

CAN SHE HELP HIM CONFRONT HIS PAST
WHILE SHE'S RUNNING FROM HER FUTURE?

Paisley's Pattern

LOREE PEERY

PAISLEY'S
PATTERN

LoRee Peery

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.

PAISLEY'S PATTERN

COPYRIGHT 2014 by LOREE PEERY

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the author or Pelican Ventures, LLC except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

eBook editions are licensed for your personal enjoyment only. eBooks may not be re-sold, copied or given to other people. If you would like to share an eBook edition, please purchase an additional copy for each person you share it with.

Contact Information: titleadmin@pelicanbookgroup.com

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version^(R), NIV^(R). Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.TM Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Cover Art by *Nicola Martinez*

White Rose Publishing, a division of Pelican Ventures, LLC
www.pelicanbookgroup.com PO Box 1738 *Aztec, NM * 87410

White Rose Publishing Circle and Rosebud logo is a trademark of Pelican Ventures, LLC

Publishing History

First White Rose Edition, 2015

Electronic Edition ISBN 978-1-61116-449-7

Published in the United States of America

Dedication

This one is for my son, Clark. God has gifted you with the ability to figure out and fix most anything. May you always use your mind and your hands to His glory. I love you and thank you for the gifts of your family.

Praise

"After reading *Found in the Woods*, I am now a fan for life! LoRee Peery does an awesome job of weaving a story of faith, trust, love, and overcoming fear into characters that you care about in a book that you will not be able to put down. I tuned everything out while reading this book, realizing that time had passed as I was lost in the pages. Why is "Do not be afraid" the most repeated command in the Bible? ... The twists and turns in this story will take you on a journey of overcoming paralyzing fear by faith, trust, and love. This book is for anyone who has experienced fear and anyone who loves a great Christian romance. I cannot wait to read more by this author!" —Sally Shupe

"*Found in the Woods* is a masterful story filled with hope, faith, and healing. Beth and Aiden are on a journey to find healing from past hurts and their place in life. Lakota, the wolf they befriend, is a strong symbol of all they struggle with. There is much to love about this story and the entire Frivolities series!" — Award-Winning author, Mary Manners

1

You will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow. — Isaiah 62:2

“Love stories come...” Dust motes drifted in a shaft of bright autumn sunshine. Paisley jotted a price on a tangerine-hued tag and attached it to the beautiful cover of a Christian romance, then replaced it on the bookshelf. Prior to her e-reader days, she would have bought the book to read for herself.

She blew dust off the top of the next book. Once she caught a quick glance of the front, she tossed the tattered, risqué-covered paperback in the discard pile.

“And love stories go.” She hesitated before grabbing the next book. Had she tossed her love for Rob in the trash without giving it a chance to bloom?

Preparation for a tag sale was a whole new prospect for her. Who would have guessed she’d be in this nice frame house in northeast Nebraska? But she was always up for something new.

The home still smelled stale. Maybe the Waverly family should have made arrangements for it to be cleaned first. But thanks to the open windows, the odor’s vigor waned.

The first thing Paisley had done upon arriving at the empty house in Norfolk was get rid of musty unwashed clothing and bedding. So far, she’d run across no kidney-shaped paisley design in the place.

That's what Rob had called their names: kidney-shaped. She liked to think pear-shaped sounded prettier, as in a ripe fruit with a curlicue at the end. There were a multitude of examples of the beautiful paisley design on fabrics in gorgeous colors. Some shapes appeared slimmer, like happy, fat teardrops.

Robin Paisley and Paisley Robbins.

The idea of their names, and God's sense of humor, still tickled her.

It was their names that had brought Rob into her life in the first place. Their transposed names often got mixed up in the mail in southern California.

She flipped hair over her shoulder and continued tagging the books on the top row of shelving. She'd first visited Nebraska for a short time as a girl when she met her aunt, Rainbow Reinforth. Paisley looked on the timing as a God-thing when Aunt Rainbow called out of the blue and asked for Paisley's help.

Aunt Rainbow's end of the conversation wove through Paisley's mind. "I can't back out on my Alaskan cruise. The money, the bucket list. When I get home, I'm facing bunion surgery. I committed to tagging the whole house as soon as he passed. The man died sooner than we thought. It had to be the Lord who brought you to mind."

"What exactly does tag a house mean?" Paisley had asked.

"It involves marking the things inside the house, and it's the way I've been earning spending money lately. You know how I've always lived for a deal. Estate sales, garage sales, you name it. But I've run out of room at my place. So I finally figured out how to have fun with other people's belongings without taking them home with me. I tag items and others get

the thrill of a bargain."

Paisley had been around her share of used goods, having lived most of her life moving from place to place. In the early days prior to her illness, her mother called their moves perfect timing. She just knew God was involved in their relocation every six months. They traveled light and found what they needed by barter or at second-hand stores.

Seeds of Paisley's latest move had come to fruition in her mind while she listened to her aunt's plea. The timing of Aunt Rainbow's call came within days of Paisley learning she was out of a house-sitting position. Good thing she'd been used to the habit of moving at the drop of a hat. She'd been tempted to linger at a friend's residence on the tree lined cul-de-sac because she enjoyed caring for bushes and blooming flowers.

But, especially because loving Rob hadn't worked out, she'd jumped at the chance to come to Nebraska. She grabbed another book. "Ah...ah...choo!"

"Bless you." A woman's voice echoed.

Paisley jerked, grabbed a shelf, and regained her balance. She turned to see the visitor pass through the kitchen door.

"I'm so sorry to startle you. I'm Nora Waverly and you must be Paisley Robbins."

"Wow, you gave me a start. Just before I sneezed I was asking myself if I should keep pricing or if I should suck all this grime into a vacuum."

"I know just the person to get the grime ahead of you. Oren and I offered to clean before he died, but Mark insisted things were fine and we didn't want to rile him up. I think our babysitter is looking to make more money for college. I also apologize for not making an effort to meet you earlier. Rainbow assured

us you are trustworthy. I just stopped by on my way home.”

Paisley stepped off the ladder. “I’d offer a hand, but as you can see, I’m covered in dust.”

Nora looked professional in a flowing gray sweater over a purple blouse and dressy dark jeans.

“I’m surprised school is out already. But I’ve gone through a lot, one long bookshelf here in the front room since clearing Mr. Waverly’s bedroom yesterday.”

“You must have barely unpacked. There’s so much here.” Nora waved an arm. “Rainbow probably told you Oren is a bank exec and I teach. We don’t have time to go through the house, and when we hired Rainbow, we still believed Dad Mark’s death was in the future.”

Paisley liked Nora’s energetic personality and highlighted swingy bob that swayed when the woman moved.

“Oren and I just want to get the place emptied. He’s at the bank long hours and I need to concentrate on teaching first graders. In case Rainbow didn’t say it, you have *carte blanche*—permission to touch anything and everything as you go through every nook and cranny. Toss it. Put it aside for us to decide on later if it appears personal. Or mark it for sale.”

“That’s pretty much how Aunt Rainbow advised me to sort through things, Nora,” Paisley said. “The organization comes easy to me, but the pricing is all new.”

“I hope your pretty yellow blouse doesn’t get ruined here on the job.”

“Thanks. I can get another blouse if I need it.”

“All right, then. I wanted to meet you and see how

it's going. A giant thanks to both you and Rainbow. Oren considered going through the house, but dealing with his dad's papers resurrected too many memories of his mom. It was all he could deal with. It was too hard on him to clean out the rest of his father's belongings. This is the only home my husband knew and memories continue to crowd him each time he crosses the threshold. But don't be surprised if Oren stops in to meet you as well, Paisley."

The house seemed empty and quiet once Nora left, taking some of Paisley's energy with her.

She blew a gust of pent-up air, relishing the silence. Her music had ended sometime during Nora's visit. She scanned the room, contemplating what to do next. She had started sorting and tagging collectibles and books on the shelves flanking the fireplace on the right. Bookcases and the fireplace covered the length of one wall. It was obvious the room had once been two, both dining and living. The front and corner of the home now had a wraparound porch that provided two entrances.

Paisley entered the kitchen to wash her hands. Then she drained a water bottle and put the empty plastic back in her tote to recycle. For the first time, she realized the quaint glass-fronted cabinet matched the one in the front room. No wonder the wall was so thick. She decided to start in the drawers from the front-room side and would continue with the bookcases once the room had been dusted.

She couldn't prevent memories of Rob from intruding.

Lord, could I have done anything to lift that chip on his shoulder?

~*~

Where could that woman have gone off to? In his zone, Robin Paisley's hand quivered. He'd worked for most of thirty-six hours straight on an antique child's rocking chair, only stuffing whatever was handy into his mouth as he passed through the kitchen from the bathroom. Paisley had never understood when he started on a project he saw it through to the completed restoration. Once he had all the tools lined up, he went at the task with methodical intent. He reached for a smaller grain block of sandpaper, catching sight of the toy scooter. That was next.

Paisley. Lovely, full of life, creative, giving, flighty Paisley. According to her, she couldn't abide what she referred to as the dark side of his personality. It never had been his nature to smile or laugh a lot.

And why was he having such a hard time getting over her absence?

They'd been good together.

They'd declared their love.

They'd talked about forever.

She'd accepted his ring. And tossed it back.

He wanted to pick up the kid's rocking chair and throw it against the wall.

Her voice in his head halted the impulse. "You're just so down and sad all the time. The glass is half-full, Rob, not half-empty. Don't you think God wants you to enjoy sunshine and a light heart?"

She didn't get it.

He'd never been a happy, dance-y, smiley, light-hearted type of guy.

Maybe it was a hard way to live.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I

will give you rest.

Instead of comforting his restless soul, the verse made him frown.

~*~

Paisley folded back the beveled glass doors against the walls on either side of the cabinet. She was in trouble. Did Aunt Rainbow know about this fancy knife collection? How was Paisley expected to know what prices to mark them with? Some handles were constructed of pearl, and others of carved ivory, inlaid wood, or plastic. Should the vast collection be marked individually or by groups? She'd have to consult the instructions Aunt Rainbow left. If the knives weren't listed, Paisley would search the Internet.

She ran a finger over an intricate resin handle. It felt loose. Rob would be able to repair it good as new.

Lord, why does he keep coming into my thoughts? Do you want him to be a part of my life?

She closed her eyes and inhaled a remnant of the spicy, cedar aroma from the built-in shelves. Paisley swiped a finger over the wood, where it left a clear trail. Dirt obviously filtered in around glass doors, not surprising due to the cropland that surrounded the town. Oren's mother had probably shelved delicate floral patterned china here. Paisley could almost hear the clink as fine pieces were removed to set the dining table for holiday meals. She dabbed a sniffle at the notion of Mark and Oren missing the woman of the house.

Rob and Paisley both knew the hurt of having no anchor in family roots. He hadn't known his father. The lack of familial foundation was revealed in his

eyes when his guard was down. He had empathized with Paisley when she told him her father died when she was eight. Her mother then uprooted them and Paisley never saw her grandparents again.

She shut the doors and gently pulled out the top drawer. What a mess. She heaved a huge sigh and shook her hair back over her shoulder.

Such a junk drawer would thrill Rob. He could probably use every knob, screw, and do-hickey he ran across on some of the damaged antiques he turned into treasured collectibles.

She yanked the drawer out further, attempting to whisk away Rob's intrusion on her mind. There was nothing of value inside. How did one get all the fuzzy dust balls cleared amidst crumbled rubber bands and uncurled paperclips?

Rubber gloves. Good thinking. She'd get a waste basket and a box for what was salvageable and come back to the dirty drawer later.

The second drawer held a mish-mash of folded and tattered tablecloths, napkins, and doilies. Unfolding them revealed that most would make cleaning rags, so she placed them in a plastic sack for later use. Of all things, there was a shower curtain still in the package, where it had ripped at the folds. Balancing the face of the drawer against her thighs, the contents from the back slid forward. Umpteen photographs and old letters drifted her way.

She coughed in reaction to the airless stirring of dust, and then sneezed into her shoulder. Beneath the movement of dry stagnant air, she caught the whiff of a familiar odor. Patchouli oil. How odd. Patchouli oil had been her mother's choice fragrance. Paisley found it tolerable in scented soups, if used sparingly.

The kitchen table looked like a good place to set the drawer, but it was less than inviting since it had been used to support a lot of dirty items. She grabbed the plastic curtain and closed the drawer, freed the shower curtain from its useless cover, and spread it across the table. Once she retrieved the drawer, and it was out in the open, she couldn't help but feel that she was snooping. Rather than the fabric of lives, she was in the details of lives. On the other hand, Nora had given her permission to go through everything.

Paisley tossed the aged envelopes, filled mostly with faded bills. How come Oren hadn't been through the drawer? There were a few personal letters that she set aside for the family.

Most of the photos were black and white with imprinted dates along the edge, but a couple faded color snapshots drew her attention. The blonde's good looks were captivating, but the image of a serious dark-haired man drew her with magnetic force. Her senses reacted like a metal detector signaling a find. She snagged the picture with an unsteady hand. The man could pass for Robin Paisley. How could he have a twin from a bygone era?

Feverish heat mixed with cold chills washed through her.

With trembling fingers, Paisley turned over both pictures looking for notations. The snapshot of the couple standing in front of a tree simply read *Mark Waverly and Precious*. In the other shot, the same twosome embraced in the open doorway of an antique van-like truck. On the back was scribbled *Precious approves of Mark's paint job on Granddad's business truck*.

Her heart jumped at the sound of a man clearing his throat, and she looked up.

What was Rob doing here?

Paisley saw black and white spots, and swayed.

“Hey, hold on. Sorry I scared you. I should have knocked or called out.” The man in a navy suit and loosened purple tie leaped forward and eased her onto a chair.

When she looked at him again, she knew she wasn’t dreaming. Paisley made a desperate attempt to speak, but no sound escaped her open mouth. Such a shock brought tears and uncoordinated stumbling when she tried to stand.

“I’m Oren Waverly. This is my dad’s home.”

The guy was a dead-ringer for Robin Paisley, the only man who’d touched her heart.

2

"Restore with Rob," he groused into the phone.

"Oooh. Who stepped on your tail?"

Paisley? No way. Sure sounds like her. "Who is this?"

"You've forgotten my voice? Should I be crushed? Do I really sound different?"

I'd like nothing better than to restore our relationship by reconnecting with you. "Paisley? Sorry, it's early."

But I have no idea where you've run off to. "I almost didn't answer. Where's area code 402?"

"I didn't think about you being two hours earlier than we are here. Would you believe, Nebraska? It's a long story. And I'm so sorry. How are you, Rob?"

Her greeting was far too casual after their last fall-out, but typical of the flighty woman. He pictured easy breezy Paisley in her floppy hats and loose flowing shirts.

Intense longing twisted through him, settling like a ball of lead in his gut. At least now, he knew where she'd flown off to.

"Listen, I've run across something that involves you. Wasn't your mom's name Precious?"

"Yes. But why would you call about my mother?" He was wide awake now.

"Way too complicated to go into over the phone, but I believe it involves your family.

"I don't have family in Nebraska."

"Are you into anything big job-wise right now?"

"I'm just working on some antique toys that will be Christmas presents."

"Sounds interesting. What kind of toys?"

"A rocking horse that needs runners, a scooter that will be like new with wheels and red paint, and ice skates. I need to grind off the rust and attach new leather straps." *Way too much detail for someone who didn't care anymore.* "I'm trying to make sense of why you're calling. Surely it's not to ask what I'm working on."

You broke up with me, remember?

"Ice skates in southern California? That's different." It sounded like she crossed a hard-surfaced floor. "Listen, this is important beyond imagination, or I wouldn't have called. Is there any chance you can fly out here?"

The weakness to give in to anything Paisley asked started in his stomach and traveled to his knees. His heart threatened to pound out of his chest, simply over the phone connection that brought him the sound of her voice. There was no reason in the whole wide world for his ex-fiancé, the woman who disappeared without giving their relationship a chance, to come out of left field with such an invitation.

"You've got to give me more reason to pack up and leave than a surprise call and plea to travel to God-knows-where." Did his voice reveal the anger that now rolled through him?

"It might have to do with your dad. I can't say more than that without seeing you." She sucked in a noisy breath. He pictured her tossing her long hair over her shoulder. "But I promise you will be surprised beyond belief."

Did she really say his father?

Rob wiped his suddenly leaking brow. "Are you asking me to drop everything here, and traipse after you, when my family history is what provoked you to make me history in your life?"

He recalled the way she'd looked when he last saw her. The day she'd handed back his diamond ring and shattered his world. Rob had been so taken aback that he stared at the ring cupped in his hand.

She'd dipped her head and hid her eyes under the floppy brim of a blushing tan hat. Then her words ripped his world apart. "I know it won't work. I can't face a future with you until you take care of the baggage you carry around in your head. You've grown into a wonderful, talented man who believes in Jesus. You've had strong Biblical men in your life in recent years. I'm sorry you never knew your father, but you now have a heavenly Father who cares for you."

Yes, Rob cared about the father he never knew. There would always be something missing as to who Robin Paisley was, and the crazy name he carried around, thanks to his mother. Who named their kid for a bird and a womanly design? She'd never told him what her real last name had been or where she'd come from.

He'd tried so hard to forget.

"Rob, are you still there?"

But Paisley was part of him. When he went to see her two weeks after the ring fiasco, to grovel, she had disappeared. His heart had felt as bleak as desert drought. And his mind had been filled with thoughts darker than ever before.

"Rob." The alarm in her voice cleared the cobwebs of the past.

"I don't understand why you can't give me more