

Love Inspired® HISTORICAL

LINDA FORD
Dakota Father

A child to cherish



Dear Reader,

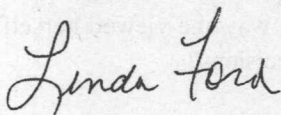
For years I have been fascinated with the way events from our past have such an influence on our lives. Some events are real and horrible, some are subtle (like an insult that made a negative impact) and some are even imagined, based on wrong interpretations and faulty information. In this story, Jenny's past contains an event that has shaped her life. It has colored the way she thinks, how she perceives comments—even who she plans to marry.

I think all of us have past issues that need to be addressed. Perhaps in reading Jenny and Burke's story, you, my dear reader, will find encouragement to confront something in your past and allow God to heal it.

That is my prayer for you.

I love to hear from my readers. You can contact me and check out my other books at www.lindaford.org.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Ford". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Blessings,".

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Burke is sure the prairies will drive Jenny home. What was there about the prairies that could frighten a person?
2. What did Jenny find about the prairies that charmed her?
3. Are there times when you can't understand how someone could have such an opposing view from yours on some topic? Is it possible you can both be right?
4. Do you think Jenny's determination to obey her parents was right or wrong? Why?
5. What roles did Paquette and the ranch hands play in helping Jenny and Burke to find love?
6. Jenny suffered a frightening event in her past. How did it shape the way she viewed herself and how she made decisions?
7. Have you suffered events that affect you today? Have you found someone you can share these with?

8. There are several things that enabled Jenny to confront her past and find healing. What were they?
9. Can you think of other things that might have helped?
10. Is there a particular verse in this story that brought you comfort? Are there other verses you would have applied in this situation?
11. Burke, too, had experiences that shaped him. Which one do you think was the most influential?
12. How would you have handled his situation if it were you?
13. What conclusion did Burke reach about God because of his experiences?
14. Would you have felt the same way? Why or why not?
15. How did Burke learn to trust God in the events of his life?
16. How do you foresee the future for Burke and Jenny? Will it be happy?

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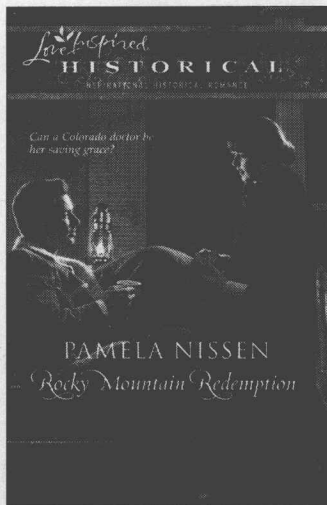
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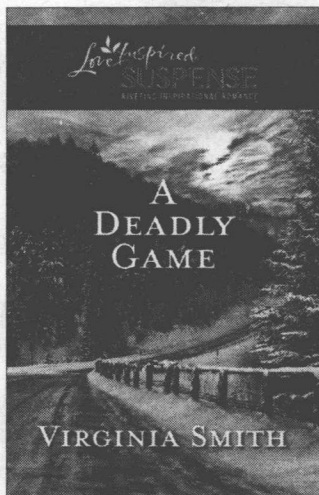
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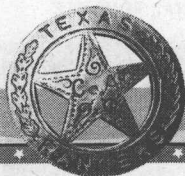
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**"Miss Archibald, I will say it again.
This is no place for a woman."**

Before he could escape, Jenny spoke. "I'll leave when I deem it's appropriate, but I won't be run off. I won't be scared off. So don't even try."

He turned slowly. "Don't flatter yourself that I'd bother. You'll find plenty of challenges without my interference."

What on earth did he mean? Was there some sort of danger she should be aware of?

But he was gone before she could ask.

She heard the sound of horse hooves and looked out the window in time to see Burke riding away, leaning forward as if anxious to be away from this place. She shivered. Should she be afraid of him?

He turned, saw her at the window. His gaze drilled into her, dark, powerful, full of—

She jerked back and pressed her palm to her throat. Promise? Hope? Or was it a warning?

Books by Linda Ford

Love Inspired Historical

The Road to Love

The Journey Home

The Path to Her Heart

Dakota Child

The Cowboy's Baby

Dakota Cowboy

Dakota Father

LINDA FORD

shares her life with her rancher husband, a grown son, a live-in client she provides care for and a yappy parrot. She and her husband raised a family of fourteen children, ten adopted, providing her with plenty of opportunity to experience God's love and faithfulness. They had their share of adventures, as well. Taking twelve kids in a motor home on a three-thousand-mile road trip would be high on the list. They live in Alberta, Canada, close enough to the Rockies to admire them every day. She enjoys writing stories that reveal God's wondrous love through the lives of her characters.

Linda enjoys hearing from readers. Contact her at linda@lindafor.org or check out her website at www.lindafor.org, where you can also catch her blog, which often carries glimpses of both her writing activities and family life.

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Dakota Father



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DAKOTA FATHER

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I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and
wonderfully made.

—*Psalm* 139:14



To my grandparents and great-grandparents,
who faced challenges in moving to a new land.

I am in awe of the hardships they endured and
conquered. We owe them, and the pioneers like them,
a debt of gratitude.

Chapter One



Buffalo Hollow, Dakota Territory, 1884

Nineteen-year-old Jenny Archibald spared a moment to dab at her forehead. If only she could escape the heat sucking at her pores and driving two-year-old Meggie to fretfulness. Jenny sensed the annoyance of those who shared the passenger rail car, cooped up in the same hot box as she and Meggie and having to endure the fitful cries of a child.

She pulled a clean cloth from the valise at her feet and spread it over the leather seat across from her. "Meggie, lie down and I'll fan you." They'd both be considerably cooler if Meggie didn't clutch at her neck and struggle in her arms.

Meggie whined a protest but allowed Jenny to put her down and, as she promised, Jenny waved over the child the book she had hoped to read on the trip.

She'd naively thought Meggie would sleep the entire way from Center City, Ohio, or be happy to stare out the window at the passing scenery.

After a few minutes of fussing, Meg stuck two fingers in her mouth and her eyelids lowered. Jenny let out a sigh of relief. And hid a smile as the other occupants let out echoing sighs.

She glanced about the car. Apart from a withered old lady mumbling in the far seat, Jenny was the only woman aboard. Across the aisle sat two men who seemed to be business associates. They had persevered in wearing their suit coats for the first hour of the trip but now had shed them and waved paper before their faces trying to cool themselves.

Further along, a cowboy hunched over, his legs stretched out beside the seat in front of him. He spared her a sharp look then pulled his hat low and let his chin fall to his chest.

Jenny told herself she would not look at the man who sat across from the old lady. She'd been aware of him since he joined them several stops back—dressed in black, with black hair, and black eyes that seemed to see everything.

Pa was right when he said to her, "Pepper, you must learn to restrain your impulses. Think before you leap."

Only it wasn't that she exactly jumped at the sight of the man. Or the thought of him sitting there so