

HEARTWARM

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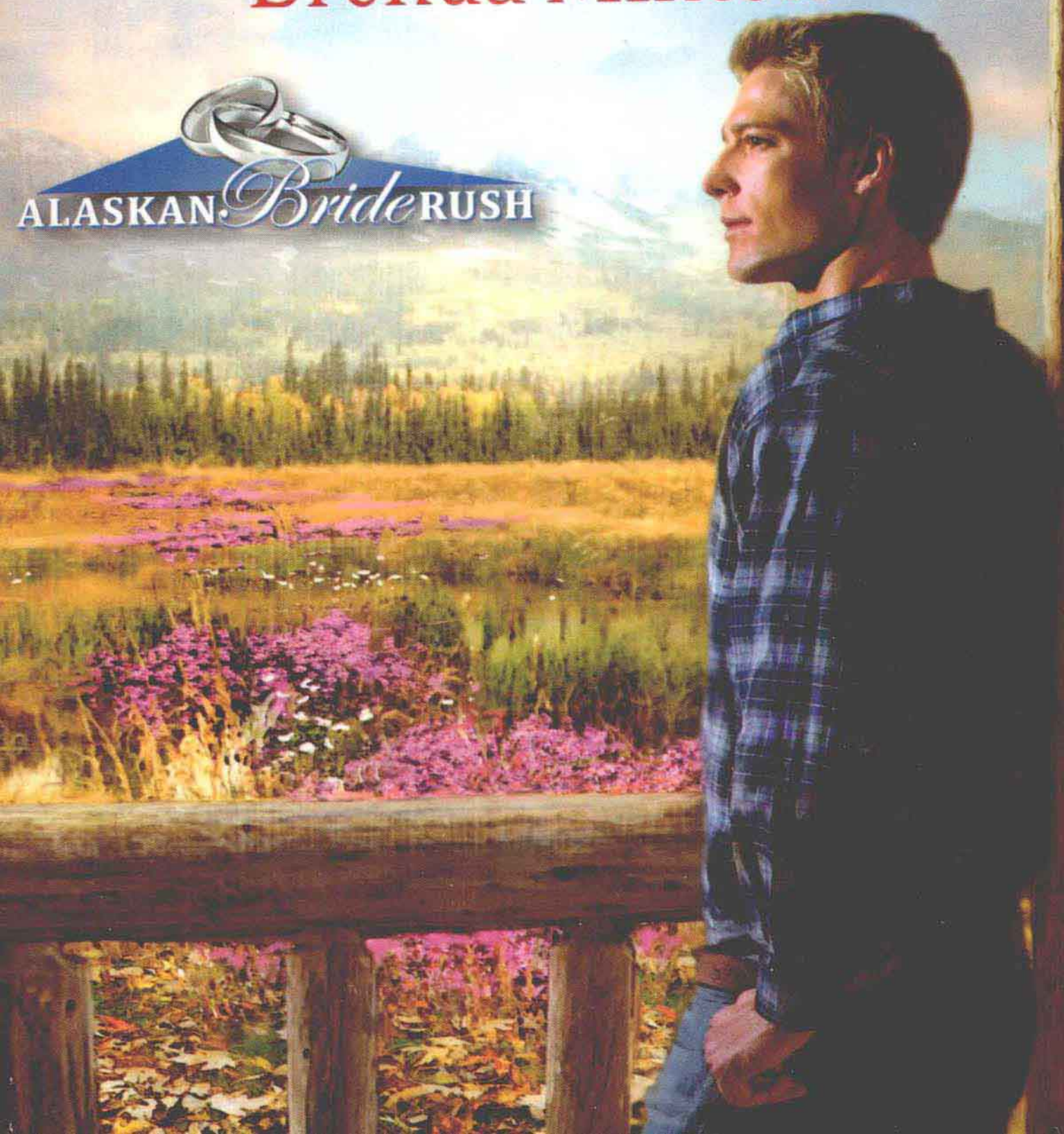
Love Inspired

Thanksgiving Groom

Brenda Minton



ALASKAN *Bride* RUSH



Dear Reader,

Welcome to Treasure Creek, Alaska. It was a privilege to work on this story and to spend a little time acquainting myself with the great state of Alaska. As I researched the area and pored over pictures of the landscape and the small towns, I could see why our characters would want to take off from their "real lives" and experience the great outdoors, Alaska-style.

Penelope Lear is a great heroine. To the outside world she had everything, but she felt as if she had nothing. She wanted more, and what she found was faith. I think she's like so many of us, searching to be who God called us to be and finding it in the most unlikely place.

Brenda Minter

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. When Tucker Lawson's father died, Tucker made a series of choices. The first was to leave Treasure Creek and fly to a cabin where he could think through his problems. He didn't turn to God, but how did God use the situation Tucker found himself in?
2. Penelope showed up in Treasure Creek because of an article. Do you think she was looking for romance or something else?
3. Penelope found faith in Treasure Creek. How does she first show that it changed her life?
4. In hunting for the treasure, Penelope seems to go off without thinking ahead. She has everything, so why would this treasure mean so much to her?
5. Faced with his father's death and the loss of a young woman he didn't know, Tucker isn't really searching for God. What is he looking for and how does that tie in to his lost faith?
6. The Johnsons have been living in this cabin for six months. They lost their son and they needed to find peace. How is their approach to grief the same as Tucker's and yet different?

7. Tucker doesn't want to like Penelope. He wants to believe she's just another selfish socialite. How does she show him that she is different?
8. Faced with the long walk back to Treasure Creek and unknown enemies, Tucker pushes everyone to keep going, including Penelope. How does she handle the situation and how does that change their relationship?
9. Penelope is attracted to Tucker, but she's looking for something more in life. Why is she holding back? He's wealthy. He's attractive. Isn't that enough?
10. Back in Treasure Creek, Penelope has to stand her ground when she is reunited with her parents. Why is this important for her future?
11. Tucker believes he's ready to head back to Seattle, even though he still has loose ends to tie up with his father's estate. What continues to hold him to Treasure Creek?
12. Penelope is willing to do just about anything to help the town of Treasure Creek. She wants to find the treasure for the community. She is helping with the Christmas pageant. Does this have something to do with her history of going on trips to impoverished areas?

13. Does Penelope really know what she is searching for in life? Does she finally find that completeness in Treasure Creek?
14. Tucker is one of the men on Penelope's father's short list as a potential husband. Why would this be a problem for Penelope?
15. When do you believe Tucker really returns to his faith?



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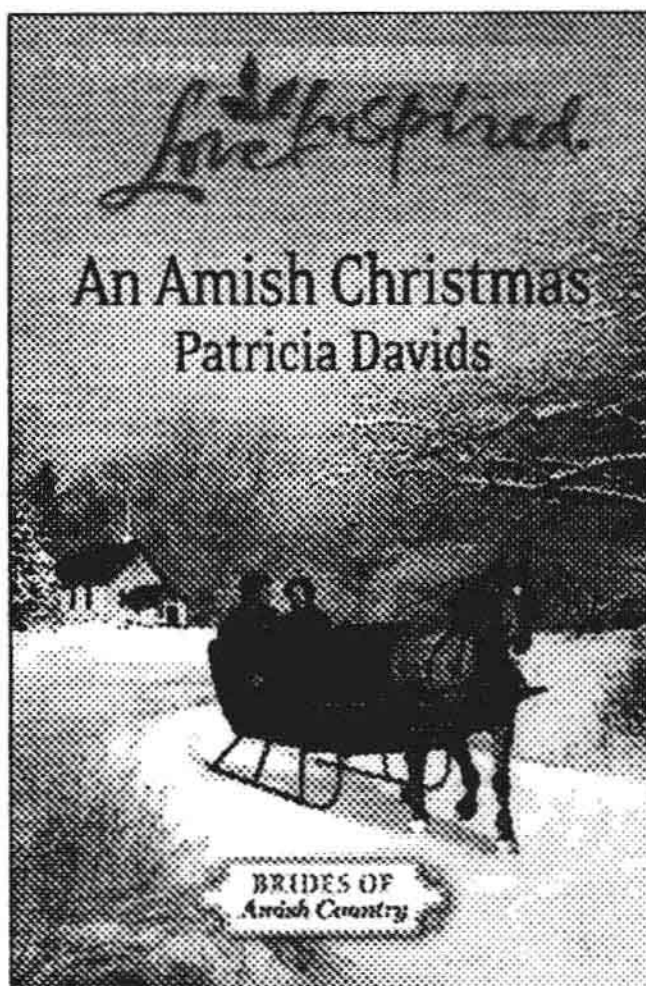
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"You're Penelope Lear," Tucker said. "Who doesn't know the Lears of Anchorage?"

"That isn't who I am."

"You aren't Penelope?" He stayed close to the fire, watching her gather herself. Lamplight flickered, casting shadows on a face that was beautiful in a way he wouldn't have imagined. Maybe because of the light in her eyes, the animation of her features.

"I am Penelope Lear. But...but I'm not a spoiled little rich girl." In the warm glow of the lamp he saw tears pool in her blue eyes.

"I'm sure they'll be looking for you."

"Of course they will." She shivered again.

But would they find her?

**Alaskan Bride Rush:
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December 2010

Books by Brenda Minton

Love Inspired

Trusting Him

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Blessings of the Season

“The Christmas Letter”

Jenna's Cowboy Hero

The Cowboy's Courtship

The Cowboy's Sweetheart

Thanksgiving Groom

BRENDA MINTON

started creating stories to entertain herself during hour-long rides on the school bus. In high school she wrote romance novels to entertain her friends. The dream grew and so did her aspirations to become an author. She started with notebooks, handwritten manuscripts and characters that refused to go away until their stories were told. Eventually she put away the pen and paper and got down to business with the computer. The journey took a few years, with some encouragement and rejection along the way—as well as a lot of stubbornness on her part. In 2006 her dream to write for the Steeple Hill Love Inspired line came true. Brenda lives in the rural Ozarks with her husband, three kids and an abundance of cats and dogs. She enjoys a chaotic life that she wouldn't trade for anything—except, on occasion, a beach house in Texas. You can stop by and visit at her website, www.brendaminton.net.

Thanksgiving Groom

Brenda Minton



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THANKSGIVING GROOM

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But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

—*Isaiah* 40:31



**This book is dedicated to Doug, for being my hero
each and every day. And to my kids for chipping in
and making it so much easier.**

Chapter One



Lost in the Alaskan wilderness.

Penelope Lear's great adventure was not supposed to end this way, with her standing on a shadowy path in the middle of nowhere. Mountains surrounded her, cutting her off from the rest of the world. She was completely, utterly alone in a world so huge she didn't know in which direction to turn.

What had started with her brilliant idea that she could find the treasure and save the town of Treasure Creek was now looking like a news alert. All because she was positive she'd seen a clue from the treasure map. Just days ago when she'd taken a hiking tour of the area, she really thought she'd seen the rock formation that people were talking about. Her dad would have told her she was less than a week in town and already in over her head.

Instead of the confidence she had started out with, she was picturing the headlines that would be splashed across newspapers tomorrow morning. Or whenever they finally realized she was missing.

"Penelope Lear, Heiress, Lost in the Alaskan Wilderness."

She didn't want to think of other headlines, worse headlines. But she couldn't stop herself from thinking about what would happen if someone didn't find her. If they didn't find the Jeep and her note that she was hiking out, heading south toward Treasure Creek, what would happen?

As for heading south, she hoped she was heading south.

She glanced at her watch and then looked west, where the sun would have been setting in an hour, if not for the mountains encircling her. At least she *thought* she was looking west. She had a compass in her bag, but she didn't know how to use a compass. It had been part of the equipment she'd bought at the general store.

The clerk had grinned at her when she'd bought supplies. Either because he was single and enjoyed all the single women trotting through Treasure Creek and his store, or because he thought she was another clueless city slicker.

Fortunately Joleen Jones had bounced into the general store in time to take some of the pressure off. Joleen with the hair, the clothes and the personality to draw attention the way sugar drew ants. Joleen, like so many other women, had come to Treasure Creek looking for the hunky tour guides described in the *Now Woman* magazine article.

In the short amount of time Penelope had been in Treasure Creek, she had realized she wasn't the only woman who had shown up to see what the men of Treasure Creek were all about; if they really were different.

Penelope insisted on being married to the man of her

choosing, rather than the man with the right business portfolio.

Cold seeped into her bones, pulling her back to the present and her horrendous situation. Penelope pulled her coat a little closer and took a few careful steps on the trail.

November in the Alaskan wilderness. She'd lived in Anchorage her entire life. Even if she had spent her time in the city, she should know something about the Alaskan wilderness, something more than the fact that it was cold. And dark.

Yeah, she should know something—like stay home where it was safe and warm.

She hitched her backpack over her shoulder. At least she had jerky to eat, a few bottles of water and a rain poncho. And matches. If it came down to it, she could build a fire.

A noise, just a rustle or maybe rocks shifting under someone's careful steps, caught her attention. She froze, and then turned cautiously, carefully. Chills were sweeping up and down her spine, tingling through her scalp and arms. She didn't want to be dinner for a bear. Or a mountain lion.

How far back had she left the Jeep? It had to be miles. She'd been walking for hours. Not that going back would do her any good. Something had run out in front of the vehicle a few hours ago and she'd veered, sending the blasted thing over a small ledge and into a ditch. It wasn't going anywhere anytime soon.

If only she hadn't allowed herself to get distracted. But instead of paying attention to the trail that passed for a road, she'd been daydreaming about the Chilkoot