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See the next page to enjoy a sneak peek
from Harlequin® American Romance®,
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Five hunky Texas single fathers—five stories from Cathy Gillen Thacker’s LONE STAR DADS miniseries. Here’s an excerpt from the latest, THE MOMMY PROPOSAL from Harlequin American Romance.

“I hear you work miracles,” Nate Hutchinson drawled. Brooke Mitchell had just stepped into his lavishly appointed office in downtown Fort Worth, Texas.

“Sometimes, I do.” Brooke smiled and took the sexy financier’s hand in hers, shook it briefly.

“Good.” Nate looked her straight in the eye. “Because I’m in need of a home makeover—fast. The son of an old friend is coming to live with me.”

She was still tingling from the feel of his warm palm. “Temporarily or permanently?”

“If all goes according to plan, I’ll adopt Landry by summer’s end.”

Brooke had heard the founder of Nate Hutchinson Financial Services was eligible, wealthy and generous to a fault. She hadn’t known he was in the market for a family, but she supposed she shouldn’t be surprised. But Brooke had figured a man as successful and handsome as Nate would want one the old-fashioned way. *Not that this was any of her business...*

“So what’s the child like?” she asked crisply, trying not to think how the marine-blue of Nate’s dress shirt deepened the hue of his eyes.

“I don’t know.” Nate took a seat behind his massive antique mahogany desk. He relaxed against the smooth leather of the chair. “I’ve never met him.”

“Yet you’ve invited this kid to live with you permanently?”

“It’s complicated. But I’m sure it’s going to be fine.”

Obviously Nate Hutchinson knew as little about teenage

HAREXP0810

boys as he did about decorating. But that wasn't her problem. Finding a way to do the assignment without getting the least bit emotionally involved was.

Find out how a young boy brings Nate and Brooke together in THE MOMMY PROPOSAL, coming August 2010 from Harlequin American Romance.



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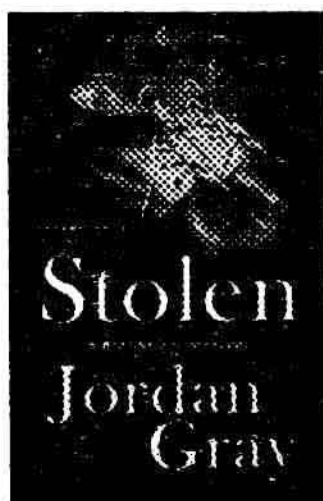
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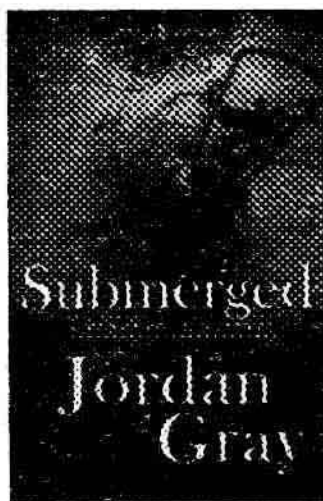
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Slade's pulse raced. It had been too damn long since he'd held a woman. Since he'd even wanted to...

But Nina had been trembling and afraid. He'd seen the relief in her eyes that finally someone believed her story, and he hadn't been able to resist.

Oh, hell...it was more than that.

She'd fought against all odds to find out what had happened to her baby girl. How could he not admire her dedication and determination?

And now...one touch wasn't enough.

He traced his hand down her hair, then along her cheek.

She tensed slightly as if to pull away, and he tilted her chin up with his thumb.

"I promise you I'll find out what's going on," he said in a deep voice.

She nodded. He traced his finger over her mouth, and her breath hitched, desire flaring in her eyes. "Slade..."

Her raspy sigh was his undoing.

He groaned, then lowered his head, angled his mouth and closed his lips over hers.

Dear Reader,

Twenty-four years ago I gave birth to my third child, a beautiful little girl I named Emily. As I wrote *Unbreakable Bond* she was pregnant with her first baby. Watching the excitement and anticipation as she carried her son brought back precious memories of having my own children and the unbreakable bond between mother and child.

It also reminded me of another special little girl, the *real* Rebecca, the daughter of a very close friend of mine. She was due to be born around the same time as my daughter, but was one of triplets who came prematurely. Sadly, the other two babies didn't make it, but although Rebecca weighed less than a pound and had several health issues, she not only survived, but went on to touch and inspire the lives of everyone around her.

While one would think she might have complained or been a sad child, Rebecca had (and still has) a glow about her.

Unlike the little girl in my story, Rebecca was blessed with two wonderful parents who loved her unconditionally and gave her every opportunity available.

When I see or hear about other challenged children, I often wonder how different it would have been if she hadn't had those parents. And as most mothers, I've thought about how awful it would be for any mother to be separated from her child.

All those elements came together to inspire me to write this story, one I hope will touch you, as well.

So hug your children, love them unconditionally and cherish every precious memory you make together. Children are godsend to us all.

Sincerely,

Rita Herron

**RITA
HERRON**

**UNBREAKABLE
BOND**



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To my beautiful daughter Emily
and her new son, Bradford

And to the real Rebecca.
Thanks for inspiring us all!



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UNBREAKABLE BOND

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Award-winning author Rita Herron wrote her first book when she was twelve, but didn't think real people grew up to be writers. Now she writes so she doesn't have to get a *real* job. A former kindergarten teacher and workshop leader, she traded her storytelling to kids for romance, and now she writes romantic comedies and romantic suspense. She lives in Georgia with her own romance hero and three kids. She loves to hear from readers, so please write her at P.O. Box 921225, Norcross, GA 30092-1225, or visit her Web site at www.ritaherron.com.

Books by Rita Herron

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- 1218—UNBREAKABLE BOND**

*Nighthawk Island

**Guardian Angel Investigations

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Slade Blackburn—Finding missing children is his job—but he can't let his heart get involved.

Nina Nash—Everyone thinks she's crazy, but she believes her daughter Peyton, who police ruled dead, is still alive.

Brooks Nash—Nina's father was upset with her for keeping the baby; does he know more about Peyton's disappearance/death than he's telling?

William Hood—The father of Nina's baby never wanted the child—could he have had the baby kidnapped?

Mitzi Hood—William's wife hated Nina for getting pregnant with his child—would she steal the baby to keep William to herself?

Eileen Hood—William's mother was furious about the child. How far would she go to protect her son's future?

Diane and Dennis Lucas—William's sister and brother-in-law have an eight-year-old daughter who was born around the same time as Peyton. Could the child possibly be Nina's?

Dr. Don Emery—The ob-gyn who delivered Peyton claims there was no way the child survived or was kidnapped. Is he lying?

Paula Emery—Dr. Emery's wife. How far would she go to protect her marriage and money?

Carrie Poole—A nurse on the neonatal unit. Does she know what happened to Peyton?

Stanford Mansfield—Does he arrange illegal adoptions?

Gwen and Roan Waldorp—Gwen gave birth to a stillborn child the night of the fire. Could she have stolen Peyton to replace her own baby?

Prologue

A thunderous boom rocked the hospital walls and floor, jarring Nina Nash awake. What had happened? Had she been dreaming, or had there been an explosion?

Screams and shouts suddenly echoed in the halls, and footsteps of people rushing around outside her room pounded. Somewhere a food cart crashed and glass shattered.

Then the smell of smoke wafted to her.

Panic seized her. Dear God, there *had* been an explosion. The hospital was on fire.

She threw off the covers, not bothering to grab her robe or slip on her bedroom shoes, but the stitches from her C-section pulled as she shuffled to the door and shoved it open. Smoke flooded the hallway in a cloud so thick that she immediately coughed, her eyes watering.

She had to get to her baby. Little Peyton had been a preemie, less than five pounds, and was in the neonatal intensive care unit.

What if the fire was near the babies?

God, no...

Stumbling forward as fast as she could with her sore abdomen, she heard the sound of voices shouting again,

another person crying. The fire alarm trilled, adding to the chaos. Through the gray fog, she spotted patients stumbling outside their rooms, everyone searching for an escape, confused and frightened.

“The east wing is on fire,” someone yelled.

“Find the stairwell and get out!” someone else shouted.

“Help me!” a woman screamed.

Someone bumped Nina as they raced down the hall toward the stairwell.

Heat flooded the hall and an orderly grabbed her arm to push her toward the staircase. “This way, miss.”

“No, I have to get to my baby,” Nina cried.

“No time, the nurses and firefighters are getting the infants out! And that corridor is engulfed in flames.”

“Then I’ll find another way,” she said and tore away from him.

Another woman darted into the fog of smoke, coughing as she collapsed onto the floor, and the rescue worker rushed to help her.

Determined to save Peyton, Nina hurried down the hall. But just as she reached the end, the ceiling crashed down, and flames shot all along the wall and floor, blocking the turn into the corridor.

She pivoted and headed in the opposite direction, feeling along the wall until she reached the next corner, but the smoke was so thick she could barely see, and flames rushed toward her. No... There was no way to get through....

Tears mingled with the sweat on her face as the heat scalded her. She had to try another direction.