strings attached. She'd practically screamed in his ear when he'd phoned to offer the car to her. She'd loved it the moment Micah had driven it home, and she loved it even more now that it was hers.

Although the weather hadn't offered too many days warm enough to roll down the windows and let the wind blow through her hair, Grace looked forward to it this summer.

Like Susie, she unpinned the hat from her head and loosed the top two buttons of her uniform as she waited for Cindy.

Cindy didn't like to drive, didn't own a vehicle, and preferred it that way. Typically, though, her friend beat her to the car. Rather than linger in concern over the reason why Cindy was late, Grace reached behind the seat and retrieved a paper tablet, scrounged a pen out of her purse, then started writing a letter to send to Jared.

It had been a while since she'd written to him. If she hurried, she could bake a batch of brown sugar drops tonight, then get a care package ready to mail to him tomorrow. She'd collected a few things she thought he might enjoy, like a new book Jason had recommended, and packages of Jared's favorite gum and candy. Jared was the only one in their family who preferred Butter Rum Life Savers and Fruit Stripe gum to any other flavor. Just for fun, she planned to include some Pixy Stix and a few boxes of Lemonhead candy.

Attention centered on the letter she wrote, describing the weather, the wall she and Cindy had painted in their apartment's bathroom, and family news he might not have heard, she sucked in a gasp when her friend yanked open the car door and plopped onto the passenger seat.

"Man, I am beat. Let's go home." Cindy set her purse between her feet and looked over at Grace. "You look awful." Her nose wrinkled. "And what is on your uniform?"

Grace glanced down at the stains on her dress and shook her head. "You don't want to know."

"You're right. I don't."

Grace ripped the pages she'd written on from the tablet and tucked them into her purse, then started the car. "Any side trips on the way home?"

"Not tonight." Cindy rolled down her window and rested her elbow on the door, drawing in a deep breath as she visibly relaxed. "Gosh, it was a long day, wasn't it?"

"No argument from me." Grace wondered what had happened to make her sunny friend look more like a raincloud. Cindy worked in the administrative offices at the hospital, but most often she ended her work day with the same chipper attitude with which it began.

Grace might have found it highly annoying if she hadn't loved her friend so much. Cindy had always been sweet and cheerful. Even after losing her fiancé, she managed to offer comfort to those around her while she stoically worked her way through her grief.

Two years later, Cindy remained alone and unattached, and Grace worried she might never date again, but if time truly healed all wounds, then perhaps love awaited Cindy somewhere in the future.

Love had proven to be quite an elusive thing, at least where Grace was concerned. Then again, she'd never been deeply in love with anyone. Not the way Cindy had loved and been loved. Grace longed to have that kind of soul connection with another and often dreamed of the day she might have a husband and family of her own. She was so busy with work and everything else in her life, she didn't have much time or energy left for dating, even if she'd met someone who sparked her interest. Which she hadn't. Not yet. But a girl couldn't give up hoping to find true love.



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Author SPOTLIGHT



A hopeless romantic with a bit of sarcasm thrown in for good measure, Shanna Hatfield is a *USA Today* bestselling author of sweet romantic fiction written with a healthy dose of humor.

She joined *Petticoats & Pistols* as a regular contributor in 2017. After being a guest author a few times, she was thrilled to receive the invitation to join the P&P fillies as a monthly blogger.

In addition to blogging and eating too much chocolate, she is completely smitten with her husband, lovingly known as Captain Cavedweller.

Shanna creates character-driven romances with realistic heroes and heroines. Her historical westerns have been described as "reminiscent of the era captured by *Bonanza* and *The Virginian*" while her contemporary works have been called "laugh-out-loud funny, and a little heart-pumping sexy without being explicit in any way."

She is a member of Western Writers of America, Women Writing the West, and Romance Writers of America.

Connect with her at her website: shannahatfield.com

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1972 Top Hits

MATCH THE SONG TO THE CORRECT ARTIST

SONG TITLE

ARTIST

LEAN ON ME	SAMMY DAVIS JR
SONG SUNG BLUE	TANYA TUCKER
THE FIRST TIME EVER I SAW YOUR FACE	THE EAGLES
TAKE IT EASY	ELVIS PRESLEY
ROCKET MAN	DONNA FARGO
THE CANDY MAN	LOOKING GLASS
BURNING LOVE	DON MCCLEAN
BRANDY	BILL WITHERS
I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW	NEIL DIAMOND
AMERICAN PIE	JOHNNY NASH
DELTA DAWN	THE OSMONDS
DOWN BY THE LAZY RIVER	ROBERTA FLACK
THE HAPPIEST GIRL IN THE WHOLE USA	ELTON JOHN

ANSWERS ON PAGE 34



Shanna's Noodle Goulash

This recipe comes from the first cookbook I ever used – Betty Crocker's New Boy's and Girl's Cookbook, circa 1970. I think it was a hand-me-down from one of my cousins, but I loved looking at the colorful pictures and thumbing through the recipes. This is an easy one to make and any type of dry pasta can be used. The recipe has been tweaked slightly for modern-day preparation, but I know Grace and Cindy would approve!

INGREDIENTS

1 pound ground beef
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 small onion, chopped
1 cup celery, finely sliced
1 teaspoon salt
1 16-ounce package penne (or pasta of choice)
1 24-ounce jar spaghetti sauce
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9x13 casserole with non-stick cooking spray and set aside (or grease with butter if you want to go old-school!). Heat oil in large skillet and cook ground beef with onion, celery, and salt until meat is lightly browned and no longer pink. Drain grease and set aside. Cook pasta according to package directions and drain. Spread pasta into the prepared casserole pan. Mix spaghetti sauce with beef and spread over the pasta, then top with cheese. Bake 20 minutes, or until cheese is lightly browned and sauce is bubbling. Yield: approximately 4-6 servings.

Find more recipes at [Petticoats & Pistols](#)
or on [Shanna's website](#)

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The Keepsake

A Tales from the Kissing Tree Short Story

by KAREN WITEMEYER

© Karen Witemeyer

The Kissing Tree is a multigenerational novella collection. All the stories center around a giant oak tree where courting couples go to carve their initials. The heroine in Karen Witemeyer's story, *Inn for a Surprise*, is building an inn near the legendary kissing tree—a romantic destination she plans to market to the ladies who read her *Tales from the Kissing Tree* column published in *Lippincott's* literary magazine. The initials carved in her beloved tree serve as the inspiration for her successful series. The story that follows is just such a tale . . .

1889 – Oak Springs, TX

“Alvin? I’m home.” Mabel Cassidy closed the front door behind her, untied her bonnet strings, and hung her sensible straw hat on the hall tree. It sported a touch of lace around the brim but no flowers or bows.

Her husband didn’t care for all the rigmarole of modern millinery, so Mabel curtailed her more feminine headdress whims to please him. She compensated with excessively lacy handkerchiefs and embroidered shawls. A woman needed a touch of romanticism in her life, after all, and heaven knew, Alvin Cassidy would not be supplying it.

Her husband was a good man. An able provider. Dependable. Principled. One couldn’t find a more godly Christian. Sentimentality eluded him, however. She loved him anyway, of course. Just as he loved her despite her sass and vinegar. She wasn’t afraid to speak her mind, and her husband better gird his loins, for she intended to do just that.

She strode down the hall toward their bedroom at the back of the house. “You better have a good reason for pulling me out of my literary society meeting. You know how much I love a healthy debate, and I nearly had those two Clovis women backed into a corner when that boy brought your note around.” Mabel shoved the bedroom door open. “Really, Alvin. You demand I come home at once, then you don’t even put in an appearance when I arrive? I’ve half a mind to march right back to—” Her tirade dissolved like wet salt when her gaze hit the bed.

Her keepsake box sat in the middle of the mattress. Open. With a note in her husband’s scrawl propped against it.

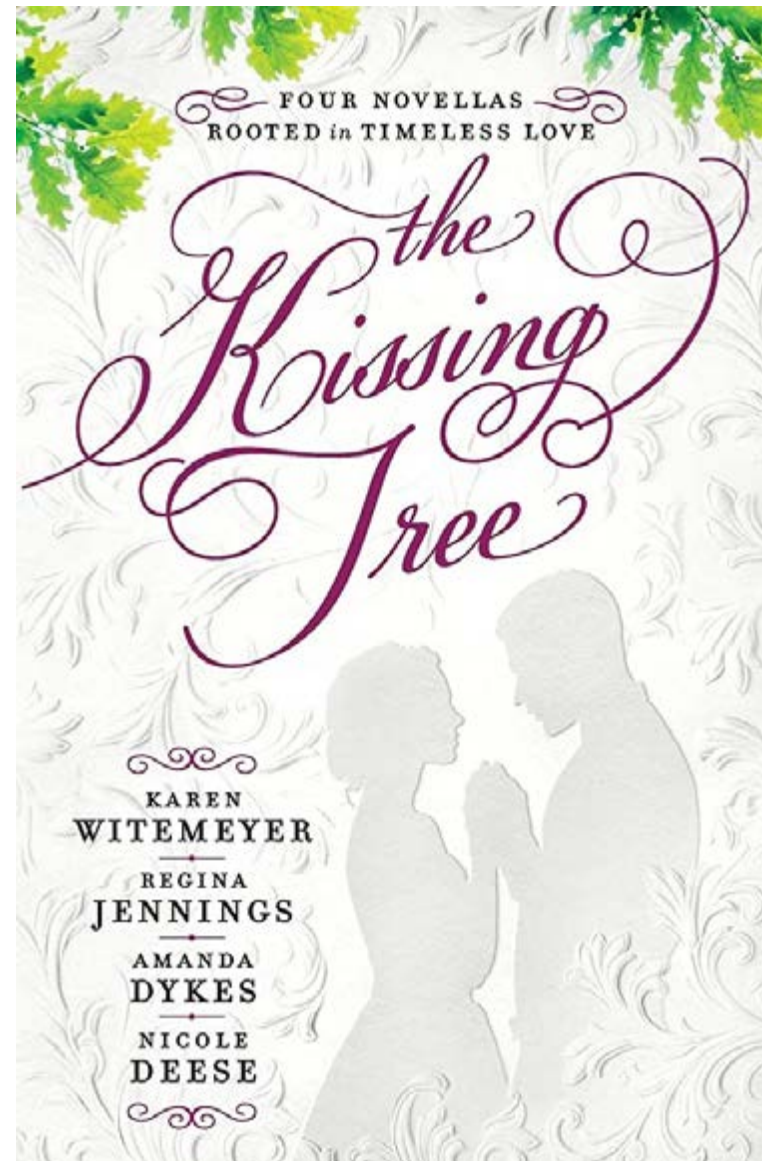
What on earth?

She glanced around the room for her husband, but of course, he wasn’t there. Why would he leave a note if he were? Then again, why would he send for her if he wasn’t going to be here? Alvin was nothing if not sensible, yet nothing about this situation made a lick of sense.

Knees feeling a tad wobbly, Mabel lowered herself to the edge of the bed and reached for the note.

Wear this ribbon in your hair and come find me in the place I first kissed you.

22 Stunned, Mabel lifted her gaze from the note to the box



and found a green ribbon dangling over the edge. She reached for it, threading the tattered satin through her fingers. The green. Not the blue one she’d worn when she’d been baptized. Or the red one she’d kept from her mama’s collection after the dear lady passed away. He’d chosen the green one.

Did he actually remember what she’d been wearing that day? The day he’d chased her behind the schoolhouse, announced she was the girl for him, then kissed her right on the lips before she could say anything in reply? She’d been all of fourteen. He, seventeen. But true to his prediction, they’d married two years later.

Mabel raised a hand to her lips, the sweet memory coaxing a smile.

“Alvin Cassidy, you old coot,” she murmured in wonder. “You do remember.”

Feeling like a schoolgirl again, Mabel grabbed the ribbon and hurried over to her dressing table. She reached for her brush,

then hesitated at the sight of her gray hair plaited into a braided bun. A sixty-one-year-old woman did not go about town with hair down around her shoulders like a girl still in short skirts.

Mabel narrowed her eyes at her reflection and jutted her chin. A woman of one and sixty had lived enough to earn the right to indulge in a few eccentricities. If she wanted to wear her hair down, by golly, she would. Awash in memories of the young man she’d fallen in love with, she tugged pins free, undid her plaited bun, and pulled the brush through her hair.

Alvin had been a quiet, serious young man. Not the charismatic type to draw a girl’s attention. Yet he’d had a kindness about him that had drawn her into his circle. Tall and a bit on the thin side, he wasn’t particularly handsome, but she’d never forgotten the day she’d first caught him looking at her with manly interest. Mercy, but her stomach had fluttered like a bowl full of butterflies. The attention of a serious man focused solely on one gal was far more tantalizing than any fleeting attention a charmer could offer. She’d never looked at another boy after that day.

Pulling a top section of hair back from her face, Mabel tied it off with the green ribbon then examined herself in the mirror. The wave from her undone braid lent a bit of fullness to her thinning hair, and the style reminded her of younger days. She pinched her cheeks as schoolgirl fluttering assaulted her stomach at the thought of rendezvousing with her young man.

As she left the house, excitement bubbled through her, making her steps quick and her grin wide. She earned several odd glances and curious greetings as she bustled down the road to the old schoolhouse, but she never slowed. A fall breeze sifted her hair behind her and cooled her blushing cheeks as she entered the schoolyard, empty on a Saturday. Upon reaching the schoolhouse, nerves took hold and slowed her pace. She paused at the corner of the building, smoothed her bodice, and pressed a flat palm to her rioting belly.

Alvin waited on the other side of that wall. Her Alvin. The man she loved with all her heart. The man who apparently had a bit of romance in his old soul, after all. Now was not the time for hesitation. A gesture like this didn’t come around every day. And if she ended up looking the fool—well, it was worth the risk.

Slowly, she rounded the corner and spied her husband, dressed in his Sunday suit, hands in his pockets, feet kicking at the bricks at the base of the wall.

“Alvin?” she ventured.

He turned. Straightened. And smiled just as he had that day more than four decades ago. The years faded away, as he strode toward her. She didn’t see wrinkled skin or gray hair. She saw a boy of seventeen, young and virile as he reached for her hand.

“You came.” He smiled at her as if she’d just given him the greatest gift he could imagine.

And that’s when she knew. He loved her as much today as he had back then. Treasured her above all others. Found joy simply in being with her. The realization humbled her. Melted her heart. And made her appreciate the man she married, the one she had taken for granted far too often over the last forty-five years.

“Of course, I came,” she said, emotion thickening her voice

His gaze flicked to her hair, and his smile changed to something almost . . . roguish. His arm twined about her waist and clutched her close to his chest. She tipped her head back to keep his face in view.

“Mabel Cassidy,” he said, his voice rough and gravelly, yet the

heated look in his eyes made it roll over her like warm butter. “You’re still the gal for me.”

Then he kissed her. Only this was no hurried peck like the one bestowed by a seventeen-year-old boy. No this was the kiss of a man who’d had four and a half decades of practice. A man who knew how to take his time and savor a moment so that his woman could attach new memories to the ribbon that would go back into the keepsake box. Memories of a lifelong love with the man who’d been her partner, her rock, her best friend.

A bit unsteady on her feet when the kiss ended, Mabel reached for his arm. Alvin patted her hand into place then gestured toward the road. “Take a walk with me?”

Not quite trusting herself to form a coherent sentence, Mabel opted for a nod then happily strolled at her husband’s side. He didn’t say a word, but he didn’t have to. Silence lay comfortably upon them. When he turned off the road, however, and led her in the direction of the giant oak that had become the stuff of local romantic legend, she finally found her voice.

“The Kissing Tree?” Young people went there. Courting couples. Not those plagued with bursitis and bunions.

“Why not?” Alvin gave her a look that dared her to object. “Don’t see why the kids should have all the fun.”

The man was full of surprises today. Mabel grinned. “Lead on, Mr. Cassidy.”

He did. And more than that, he carved their initials into the Kissing Tree with all the skill of a master whittler. She used to fuss at him for leaving shavings all over the porch. Now she admired his skill with deep appreciation.

As they stood beneath the sweeping branches of that mighty oak, Mabel couldn’t help but think of how well the tree represented their love. It had started small but found fertile soil to put down roots. It grew over the years, weathered storms, and sheltered others beneath its branches. And now this tree would carry the legacy of their love into future generations.

“I love you, Mabel.” Alvin’s quiet words brought a tear to her eye.

“I love you, too.” She squeezed his arm and laid her head against his shoulder.

He kissed the top of her head then reached above them to slice off an oak leaf with his knife.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“Fetching you a new keepsake for that box of yours.” He handed her the leaf.

She held it to her bosom, her heart bursting at the seams with love for this man. “You’re my greatest keepsake, Alvin Cassidy. I’m never giving you up.”

“That’s good,” he said with a wink. “Cause I plan to pester you for at least another twenty years.”

“Better make it thirty,” she said, her voice saucy.

“I’ll do my best, Miss Mabel.”

Which suited her just fine, because Alvin Cassidy’s best was fine, indeed.

* * *

I hope you enjoyed this tale from the Kissing Tree. Be sure to watch for Alvin and Mabel’s cameo appearance in Inn for a Surprise!

Blessings,
~Karen Witemeyer

[Inn for a Surprise- Available on Amazon](#)

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Excerpt from

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Heart
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Prologue

Sitting at her desk staring out the window at the gray January sky, love flowed through Rose Haddock as she thought of Josie, the daughter of her heart. Rose's fingers traced the delicate pink mother-of-pearl handled pistol nestled on a green velvet bed in its simple mahogany case. Even before she'd discovered the worn note inside the case's pocket, she'd been drawn to the pistol when she'd spotted it at the Bonner estate sale.

Rose believed people and objects often came into someone's life to teach a lesson or deliver a message. Since discovering the pistol, she'd known she was meant to continue its legacy with her sister Lily's only child and spitting image, Josie.

When she'd lost her sister, her promise to help raise Lily's then ten-year-old daughter had kept Rose going.

Lily, I'm worried about our girl. Since her divorce, she's closed herself off from love, and she's killing a part of herself.

Rose rubbed her hand against her breastbone, trying to ease the tightness and ache there. After digging antacids from her middle desk drawer and taking two, she waited for the pain to

subside. Having felt this way too often lately, she added calling Dr. Sackrison to her to-do list. That done, Rose's thoughts returned to the pistol and Josie.

The pistol had been created to encourage women to open their hearts to love. The problem was her ever-practical and logical niece would consider the pistol and its legend a fanciful, but fictional—and futile—tale. But if Rose talked to Josie in person, explained her concerns and why Josie needed love in her life, maybe her niece would understand.

Unfortunately, Josie's visits had grown few and far between in the last years. Last week when Rose had asked her to visit, the conversation had gone predictably. Work was crazy. Maybe in a couple months she could visit, but something told Rose she couldn't wait for her niece. What if instead of asking Josie to come to Oklahoma, Rose went to New York City? Surely if she visited, Josie would make time for her.

Dismissing her nagging chest discomfort, what she'd say to her niece tumbled through her head. How would she ever remember it all? Needing to organize her thoughts, she retrieved stationery and a pen. *Don't just write notes. Write Josie a letter.* Always one to listen to her inner voice, especially

when it spoke to her this emphatically, Rose started her letter. *My dearest Josie, First, stop wrinkling your nose and sighing at my addressing this letter to Josie rather than Jade. While you may go by your middle name now, to me you'll always be my little Josie. When I saw a beautiful, pink-handled pistol a month ago, it called to me. After buying the revolver, I discovered a letter inside the case. When I read it, I knew this beautiful piece was meant to be with you. Now reach into the case's pocket and read the note resting there.*

Rose chuckled, imagining Josie reading that sentence. Her stubborn niece wouldn't put this note aside yet. She'd want to finish what she started before turning to the other note. *Josie, I know you're thinking you'll read the other note after you finish mine, but do as I say. Read the other one right now, young lady.*

Now that you've read the other note, don't wrinkle your nose again, Josephine. I know true love isn't the answer to all problems. But I'm worried about you, and it's time I say so. In voicing my concerns, I believe I'm doing what your mom would have if she were alive. The divorce has changed you. In some ways for the better, but in many for the worse. You always possessed an open, loving heart, and saw the best in people. You believed you could do anything you set your mind to. But since your divorce, I've seen a change in your spirit. Now I see a woman who's so afraid of making a mistake, she overthinks every decision. She fears being hurt, so she no longer trusts her judgment about people. I know you, and you're thinking you missed signs with Eric. Maybe you did, or maybe he was good at hiding what he didn't want you to see.

As you discovered, loving someone can bring us pain so dark we think there's no escape. When I lost your mother, I foolishly believed not ever having her in my life would've been better than dealing with my grief. But without her, I'd have missed years of love, memories, and what she taught me. I also never would've received my life's greatest gift—you.

Living shut off from the world may save you from pain, but it will rob you of joy, and that's not being truly alive. You can't give up on love. I believe love, even if it doesn't last, is never wasted. What love we create lives on long after we're gone, working magic in the world.

As the note says, accept the gift...or not. I'm hoping you choose hope and love.

Chapter One

"I was surprised when your name was on Raelynn's recommended contractor list. Did you get tired of ranch life and raising cattle?" Josie asked.

"Are you kidding? Not in this lifetime," Dalton Kelley said, filling his voice with what he hoped passed for a lighthearted tone. "But with droughts, natural disasters, and uncertain prices, ranching's unpredictable."

Or cattle rustlers could steal nearly half a herd throwing a body into financial chaos. This job would tide Dalton over and keep him from missing another mortgage payment until

he received the insurance money. "Most ranchers take a second job now and again to keep a healthy emergency fund for rough patches."

Dalton glanced at his computer monitor. Though Josie had tried to tame her red hair into a frumpy bun, strands had escaped, forming a halo of fire around her face. Delicate high cheekbones accentuated her wide green eyes. Those eyes could capture a man and draw him in even before he realized she'd lassoed him. Dalton released his breath in a long, slow, controlled exhale.

How odd that holding on to the Done Roamin' Ranch that had been in his family for generations rested on convincing a woman he'd dated as a teenager, Josie Buchanan, to hire him.

From age ten until she'd left for college, Josie had spent every summer, a week at Christmas, and every spring break with her Aunt Rose. The last time he saw Josie, they'd sat by the creek on his ranch. He'd joked about how she should attend Oklahoma State instead of going to school in New York. Only he hadn't been joking.

"With all your ranch responsibilities, do you have time to devote to this renovation?" she asked, bringing his thoughts back to the present.

"Absolutely." It would take time management and sticking to a schedule, but he could do it. Waking early and staying up late to see to the chores might run him ragged, but he'd survive on two hours' sleep if that's what it took.

"Good, because despite our past association and all you did for my aunt and uncle over the years, if you aren't putting my job first, I'll find someone who will."

Past association? Was that how she saw him? He thought they'd been more. Each other's first kiss for sure, and she'd been his first love.

"I thought the world of Rose and George."

When his folks had retired to Florida, the couple had become his adopted local parents, inviting him for Sunday dinner and making sure he wasn't alone on holidays. He smiled, thinking of fishing with George. And Rose. Whenever he'd gone to mow the lawn, shovel snow, or see to whatever needed doing, she'd had brownies waiting and had insisted they chat. Dalton smiled again. Invariably those talks had always turned into her talking about Josie and grilling him about why he hadn't settled down. "I think of George whenever I use the fishing rod he gave me, and I'll never have a brownie again without thinking of Rose. Nobody's compares with hers."

"Do a good job, and I might share her secret recipe with you." "Now that's incentive."

The irony of their situation hit him. The house Josie inherited had belonged to her family since 1911, but she couldn't sell the priceless gift fast enough. How could she do that when she'd spent much of her childhood there? He couldn't understand her not feeling a connection to the land and ancestors who'd shaped her.

He was the opposite because he couldn't imagine living anywhere but his family's land. Hopefully he'd raise children there one day should he find a woman who loved him enough to live with the financial uncertainty of ranch life.

Josie cleared her throat, pulling his attention back to her.

"Once we deal with these final details, I'll send the contract for you to sign."

"I'm grateful for the job, Josie."

When her posture stiffened, her face scrunched up, and her eyebrows formed a V above her nose, he realized his mistake.

"I go by my middle name, Jade, now."

Rose had never said why Josie had started using her middle name, other than she felt it better suited her career and the image she wanted to portray. But what the heck did that mean?

"Sorry about that, but having known you for years as Josie, it'll take time to get used to calling you Jade."

"I'm sure you'll find it easier than you think. Now back to the project. I want to emphasize how important my timeline is. I absolutely—" Her phone pinged, indicating she'd received a text. Without saying anything to him, she grabbed her phone, read the message, and typed a reply.

After finishing, she said, "Sorry about that, but back to our conversation. With the information you gave me about the house, I feel my timeline is on target. What I need from you is reassurance you can finish in the allotted time."

Knowing she could see and hear him, Dalton resisted the urge to laugh and say didn't she know there were no guarantees in house renovations or life? "That's the plan, but—"

"Good," she said, cutting him off. "I can't be absent from the office longer than a month."

"You're taking a leave from work?" He'd assumed she'd oversee the project from New York and they'd connect either like this, via texts, or on phone calls.

She chuckled. "Certainly not. I'll be working remotely, but with finishing the fall catalog and photo shoots for a new marketing campaign, I don't dare stay away longer."

He nodded, not sure what she expected. Yeah, he got it. She was a big wig the company couldn't live without. But how crucial could things be in fashion?

"Just remember, as George used to say, there are only two guarantees in life—death and taxes," Dalton joked. "Unexpected issues come up with turn-of-the-century houses when walls start coming down."

A knock sounded on Jade's door, followed by a voice apologizing for the interruption and saying her signature was required. Jade muted their call. As she saw to the paperwork, Dalton saw visions of what working with her would be like. He'd twiddle his thumbs while she dealt with other business, but he'd be expected to hop to when she needed him. Yup, her time mattered more than his. Had she become an everything-was-an-emergency-to-be-handled-in-five-minutes person that believed the world revolved around her?

When her attention returned to him, Dalton said, "Do you want to call me back? Obviously you're busy, and I have other things I could see to."

"I'll let calls go to voicemail until we finish." She set her phone aside where he couldn't see it. "Though I've never owned a house, researching renovating older ones on the internet made it clear unexpected issues can arise."

If she'd never owned a home, she had a landlord to see to problems. Heck, she probably hadn't ever replaced a light

bulb much less been involved with serious renovations.

"Everyone thinks they've accounted for surprises, but a simple thing like a contractor's other jobs can mess up the schedule."

"If that happens, I'll hire someone who makes my job a priority."

Had she forgotten Loksi lacked a Walmart, McDonalds, or more than one plumber and electrician? Looked like reality would come hard and fast once she arrived. "That's your choice. I'll do everything I can to keep us on track. Sometimes materials are on backorder or shipping gets delayed by weather in the winter."

"That'll be my problem since I'll be doing the ordering to keep watch on costs."

More power to her, but he'd best warn Jerry at Everything for the House to double up on vitamins. From his interactions with Jade so far, working with her would be an exercise in patience.

"The last issue we need to discuss is your payment schedule," she said.

"What's to discuss?" He wiped his sweaty palms on his jeans. He needed the first half of his fee now. "Paying half at the start and the remainder at completion is standard."

"I've found with vendors that breaking payment into more installments associated with hitting targets ensures we remain on schedule. I suggest four payments associated with completing certain objectives."

No way. "That won't work for me."

"Should I find someone else?"

Dalton kept his breathing even and his features blank. He sure hoped he was a better poker player than Jade. "If you want to start over talking to contractors, that's up to you, but don't count on starting next week since Billy Bishop may have lined up another job."

He stared straight ahead, waiting, as he watched the gears turn in her mind. She hated backing down, but he'd bet she'd detest more her precious timeline getting off track before she ever started.

"What if we split the difference?" she asked.

"Deal."

"I think we're done, unless you have questions."

Having helped his father over the years with smaller renovations such as enlarging their kitchen, he knew what to expect with this job. "I'll see you Monday."

"I have a catalog photo shoot I can't miss, so I'll see you Tuesday morning at eight."

Something told Dalton he'd best rest up and increase his vitamins because working with Jade would test more than his patience.



Order [Aiming for His Heart](#) today!

Author SPOTLIGHT



The first blog Julie Benson wrote was for *Petticoats and Pistols* as a guest author. When asked to join the amazing group of authors in August 2017, she couldn't believe her good fortune. Since then, she's faced her fears about blogging (mainly that she'll run out of ideas), grown in ways she'd never imagined, and is continually thankful for her fellow fillies' support and encouragement.

Julie lived in the Chicago suburbs through elementary school, before moving to Dubuque, Iowa. Even then, she loved to read and spin her own stories. While attending Iowa State University, she went to a roller-skating party where she met the man who became her husband. When he graduated a year before her, she followed him to Texas.

After receiving a BS in Sociology from the University of Texas at Dallas, Julie worked as a caseworker until choosing to stay home to raise her children. Then, to challenge her mind and preserve her sanity, she pursued a writing career. After writing historical romance and romantic suspense novels that won't see the light of day, Julie wrote a contemporary romance with a cowboy hero. That became *Big City Cowboy*, her first sale to Harlequin.

Now that her three sons have left the nest in Dallas, when not writing light-hearted contemporary western romances filled with friendship and humor set in small-town America, Julie works on home improvement projects, fosters dogs, and visits Texas wineries with her husband. She loves hearing from readers. Contact her at julie@juliabenson.net.

Or visit her website: <http://www.juliabenson.net>



Julie's Progressive Dinner Chicken

In *Aiming for His Heart*, the chicken dish Jade makes for Dalton is a favorite of mine. I got this recipe from a dear lady, Judy Hoffman, who made it for my family after the birth of our third son.



INGREDIENTS

- (8) Chicken breasts (I pound mine slightly so the chicken isn't as thick)
- Sliced Swiss Cheese
- Cream of Chicken Soup
- ½ cup white wine or chicken broth
- 1-2 cups Pepperidge Farm Stuffing
- ¼-½ cup butter (melted)

DIRECTIONS

- Place chicken in 9x13 baking dish.
- Place Swiss cheese on top of chicken. Mix soup with wine or broth and pour over chicken and cheese. Sprinkle stuffing mix on top. Pour melted butter over stuffing.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 50-55 minutes.

Find more recipes at Petticoats & Pistols

Get to Know the Author JULIE BENSON

What don't you feel guilty spending money on?

I never feel guilty about spending money or taking the time for massages with my massage therapist. Before getting them on a regular basis, I struggled with neck and shoulder pain because that's where I carry stress. I also have a bad habit of hunching when I write which doesn't help my body. Massages and yoga help me combat stress and too much sitting at the keyboard.

What would you buy first if you won the lottery?

I'd pay outstanding vet balances for the rescue I foster dogs with. Adoption fees fail to cover what rescues spend on a dog. And that is with local veterinarians giving them a discount. The bills for sick or injured animals are often huge. Like for the four puppies I'm currently fostered. Sick with Parvo, a virus that kills twenty percent of those infected, these puppies were hospitalized for a week, receiving fluids and medications through IVs. Then after making my donation, I'd buy a house in the country.

Do you enjoy the outdoors? Camping? Hiking?

I enjoy the outdoors, but not camping. My husband says my idea of roughing it is a hotel without room service! But I love taking walks in the country. I did a lot of that recently when I visited family in Iowa. When I stayed with my soon-to-be daughter-in-law in Florida, I loved walking on the beach at least twice a day. Despite that, even if I walk with the dogs, walking around my neighborhood bores me.

What is your worst habit?

I struggle to let go of anything sentimental or that could be useful. If I hadn't started watching Hoarders years ago, I'd be in trouble. That show motivated me to start sorting through boxes of items from my boys' childhood—schoolwork, clothes, toys. I've been amazed at the volume of stuff I've recycled, donated, or thrown out.

Could you live off the grid?

I'm not sure I could, but I'd like to try. Sure, I want my family to be able to reach me in an emergency, but I'm often overwhelmed by emails, social media, and the fact that anyone can reach me anywhere, anytime. I find all this connectedness makes it hard to completely unwind. My idea of paradise is a house in the country with my hubby, dogs, horses, chickens, a few cows, and spotty internet service.

Do you collect anything?

I collect pink depression glass in Mayfair, the pattern of dishes my grandmother gave me. However, since I've collected enough to use at dinner, including servicing pieces and glasses, it's hard to find pieces I don't have. I love angels and have those scattered around the house enjoy collecting old or unique boxes. Now if ask my husband, he'd say I collect dogs...but we won't talk about that!

Do you like to keep background noise on or do you work in silence?

Silence drives me crazy. I tried writing in a library and discovered my ADD brain can't focus in quiet because my mind wandered. I write in Starbucks. For me, the café noise blends into the background and forces me to focus. I've also learned being out with people helps fight depression. I know it makes no sense, but that's how my brain works. Along those lines, I don't write my stories linearly. I write them like a puzzle, often jumping ahead to write scenes I know will be in the book. Somehow it eventually comes together the way a puzzle does. That was a huge turning point for me when I quit fighting how my brain works and embraced it instead.

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

There are so many things I've seen that I would love to make if I learned to weld. For example, I've seen Christmas trees, reindeer and wreaths made from horseshoes. I also love metal yard art such as cacti, armadillos, and donkeys. But unfortunately, I'm a klutz who's always bumping into something. Whenever I use electric hedge trimmers, I cut the cord. That makes me think learning to weld, an activity involving a blow torch and hot metal might not be a wise idea.

Would you rather be able to fly or be invisible?

For a minute, I thought invisible. Then I remembered the saying about eavesdroppers never hearing anything good about themselves. So forget that! I'd rather be able to fly. First, it's faster than driving. I'd love to get places faster, especially to visit friends and family. Flying would also allow me to go anywhere. As Dr. Emmett Brown says in Back to the Future, "Roads? Where we're going, we don't need roads."

What would you like to be known for?

I'd like to be known for being an honest person who cared for those people and animals around me, while trying to make my small corner of the world better.



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Excerpt from

PISTOL *Perfect* by Jessie Gussman

“Are you sure that’s solid?” Mable Lefrak eyed the barnyard muck dubiously.

As a large animal vet, she didn’t notice the tangy smell of cow manure that hung heavy in the air, but she’d been in her share of mucky places and, to her at least, the slop in Carol Smith’s barnyard looked like it could swallow a person whole.

“Yes. I’m quite sure. I had my nephew put that box in the shed last fall. He walked right over without any problems.”

There was a difference in precipitation between the fall and spring seasons in North Dakota, which could have a rather large impact on whether Mable was able to walk across it, or whether she got sucked into Middle Earth.

But Carol had mentioned she had an antique that quite possibly had belonged to the great Annie Oakley in the shed. Animals might be Mable’s first love, but anything Annie Oakley was a close second. She just hadn’t been able to figure out how to make a living by reading and studying about the famed sharpshooter. So she became a vet instead.

That made as much sense as pretty much everything else in her life so far.

“Alright. If you say so,” Mable said, even though the reason she chose to proceed had more to do with getting her hands on something Annie might have touched and less on Carol

Smith’s word that the ground between the edge of the barn where they currently stood and the shed that housed the box was solid.

Not that she didn’t trust Carol. After all, she’d agreed to move in with her to help her out until her nephew was able to move in, or, from what Mable understood, move her out, since the nephew had a business in Chicago and didn’t want to move to North Dakota.

“I’m sure you’ll be fine.”

Famous last words. Except they weren’t as Mable picked her way carefully over the cushy, but firm, ground.

It didn’t help that Billy, the Highland steer who typically hung out in the town of Sweet Water, but, for some reason, had chosen to visit Carol today, stood in a spot where his hooves had sunk in so the mud was up to his knees.

“What are you doing here, Billy?” Mable said as she moved past him. She’d have to ask Carol after she made it back. Billy didn’t really belong to anyone. The whole town took care of him and, in return, he brought in tourism dollars, since he’d developed a bit of a reputation as a matchmaking steer.

“You’re wasting your time here,” Mable murmured. But Billy didn’t seem to care and kept on chew his cud, his eyes half-closed.

She wished she were as calm as he was, but she couldn’t shake the feeling that the mud in the barnyard was a lot deeper than anyone thought and that one wrong step would have her sinking up to her armpits.

She had to breathe a sigh of relief when she made it to the storage shed. She’d never actually heard of anyone getting stuck in a barnyard and needing to be pulled out by a crane or something, but she’d watched cows step through mud up to their underbellies and a farmer that she’d worked with once had lost a shoe in deep muck.

Still, all she had to do was grab the box and walk back and she could say she survived.

Opening the door of the shed, she peered in.

“There aren’t any lights,” Carol called from her - safe - spot on the other side of the barnyard.

“Okay,” Mable called, distracted. The shed was piled floor to ceiling with boxes and bags and oddly shaped items that looked like they’d been packed in by a professional. Not a centimeter of space was wasted.

“It’s on the right. It’s about this big.”

Mable looked over her shoulder. Carol had her hands up, indicating the box wasn’t super huge. She turned back around, looking for something about that size on her right.

Stacks of boxes and some things covered with a sheet met her gaze as it slid sideways. She bit down on her lips, squint-

ing in the dim light, her heart beating just a touch faster than normal. She could be within seconds of touching something that once belonged to Annie Oakley.

There. On top of a pile of boxes, uncovered, alone, a deep mahogany rectangular box resided, almost like a queen on her throne.

Reigning over a barnyard of muck and a shed full of...whatever a person who was almost seventy took with them when they moved from Oklahoma to North Dakota.

Mable stepped toward the box, picking it up reverently. Annie Oakley could have touched this very box.

Almost overcome by curiosity about what, exactly, was in the box, she resisted the urge. She couldn’t open it without Carol.

Instead, she tucked it carefully under her arm and walked out of the shed, closing the large, wooden doors carefully behind her. If the things were worth moving from Oklahoma to North Dakota, they were worth taking the time to make sure the doors were closed and they wouldn’t be exposed to the elements.

Maybe it was her excitement over the box, or maybe it was the fact that Billy had moved a little to the left from where he’d been standing and she didn’t notice it right away. Maybe it was just something that was bound to happen.

Whatever it was, Mable took a slightly different path 33

through the barnyard on the way back from the shed. An unfortunate decision on her part since she was just a little over halfway through when she took a step...and the ground gave way beneath her foot.

Mable's stomach dropped like a hot potato and she let out a yelp, automatically moving her other foot forward to try to catch her fall.

Pointless, since that foot sank deeply into the wet manure as well.

Manure wasn't quicksand, but for some reason, that's where Mable's mind went as she frantically tried to pull her feet out. She'd heard that if a person fell into quicksand, the more they struggled, the deeper and faster they sank.

But how could she not try to get herself out?

Clutching the box - she wasn't going to survive man-eating manure only to lose her treasure - she pulled up on first on leg, then another, the manure sucking and grasping at her feet.

She leaned forward and put her free hand on the ground in front of her, her heart pounding and her breath coming in shallow gasps. If only Billy could talk. She'd ask him to give her a horn and pull her out.

Pausing for a fraction of a second to gather her strength, she pulled as hard as she could and her foot popped up.

Her shoe did not.

Ugh. She didn't want to lose her shoe.

Still holding tight to the box, she was able to pull her other foot out, a layer of manure an inch thick sticking like a clay blanket to her entire lower leg and foot, but at least her shoe remained in its proper position on her foot.

On her hand and knees, she turned, shoving her free arm down into the hole where her first leg had been, fishing blindly around in the muck, trying to feel anything that could be her shoe.

She had her arm in up to her armpit and couldn't feel anything except the surprisingly cool muck.

The stench was overpowering, even for someone used to working in barnyards all across central North Dakota.

Something touched her from behind and she fell forward. Unwilling to let go of the box to catch herself, she managed to turn her head so she landed with her left cheek in the muck. What in the world?

Twisting her head, she saw a big, furry body innocently standing directly behind her. It must have been Billy, trying to scratch his head on her rear end, which had probably been sticking up in the air a good bit higher than he was used to seeing rear ends stick, that had pushed her forward.

She could hardly get upset with him. Billy was as sweet and good-natured as a cow could be.

Still, she wasn't really feeling any good-will toward him as she pushed herself - carefully - to her feet, manure covering practically every inch of her front from her head down to her, exposed, toes.

"Thanks, Billy," she muttered, more than a little sarcastically, as she turned intending to stomp the rest of the way across the barnyard.

But she hadn't even taken a step before she stopped short.

A man, tall with deep blue eyes, stood in front of her, and, if she were any judge, his lips were pressed tightly together to keep from laughing at her.

She probably was a sight, but it still irritated.

But, she had to give the man credit. He did not smile, although he did not offer to shake, either, as he introduced himself. "I'm James, Carol's nephew."

It could have been her imagination, but it felt like, at his words, the box in her hands vibrated.

Odd.



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Author SPOTLIGHT



Jessie Gussman is the newest filly, joining the Petticoats and Pistol family in October of 2021. It's been a fun year and a half as she's gotten to know the wonderful authors in the filly family and their amazing and engaged blog readers!

USA Today bestselling author Jessie Gussman writes sweet and inspirational romance from her farm in central Virginia. Having attended, but never graduating from the school of hard knocks, Jessie uses real life on the farm to inspire her cowboy, rural and blue-collar fiction.

When she's not chasing kids, cows and the occasional roll-away hay bale, Jessie enjoys wading in Naked Creek and not cleaning her house. Most of the time her main goal is to keep from catching herself on fire...again.

If you enjoy fun stories with vivid characters showcasing strong families with a ribbon of faith tying everything together, you might enjoy Jessie's books.

Visit Jessie's Website: <https://jessiegussman.com/>

1972 Top Hits

SONG	ARTIST
Lean on Me	Bill Withers
Song Sung Blue	Neil Diamond
The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face	Roberta Flack
Take It Easy	The Eagles
Rocket Man	Elton John
The Candy Man	Sammy Davis Jr
Burning Love	Elvis Presley
Brandy	Looking Glass
I Can See Clearly Now	Johnny Nash
American Pie	Don McClean
Delta Dawn	Tanya Tucker
Down by the Lazy River	The Osmonds
The Happiest Girl in the Whole USA	Donna Fargo

Jessie's Texas Sheet Cake

INGREDIENTS

1 cup water
1 cup butter
4 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
2 cups flour
2 cups sugar
1 tsp baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup buttermilk
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
Frosting:
6 tablespoons milk
4 tablespoons cocoa powder
1/2 cup butter
1/2 pound powdered sugar

DIRECTIONS

Put water, butter, cocoa powder into a sauce pan and heat, stirring occasionally, until the butter is melted. In a mixing bowl, mix together flour, sugar, baking soda and salt. Add the chocolate mixture and mix well. Mix together the buttermilk, eggs and vanilla, then add to the chocolate mixture, mixing well. Pour into a sheet cake pan and cook at 350 for 20 minutes.

Frosting:

In a saucepan put milk, cocoa powder and butter. Heat, stirring occasionally until the butter is melted. Add the powdered sugar and mix until there are no lumps.

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

Get to Know the Author JESSIE GUSSMAN

What is your worst habit?

I know I'm the last author to do this interview, but I'm pretty sure no one else is going to pick this question. We always want to put our best foot forward, right? But, I do have some bad habits. I have a tendency to get immersed in things. I always love whatever it is I'm doing, and I don't want to stop to do anything else (especially pesky little things such as laundry and cooking dinner). But, probably my worst habit (other than my Dr. Pepper addiction) is my tendency to see clutter and want to get rid of it NOW. So, my idea of cleaning is putting things where I can't see them (in cupboards, the trash can, under the rug, under the bed, even in the oven) even if that's not where they go. It drives my family crazy, and they tell me I haven't actually "cleaned" anything. But getting rid of the clutter makes me feel better.

Are you a spender or a saver?

I am a saver all the way. I can be painfully frugal. I hate shopping, and I don't really enjoy getting new things (so odd, right?) because I get attached to my old things and don't want to change. The exception to this is going out to eat. Maybe because I cooked so much when my kids were young - we homeschooled, and for some reason, my kids expected to eat AT LEAST three times each day. I did teach them all to cook and assigned them a day where they were responsible for the meals, but I still had to oversee everything. Anyway, there is just something so decadent about going to a restaurant, getting to choose whatever I want from a list of delicious food, having someone bring it to me without me having to lift a finger and not needing to worry about cleaning up the mess. It makes you feel so spoiled. :)

Could you live off the grid?

Yes. Absolutely. And I would love to do it, too. When we first moved to Virginia, our electricity went out at least once every two weeks or so. I missed hot water showers, but otherwise, I am very happy with no electricity. Of course, it would be difficult to be a writer in today's world without internet, so there's that.

What gets you excited or gives you energy?

I'm a pretty flat line emotionally. I don't get super excited, but I also don't often get down, either. I get recharged by being alone, preferably outside. I love watching the sunrise and sunset, sitting on my front porch and listening to the cows and horses eat, seeing the first blooms of spring or smelling the fragrant air of summer. I love watching storms and listening to the thunder, seeing the lightning. Once I was up at one of our laying houses, which sits on a hill, when a bad thunderstorm went through. There wasn't so much thunder as there were huge gusts of wind. It was such a powerful display of God's amazing glory. I'm not sure if excited is the right word, but I was definitely amazed and in awe of my Creator.

What is the last thing you do before sleeping?

Every year I read my Bible completely through. This year I'm listening to it on audio. So, after I get in bed at night, I put my audio on and listen to my daily Bible reading. It's a really great way to fill my mind with God's Word right before bed. After I turn my audio off, I pray through my prayer list, then I just talk to God until I drift off.

Name three things that make you happy.

I hope my children don't see this, because I always told them that happiness is a choice. I believe that, but there are definitely things that make us smile. I love watching the miracle of birth. Whether it's kittens, calves, foals, puppies, or even watching chicks hatch, seeing a new life emerge into the world never, ever gets old for me and makes me smile every time. Beyond that, I love rainy days and sunny days and brisk breezes, falling leaves and falling snow, the smell of newborn babies and cow breath, wild flowers and graveyards, freshly made cheese and sweet, yeasty rolls with lots of butter, blueberries and strawberries and wild raspberries from the woods of PA, watching foals and calves play in the pasture, listening to my children sing in harmony, soft candlelight on snug winter nights, the smell of wood smoke, thunderstorms, good books, laughing with my kids, sitting on the front porch and watching the sunset with that sweet ache you feel after a hard day of work, hymns in harmony and a beautiful happily ever after.

If you had unlimited storage for one thing, what would it be?

Books. And plants. And hymnals. Seriously, I mentioned we homeschool, so we have a ton of books. Maybe more. Everywhere I've lived, I've had a ton of bookshelves and they've always been full.

What would you like to be known for?

There is nothing that makes me happier than to have someone say to me that my books brought them closer to the Lord, made them think and make changes in their life, inspired them to be a better Christian wife and mother, encouraged them in their walk with the Lord or helped them develop one. I'd love to be known as someone who pointed people to Jesus.



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Annie Oakley Quiz Answers

Answers:

1. Phoebe
2. Ohio
3. The wolves
4. A shooting competition
5. Sitting Bull
6. 50
7. 8
8. 6
9. 0
10. 15,000



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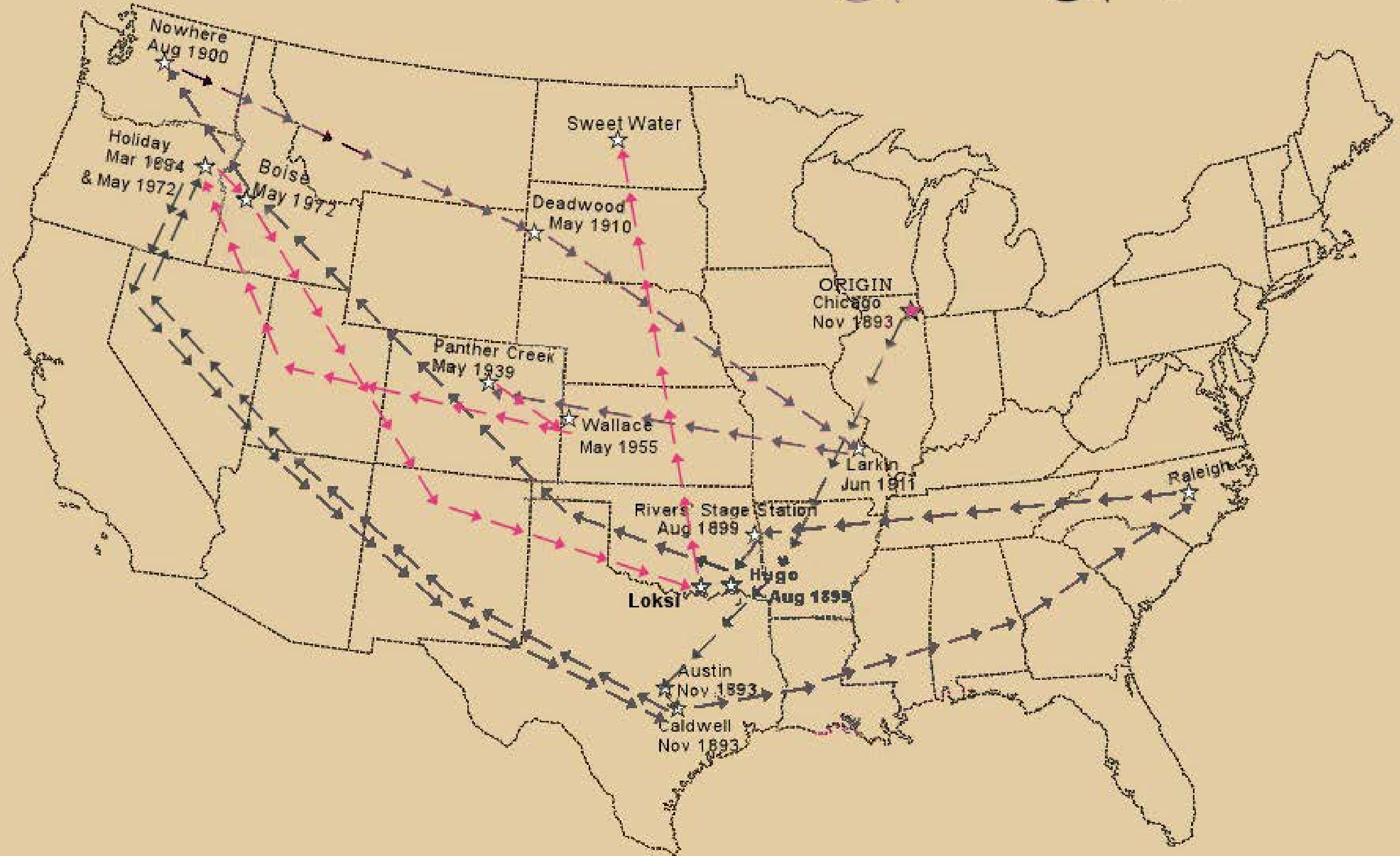


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the Pink Pistol SISTERHOOD



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

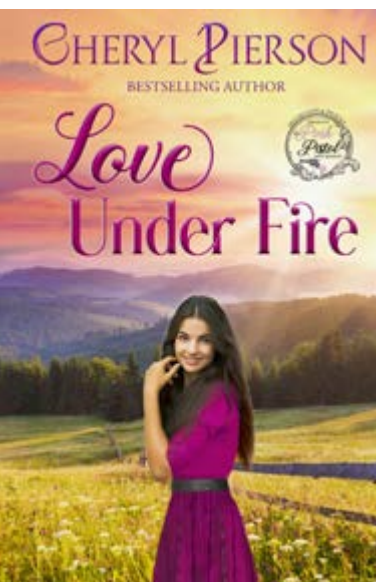
A pistol, a mule, and a promised mining job lure Rena Burke to Oregon. She might wear trousers and work with men, but Rena secretly longs to be appreciated as a woman. Too bad the man she admires believes her to be a dangerous influence on his young daughter.

[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.

[Available April 20, 2023](#)

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.

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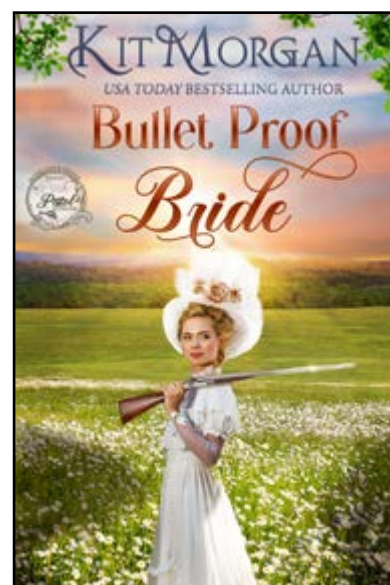


BULLET PROOF Bride

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](#)

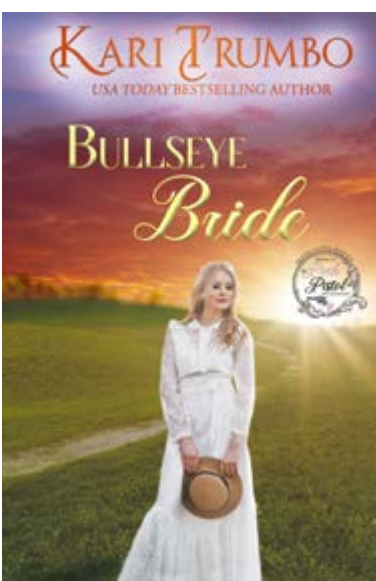


ONE SHOT AT Love

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](#)

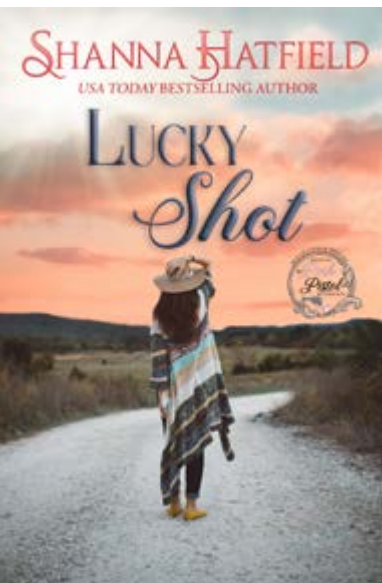
ARMED & Marvelous

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.

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LUCKY Shot

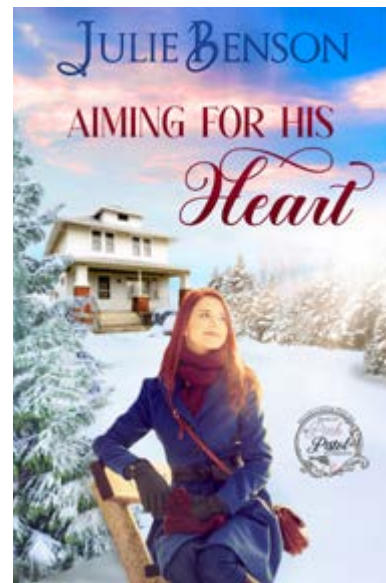
1972 - Boise, Idaho

She's a nurse who accepts no nonsense from her patients. He's a war veteran fighting wounds and his attraction to her. When a legendary pistol gives them common ground, will a lucky shot lead to love?

[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?

[Available June 30, 2023](#)

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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