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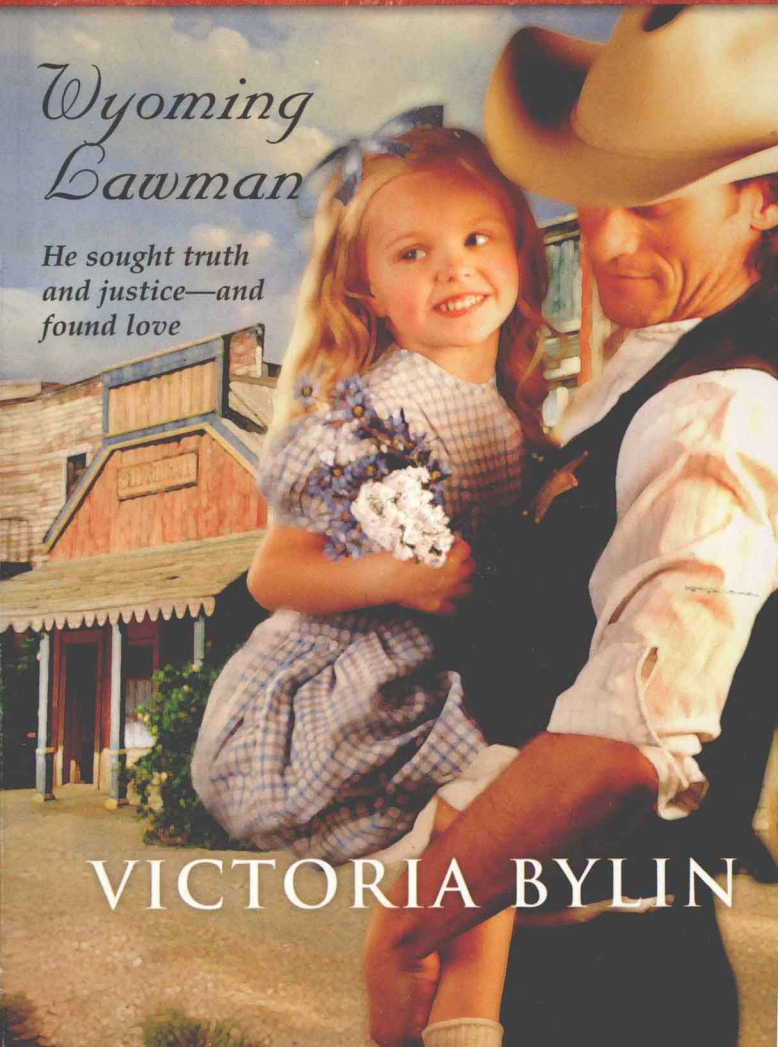
HISTORICAL

INSPIRATIONAL HISTORICAL ROMANCE

Wyoming Lawman

*He sought truth
and justice—and
found love*

VICTORIA BYLIN



Dear Readers,

When I was a little girl, I used to sit on my bedroom floor with a big book of fairy tales. The cover showed Rapunzel with her long hair, Little Red Riding Hood in a forest, and Puss in Boots. I loved this book, especially the color plates for *Thumbelina* and *The Flying Trunk*. Every story fed my imagination.

That book of fairy tales came to mind as I described Deputy Matt Wiley reading a bedtime story to his little girl. Children's books as we know them weren't common in 1875. He would most likely have read from *The Tales of Mother Goose*, a collection of fairy tales collected by Charles Perrault in 1658. The first American edition was published in 1787 and had many of the stories we love today. Among them were *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty in the Wood* and *Little Red Riding Hood*.

In addition to traditional stories, children's books in the nineteenth century contained short rhymes, moral lessons and simple drawings. Some of the rhymes would be familiar to us, things like "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe" or "Hey Diddle Diddle." I can't read those words without smiling. Both my sons (now grown) were fascinated with the idea of a cow jumping over the moon.

My book of fairy tales and a children's book from 1875 would have been quite different, but the feeling of discovery would be the same. Like me, Matt's daughter would have been transported to another place and time. No matter where we live or when we were born, stories have the power to open our eyes to amazing possibilities.

Looking back I see God's hand on my book of fairy tales. Who could have known? The little girl reading about Cinderella and Rapunzel grew up to write stories of her own.

Victoria Byb

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. After a traumatic experience in Denver, Pearl decides to start a new life in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Which of her problems is she able to leave behind? Which problems follow her? What are the pros and cons of a change in geography when a person is recovering from trauma?
2. Matt is grateful to Pearl for saving his daughter's life, but he doesn't want to be in her debt. How would you describe his attitude? Does it show integrity or pride?
3. Matt gave up a job he loved with the Texas Rangers and moved to Cheyenne. Have you ever made a big move? How did it affect your family?
4. When Pearl is interviewed for a position as a teacher, she refuses to hide the fact that her son was born out of wedlock. What were the consequences? What might have happened if she'd been less open?
5. Matt's daughter needs a mother, but he's reluctant to remarry. Why? What are his biggest fears? What factors contributed to his doubts?
6. Carrie and Pearl have a special friendship. What makes them so close? Do you have a friend like Carrie in your life?
7. The Golden Order was once an honorable civic organization. With time, the group's leaders lost their moorings. Why do you think this occurred? What makes good people go bad?

8. Matt is more than troubled by his past. He's crippled by guilt and shame. What must he do to find redemption? Describe the steps of his journey, starting with his offer to write a letter of reference for Pearl.
9. The blue ribbons are significant throughout the story. When does Pearl wear them? What do they represent to her? How does their meaning change for Matt?
10. When two prostitutes visit Jasper Kling's store, Pearl treats them with courtesy even though she knows she might lose her job. Have you ever had to make a similar choice? What were the circumstances?
11. What motivates Tobias to help stop the Golden Order? Does he compromise his morals when he goes "undercover"?
12. Matt initially criticizes the psalms as poetry. Do you have a favorite psalm? Which one is it? What do you love about it?
13. Pearl's journey from timidity to courage takes several steps. What are the most significant events in her recovery? How do fear and faith interact?
14. What is Matt's deepest motivation for stopping the Golden Order? What is he seeking? What does he need to do to find peace?
15. Sarah's favorite story is *Cinderella*. Do you have a favorite fairy tale? How would you describe the relationship between today's romances and the tales we all grew up with?

Love Inspired.
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FROM #1 NEW YORK TIMES
AND USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
DEBBIE MACOMBER

Mrs. Miracle on 34th Street...

This Christmas, Emily Merkle (just call her Mrs. Miracle) is working in the toy department at Finley's, the last family-owned department store in Manhattan.

Her boss (who happens to be the owner's son) has placed an order for a large number of high-priced robots, which he hopes will give the business a much-needed boost. In fact, Jake Finley's counting on it.

Holly Larson is counting on that robot, too. She's been looking after her eight-year-old nephew, Gabe, ever since her widowed brother was deployed overseas. Holly plans to buy Gabe a robot—which she can't afford—because she's determined to make Christmas special.

But this Christmas will be different—thanks to Mrs. Miracle. Next to bringing children joy, her favorite activity is giving romance a nudge. Fortunately, Jake and Holly are receptive to her "hints." And thanks to Mrs. Miracle, Christmas takes on new meaning for Jake. For all of them!

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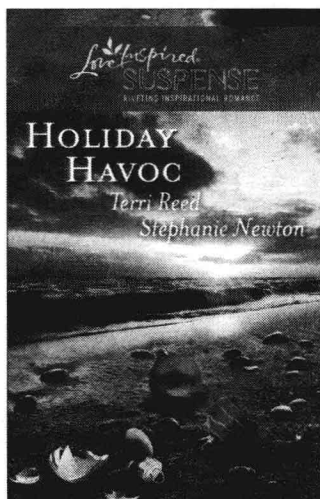
by Terri Reed

A cry for help shatters youth counselor Sean Matthews's quiet Christmas night. He saves Lauren Curtis from her attacker—for now. But the vengeful man on her trail won't be held at bay for long....

Christmas Target

by Stephanie Newton

She hadn't wanted the contest "prize" in the first place. But when police officer Maria Fuentes arrives for the holiday vacation she won, she finds much more than expected....



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“I love you, Daddy.”

“I love you, too, darlin’,” Matt replied.

He galloped Sarah into her bedroom, tucked her against the feather tick, sat on a stool by her bed and opened Mother Goose. He could see the picture of Cinderella with her blond curls and blue eyes.

Sarah rolled to her side. “I think she looks like Miss Pearl.”

So did Matt. “A little.”

“A lot.” Sarah tucked her hands across her chest. Then she did something Matt had never seen her do. She closed her eyes and mouthed words he couldn’t hear.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

“I’m praying.”

Matt had no such inclination. A long time ago he’d prayed prayers, but not anymore. That boy had turned into a man who had to live with his mistakes. He couldn’t change the past, but he could stop others from making the same mistakes. That’s why he’d do anything to protect the innocent...anything except put Sarah at risk.

“Daddy?”

“Yes, darlin’?”

“I’m praying for a mama.”

Books by Victoria Bylin

Love Inspired Historical

The Bounty Hunter's Bride

The Maverick Preacher

Kansas Courtship

Wyoming Lawman

VICTORIA BYLIN

fell in love with God and her husband at the same time. It started with a ride on a big red motorcycle and a date to see a Star Trek movie. A recent graduate of UC Berkeley, Victoria had been seeking that elusive “something more” when Michael rode into her life. Neither knew it, but they were both reading the Bible.

Five months later they got married and the blessings began. They have two sons and have lived in California and Virginia. Michael's career allowed Victoria to be both a stay-at-home mom and a writer. She's living a dream that started when she read her first book and thought, “I want to tell stories.” For that gift, she will be forever grateful.

Feel free to drop Victoria an e-mail at VictoriaBylin@aol.com or visit her Web site at www.victoriabylin.com.

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VICTORIA BYLIN



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WYOMING LAWMAN

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Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor
in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the
watchmen stand guard in vain.

In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for
food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.

—*Psalms* 127:1–2



To my husband, Michael,
For his patience, support and sense of humor.
Thank you, Bears, for helping with the bad guys.
Only a true good guy would have your wisdom.

Love you!

Chapter One



Cheyenne, Wyoming
October 1875

Pearl Oliver stepped out of the carriage in front of Dryer's Hotel and glanced down the boardwalk in search of her cousin. Instead of spotting Carrie, she saw a little girl with hair as pale as her own. Pulled loose from two braids and wisping around the child's face, it glinted white in the sun. Pearl's mother had told her daughter that a woman's hair was her crowning glory. Pearl knew from experience it could also be a curse.

She turned back to the carriage intending to lift her son from her father's arms. Before he could hand the baby to her, she heard an excited cry.

"Mama!"

Expecting to see another mother, she looked back at the little girl. What she saw stopped her heart. The child, with her pinafore flapping and a rag doll hooked in her elbow, was charging across the street. Behind her, Pearl saw a freight wagon about to make the turn. The girl hadn't looked before stepping off the boardwalk, and the driver wouldn't see her until he rounded the corner.

“Stop!” Pearl cried.

The girl ran faster. “Mama, wait!”

Unaware of the child, the freight driver shouted at the team of six mules to pick up their pace. As the beasts surged forward, Pearl hiked up her skirt and ran down the boardwalk. “Stay there!” she cried. “I’m coming for you.”

Instead of stopping, the child ran faster. The mules gained momentum and the wagon swayed. Pearl cried for the driver to stop, but he couldn’t hear her over the rattle of the wheels. The child, now halfway across the street, saw only the woman she believed to be her mother.

Praying she wouldn’t slip in the mud, Pearl dashed in front of the mules, each one snorting and chuffing with the weight of the load. The driver cursed and hauled back on the reins, but the wagon kept coming.

So did the child.

So did Pearl.

She could smell the mules. Puddles, mirroring the clouds, shook as the animals lumbered forward. With more speed than she rightly possessed, she dashed in front of the beasts, hooked her arm around the child and pulled her back from the wagon. Together they fell in a tangle of skirts and pinafores with Pearl on her belly. Her knees stung from hitting the dirt and she’d muddied her dress.

She didn’t give a whit about her knees, but the dress mattered. She planned to wear it to her interview at Miss Marlowe’s School for Girls. A woman in her position had to always look her best. One wrong impression and she’d be worse off than she’d been in Denver.

With her heart pounding, she raised her head and looked at the child. She saw eyes as blue as her own and hair that could have grown on her own head. The girl looked to be five years old, but there was nothing childlike about her expression as she clutched her doll to her chest. Like Pearl,