

...A BEAUTIFUL STORY OF LOVE OVERCOMING ALL OBSTACLES...  
IT'S MY PLEASURE TO RECOMMEND **RESCUE ME.**

~Tracie Peterson, best-selling author  
of over one hundred novels including the  
Brides of Seattle and Lone Star Brides series

# Rescue Me

A man in a red shirt and climbing gear is climbing a rock face. The background shows a scenic view of mountains and a valley with colorful autumn foliage.

**SANDY  
NADEAU**

# Rescue Me

Sandy Nadeau

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales, is entirely coincidental.

## **Rescue Me**

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## *Dedication*

"Greater love has no one but this, that he lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13

Friends are one of the greatest gifts from God. Jesus, you are my "bestest" friend of all time! I'm married to my next best friend. Thirty-nine years so far. And having my daughter Trish be my best friend, too, priceless.

To Marcia, the world may have lost you this past year, but your unconditional friendship and love will be with me forever. Thank you for showing me what loving Jesus really means. Elaine, thanks for going along with me on this writing ride. To other friends I've watched pass from this life, thank you for being a part of my life. Karol, Gayle, and Penny, I hope you know what you meant to me. And to new friends and readers, I love getting to know you more. Thanks for coming along on this latest adventure.



## *What People are Saying*

Romance is often complicated by life and Sandy Nadeau's RESCUE ME takes the reader through the obstacles that surround two people who have been wounded by those complications. Sandy pens a beautiful story of love overcoming all obstacles and God's perfect love healing all wounds. It's my pleasure to recommend RESCUE ME.

*~Tracie Peterson, best-selling author of over one hundred novels including the Brides of Seattle and Lone Star Brides series*



*Other Titles by Sandy Nadeau*

RED GOLD







# 1

“I can’t believe this.” Steve McNeal reached down again to try to move the rock that trapped his foot. Pain shot through his entire leg and cold dots of perspiration chilled his forehead. He rested against the granite boulder trying to ignore his throbbing ankle and to slow his heartbeat. Of course this had to happen. How could he have been so stupid as to try to scramble between the boulders alone? How many times had he scaled this boulder field? A shortcut to the trail. Brilliant idea.

Bracing both arms against the cold, rough granite on either side of him, he pushed with his free leg against a flatter area of one boulder, trying to get some relief from the pressure on his trapped foot. No doubt about it. This was a definite problem.

Steve scanned the sloping hillside that held the trail, which wound around the boulders that now held him hostage. The view was limited from his position, but at least he’d made his way down facing forward so he could look out instead of at the rock behind him.

Unbelievable. Ten feet from the ground, the trail right there, freedom so close and yet

absolutely unattainable. *Ow!* He had to get his foot out. Or quit moving.

How could there be no one on the trail today? He twisted his upper body to look up at the boulders. "Anybody up there?" He quickly straightened. *Ouch, OK that hurts.* He reached into his pocket and pulled out his cellphone for the tenth time. Still no bars. What did he expect? Suddenly he'd have signal?

Cell towers were not a popular thing among the dwellers of the foothills southwest of Denver.

"Lord, a little help here?"

"Hey, Mister."

It might as well have been a voice from heaven. Relief let some of the tension out of his shoulders. He strained to see the face that peered over the edge of the rocks above.

"What'cha doin' down there?"

"Hey kid, I'm uh...stuck. Can you go get some help?" Steve's arm slid against the granite and a little skin peeled off as he tried to look up at the boy. More pain burned a path through his leg, and he gritted his teeth to keep from moaning. His forehead tightly furrowed. He didn't want to look like a sissy in front of the kid.

"Who are you talking to?" A female voice asked.

"There's a guy down there."

"Oh, my. Are you OK?"

*Seriously? Do I look OK?* "No ma'am. I appear to be trapped by a rock. Can you get a call

out for help?" Steve couldn't see much of her between his position and only her eyes peeking over the edge.

"I don't have a signal. We'll go where we can get one. Hang in there."

*Not much choice.* "Thanks."

The footsteps moved away. Back to the quiet of the woods. Steve tried to remember where the cell signals could be received in the park. He never really paid attention while out here. Making a call was the last thing he wanted to do while hiking. He hoped they wouldn't have to go all the way to the parking lot. They'd have to wait for the crew, and then get back up here. That would add at least thirty or forty more minutes to his confinement than he cared to think about.

He dreaded which of his colleagues would be on duty today with rescue, not to mention the fire department. Was Ronnie on today? As the climbing expert on the department, it was likely she'd respond. He liked seeing her anytime, but not under these circumstances, given the choice. This ranked right up there as his most humiliating moment. Well, maybe not, but at the moment it felt that way. The fact that she wouldn't want to see him didn't help.

Breath expelled out of him, inflating his left cheek. Repositioning his upper body to find any level of comfort, he closed his eyes to see the image of her in his mind. He missed Ronnie since she broke it off a few years ago, but this would

not be the way to encourage her back into a relationship.

He knew the drill. He was a firefighter, for crying out loud. He had given the talk to countless grade-schoolers. Never hike alone. Stick with a buddy. Sheesh. How humiliating. He'd never live this down.

The heavy scent of fresh pine and forest debris filled his nostrils. A chipmunk skittered down below, free as could be.

"Show off." Irritation rose up inside and increased as he took it out on the wildlife. "You're losing it, Steve." He roared against the pain developing in his stuck lower leg, reminding him of the guy who had to cut his own arm off. He, too, had been out alone, and after days of a rock trapping his arm, with no help in sight, the man had no choice but to amputate his own arm to make it out alive.

The pain started to bring on desperate thoughts of how to escape this mess he'd gotten himself into. "Maybe..." He looked down at his leg. No, Ronnie would still know what a stupid thing he did. Even more stupid if he cut his own leg off. They'd get him some help, right? He hoped they realized this was serious.

With little else to do, the thought wouldn't leave him. Amputation would make his job as a firefighter a bit difficult. He resigned himself to wait. Wait for her to come to his rescue. He groaned. Maybe she would have today off. Ah, one could hope.

Again he pulled his leg and tried to reposition or better yet, wrench it free, but it put his ankle that much closer to breaking. He had to refocus and began to analyze the position of his foot. He had his forearms wedged against the rough granite in a desperate attempt to try to keep his weight from causing further damage to the tendons in his foot. It continued to scrape his arms raw.

Someone—a skinny someone—would have to raise the rock from below to free his foot. A skinny person could fit in the gap beneath him between the two boulders, and he knew who that would end up being. He couldn't see any other way, outside of an earthquake shaking it loose.

Voices echoed up to him from the path through the forest. *How am I ever going to live this down?* He moaned as his head fell backward, seeing only sky.

The team came up the trail toward the rocks. Finally. Pine needles crunching, gravel sliding as they rushed to reach his self-inflicted prison. The young eyes he'd seen looking over the top of the rocks and the woman who resembled the boy pointed toward him. As all the faces looked up, he saw her.

Ronnie.

He knew it. She would have to be on when something like this happened. And Troy, the obnoxious rookie on the fire department. Great. Of course, they both had to be on call.

In an attempt to keep his humor about

him, he raised his hand in a half-hearted wave. "Nice of you all to join me."

Ronnie's forehead scrunched, her eyes filled with...was that concern? "Steve. What in the world...?" She dropped her gear and came near the base of the rocks to evaluate his situation.

"I know, I know. I'm stuck, OK? Just get me out of here."

"You bonehead," Troy piped in. "What were you thinking?"

The team of rescue and fire department personnel followed her up the slope as close to the rock face as they could and set their gear down. The team leader, George, walked over to the narrow opening under Steve and examined the situation.

"Looks like we can dislodge the rock from below you, Steve." George explained the plan to the crew then directed two men to take the harness and ropes up top. He pointed to the route a little ways to his left. "Well, Ronnie, you're the thinnest, you need to get in there and try to push up on the rock to release it. Steve, do you think it's broken?"

"No, I don't think so. It won't budge."

Troy took Ronnie's arm to lead her up to the gap.

Ronnie gave him a scowl and pulled her arm away then worked her way into the area on her own. She tightened the chin strap of her climbing helmet as she worked her way into the cavity and climbed on some of the long, fallen



rocks, testing their stability. She looked up and smiled.

Did she have to be so cute?

"Enjoying your walk today?"

"Funny."

"How long have you been up here?" She continued to maneuver, bracing her backside against the granite. Her helmet bumped and scraped against the stone. She got under the rock.

"More than an hour. I came out early to hike and decided to take the rocks for a better work out. I slipped. Then that blasted rock fell and wedged me in. I couldn't pull out of the way in time as I slid down." He pushed against the rock wall with his right forearm and grimaced.

"You sure it isn't broken?"

His heart warmed at her concerned expression, remembering how close they had come to being married.

"I think it's a bad sprain at this point, my hiking boot is helping, but much longer and I think my ankle might snap. The pain's increasing." Steve's face hurt from frowning.

"Once they get the harness down to you, I'll push the rock while you try to pull your foot free if you can handle the pain. If this doesn't work, we'll have to get the saw or else the explosives." She gave him a lopsided grin.

"Hilarious. Do what you can."

"You must have wanted out of class this week."

"No, I'm getting my EMT. I'll get there if I

have to crawl. That is, if you get me out of here.”

Two team members were on the rocks above him. “Hey, Steve.” They lowered the harness. “Get this around you and buckle up. Let us handle your weight once they free you.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know.”

The straps slid against his back, allowing Steve to slip his arms into the loops. He cringed as he had to take an arm away from the wall of rock and pushed with his free leg for support. He pulled the straps around his thighs and buckled them. Each movement had to be quick so he wouldn’t put prolonged pressure on the strained bones. It hurt so bad he didn’t dare stress it more than necessary.

Who would have thought he’d be on this side of a rescue? He fumbled with the fastener and attached the two loops at his chest. “All right, let’s get on with this.” His lips pressed tight against each other, his jaw clenched so hard his teeth hurt, knowing he was in for some intense pain as Ronnie freed his foot.

~\*~

Ronnie had done a good job of avoiding Steve the last few years. Oh, it was inevitable that they’d be on some calls together. But did she have to be the one to rescue him? She straightened her shoulders to steel herself against the emotions of the past. She had to be professional. Forget that she had fallen in love with him until...she choked

back the thought.

Ronnie reached up and squeezed her gloved hand through the gap where Steve's foot was trapped. Another foothold allowed her the leverage needed as she applied gentle, but firm pressure on the soccer ball-sized rock, yet her muscles strained at the effort. "OK Steve, see if you can pull your foot out."

"Ow, ow, ow."

"We're getting there Steve, keep trying." She continued to apply force.

He let out a determined yell.

The rock raised as his foot escaped and then settled back among the fallen stones. She kept her hand against the cold surface.

Steve held the foot out away from the rocks, the harness holding his weight. His face was scrunched in obvious pain.

She winced in sympathy. "OK guys, lower away. Steve, are you going to be able to put weight on that?"

"Man, I don't think so. I can feel it swelling. I've got to get this boot off soon."

Ronnie backed out of the gap.

Troy pushed his way in. "Let me get under him, Veronica. I want to be the one to help him out of this mess." Troy laughed.

Steve groaned.

She sent her best warning look at the arrogant rookie. "It's Ronnie—not Veronica."

Steve made the effort to keep his leg raised and used the other foot and his arms to keep from

banging into the rocks.

The men above lowered him slowly.

Troy guided and pulled Steve away from the rock face.

As they settled him on the ground, Ronnie grabbed the medical kit, undid the latches, and found the wrap and splint material. "We'll get this boot off and splint you up."

George began to work at the laces of Steve's hiking boot, careful to keep the ankle straight.

"Yeah. Just get me out of here. I'm pretty sure I've been sufficiently humbled."

Troy stood next to him, a sadistic expression on his face. "Oh, I don't think so. How about this? Ever think of staying on the kiddie trails? Maybe you should get some glasses so you can see where you're going. You better stick to running into burning buildings. It's safer. Or how 'bout this thought? We now get to strap you into the Stokes basket and haul your sorry backside out of here."

"That's enough, Troy." Ronnie glared at the arrogant man. "You're supposed to be a professional. Knock it off so we can get him down to the ambulance. Help me pack up the equipment." She stood up next to the Stokes. The cupped light-weight wire basket would allow them to carry Steve through the woods down to the parking lot where the ambulance waited.

As they belted him in, Steve groaned again. "My SUV is at the trailhead."

George continued attaching the straps. "Don't worry about your vehicle. Maybe Ronnie can pick it up for you later."

"I..." she sputtered.

"You're off duty soon. Help him out and get his car."

The team traded off in carrying him on the narrow trail a mile from the lot.

Ronnie followed behind. The last thing she wanted was more time with Steve. She sighed heavily. He did need help. Great.

Nearing the last quarter mile, Troy handed off to another man on the front of the basket. He turned and walked backward, ribbing Steve. His heel caught on a root, sending him to the ground. He landed in a pile of fresh horse dung.

George chuckled. "You are not riding in my vehicle."