



Moon, sky, stars . . .
Lacy's land was like an acre of heaven.

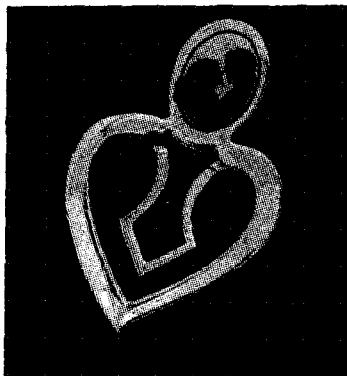
TOP OF THE MOON

Rena McKay



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"And Why Do You Want the Property?"

Lacy asked. She was getting the uncomfortable feeling that little about the property . . . or herself . . . would remain a secret from this dark-eyed man.

"I don't really think that's relevant." Ward Falconer's manner was suddenly stiff. "The company I represent is prepared to pay a reasonable sum."

"What kind of company?"

"Logging."

Realization of his intentions for the property dawned on Lacy, and with it came both indignation and anger. "You want to *log* my

"I don't really think that's relevant." Ward Falconer's manner was suddenly stiff. "The company I represent is prepared to pay a reasonable sum."

"The property indignation and anger is not for sale."

RENA MCKAY

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TOP OF THE MOON

Rena Mckay



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**To Bill and Sabrina,
who are my special gift from God**

TOP OF THE MOON

Chapter One

Lacy Purcell rapped lightly on the metal door of the compact trailer. When the door opened she lifted the sack tucked under her left arm. "Hi! I brought over another supply of wood scraps for Alan."

Ginny Haverland's mouth formed a glum smile. "Great. We'll smother them in wild dandelions and have them for dinner. Along with some of our fantastic, home-grown herb tea."

Ginny opened the door wider, and Lacy stepped inside. Ginny's husband, Alan, was sitting at the small dinette at the front of the cramped trailer. He was staring morosely at what Lacy suspected was a cup of the aforementioned tea, which she knew from personal experience could most kindly be described as "unique."

"Anything wrong?" Lacy inquired, noting the dispirited expressions.

"Alan got laid off from his part-time job at the plywood mill today."

Alan flicked a torn envelope lying on the dinette. "We got a notice denying our latest septic site application. We've had so many holes dug on that property for the inspector to look at that the place looks like a bombed-out war zone."

"And I just found out that I'm pregnant."

"Ginny, that's terrific!" A little less certainly, with a glance at Alan, Lacy added, "Isn't it?"

"Yes, yes, it is." Alan jumped up and hugged his wife, and some of the tenseness left her face. "But that, along with everything else, has made us face some hard facts and come to a decision."

"We've finally realized that we're city people." Ginny smiled a little guiltily, as if she were confessing to something slightly disreputable. "We made a big mistake thinking we could come here to southern Oregon and turn ourselves into carefree earth-children. All our do-it-yourself projects turn out like this miserable tea we grew. This trailer is too small, and when the baby comes—"

"But it'll be different when you get your house built on your own property," Lacy protested.

Alan groaned. "That was our biggest mistake of all. When I think how dumb we were when we bought that five acres . . ." He shook his head.

"But it's such a beautiful site." Lacy had never been to the mountain acreage, but Ginny and Alan had always raved about its wild beauty.

"Sure, it's beautiful," Alan agreed. "Gorgeous view from the rocks. Towering trees. Wildflowers. Bubbling creek. Unfortunately, that's all we saw when we plunked down every cent we had to buy the place."

"We're city people," Ginny reminded Lacy. "In the city, water comes with a turn of the faucet, disappears with a pull of a plug. When you want electricity, you just flip a switch. We gave very little thought to the fact that out in the mountains it isn't that simple."

"Yeah. When we were looking at those trees we should have noticed how steep a slope they were growing on. When we were smelling the wildflowers, we should have realized that the soggy ground underneath would never qualify for septic site approval. And the creek only bubbles in the winter; it goes dry in the summer." Alan sounded thoroughly disgruntled, like a man who had just gotten a faceful of thorns while blithely sniffing the roses. "We should have noticed that the closest electric pole is miles away, and the power company charges by the *inch* to extend the lines."

"Without approval to install a septic disposal system, you can't even build on the property," Ginny explained. She took a deep breath and came out with the bottom line. "We've decided to go back to Los Angeles."

"So I won't be needing the wood scraps," Alan said, gesturing to the sack Lacy had brought.

The scraps were myrtlewood, a coastal tree noted for the mellow, gold-brown beauty of its wood. The irregular scraps were left over from the production of bowls and other myrtlewood items in the crafts shop connected with the store in Jacksonville where Lacy worked. Alan had been carving whimsical animal figures out of the scraps to pick up some extra money.

"We'll be leaving as soon as we can scrape together enough money to go," Ginny added.

Lacy knew how precarious their financial situation was. They had put all their savings into paying cash for the property, with the idealistic notion of being self-sufficient and owing no one. "You'll sell the property?" she asked.

Alan made a sound somewhere between a snort and a hoot. "If someone as dumb and optimistic as we were comes along to buy it and learn the hard way, the same as we did."