

CONTEMPORARY
ROMANCE

WR

IN HIS SIGHT

—
—
Finally, an inspirational romance
with realistic thoughts and actions!

—
—
~The Romance Studio on
THE INHERITANCE

—
—
PAMELA S THIBODEAUX

IN HIS SIGHT

by

Pamela S. Thibodeaux

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.

IN HIS SIGHT

COPYRIGHT © 2010 by PAMELA S. THIBODEAUX

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the author or White Rose Publishing, a division of 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 away to other people. If you would like to share an eBook edition, please purchase an additional copy for each person you share it with. If you're reading an eBook edition, and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your use only, then please return to the publisher and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

Contact Information:

titleadmin@whiterosepublishing.com

Cover Art by Nicola Martinez

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

Publishing History
First White Rose Edition, 2010

Published in the United States of America

Dedication

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ ~ were it not for Your hand guiding me and Your voice encouraging me during my darkest hour, this story would not be finished much less published. Thank You for entrusting me with the gift of sharing my faith in You through writing.

Praise for Pamela S. Thibodeaux

Winter Madness is a wonderful romance and an excellent example of Spiritual growth. ~Reviewed by Dee Daily for The Romance Studio

A good, sweet read charged with attraction but an emphasis on true love. I recommend it to women of all ages. ~ Review of *A Hero for Jessica* by Violet for The Long and the Short of It

Cathy's Angel is a short tale that is entertaining as well as inspiring. Well done! ~ Reviewed by Marlene for Fallen Angel Reviews

Prologue

Lorelei Connor scoured the atlas on the coffee table. Her eyes searched far from the small town where she resided. The tick of the clock on the mantle above the fireplace reminded her time had run out.

Fear crawled up her spine.

They had lived in one place for too long. It was time to move on.

She closed her eyes, placed the red marker over the state of Tennessee and let the Lord lead her hand. She gazed down at the circle just southeast of Nashville. *Stars Crossing*. The name leapt out. She did a quick search on the Internet for specifics and clicked on the "Real Estate" link to verify available housing. A note on the page caught her eye. *Handyman needed for maintenance and minor repairs of properties owned by agency. Emailed resumes accepted.* Her soul danced in excitement.

She picked up the laptop and rushed into her daughter's room. "Laurel, I know where we're going!"

Her child groaned and buried her face in a pillow. "Not again, Mom. Where to now?"

Lorelei climbed on the bed and elbowed her daughter in a gentle gesture. "Look at this little town in Tennessee I've discovered."

Laurel sat up and glanced at the screen. "*Stars Crossing?* Who ever heard of Stars Crossing,

Tennessee? Stupid name if you ask me. You promised we'd stay here for a while."

Despondency colored her tone and made Lorelei's heart ache. "This time for good, no more moving, you'll see."

"Yeah, like I haven't heard *that* before."

Lorelei closed the laptop and crawled off the bed with a sigh. Weariness dragged at her. She understood how Laurel felt. She, too, despaired of the constant moving. Maybe this time she'd find the peace she craved and a quiet, unhurried lifestyle where she felt safe.

"Pack up your things."

She returned to the living room and emailed her resume to the real estate agency. Two days later she and Laurel hit the road, everything they owned in the backseat and trunk of her car.

Five days after leaving Wyoming, they arrived in Stars Crossing, Tennessee. Within hours Lorelei had a place to live, a job, and Laurel was registered for school.

Chapter One

Carson Alexander walked through his classroom and tugged desks into a semi circle around the dry erase board. One thing he loved about teaching sixth-grade English at Stars Crossing Middle School was that the classes were small. With no more than fifteen students at a time he could work closely with each one and give them the attention they needed and deserved. Another thing he appreciated was the lack of standard or strict curriculum. As long as the children passed the exams set forth by the Department of Education, he could teach as he pleased.

So far, his kids excelled, maintaining some of the highest scores in the entire school. Pride filled his soul and caused his heart to swell, chest to puff out.

Pride goes before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

The Voice echoed in his mind, ricocheted through his soul. He shrugged off the warning, walked to his desk and picked up the name tags for each incoming student. He thumbed through the stack, pondered each one and wondered about the child attached to the name....Jenny & Jerry Smith—twins or un-related? One name struck him hard, sent unnamed emotion curling through his system—*Laurel Connor*.

He hadn't heard the name Laurel in years and

then, used only as a surname or when referring to the small town in Mississippi from whence he came. He moved to Stars Crossing, Tennessee five years ago for two reasons. One, the teaching position and two, the town though smaller, reminded him of home.

Memories crashed through the floodgates he'd built around his heart...the huge two-story house and two-hundred acre farm where he grew up. His seven siblings, parents who adored him—their eldest son, and the pain of losing everything he held near and dear to his heart.

Tears threatened. His vision blurred, hands began to shake. Carson swallowed the lump in his throat, put down the stack, and shoved his hands into the front pockets of his slacks. Adrenaline pumped through him, caused his pulse to skitter and jump. Saliva pooled in his mouth. By sheer force he willed his emotions under control.

The bell rang, and he turned to greet the children who rushed into the room. He watched as one-by-one they filed in and took a seat.

Someone was missing.

He rifled through the name tags then wandered over to the door and saw her trudging toward the class. Desolation lined every feature of an otherwise lovely face. He turned back to the class and began roll call. He handed each child their student ID and waited for her to enter. The tardy bell rang seconds before she reached for the knob and pulled open the door.

All eyes turned. She averted her gaze, mumbled an apology and slid into the only available seat.

"Hello, Miss Connor." Warmth in his tone eased the frown from her face.

"How'd you know my name?"

He smiled and handed her a name tag. "Only one I had left."

"Oh." She ducked her head at the snickers coming from the other students. A flush darkened her cheeks.

"Enough!"

Everyone jumped to attention. Muffled laughter died.

"One thing I will not tolerate is rudeness. Especially when it causes disruption in my class or embarrassment to one of my students." One at a time, he met each student's gaze until assured his meaning was clear; then he continued. "We're all equal here, classmates, and we will respect each other."

Relief flickered in her eyes. He smiled down at her, pleased when the corners of her mouth tugged upward in response. Carson walked over to his desk then turned back to address the class.

"I never understood why we start the school year on a Wednesday, but since I can't change that, we're going to spend the next three days getting to know one another. I don't mean in name only. Some of you have lived here your entire lives. Some are new and some have only been in the area a couple of years." He hesitated, picked up a pen and tapped it against his palm.

"What I'd like for each of you to do is write a one page essay on your life...who you are, where you're from, what you want to be when you grow up...keep it brief, concise, and to the point. We'll read them aloud over the next two days. Friday is open house, and I'm looking forward to meeting your parents or guardians. Any questions, don't hesitate to ask."

His gaze met Laurel's. Only a brief moment of contact, but long enough for him to see the sheer panic

there. Color rushed to her cheeks. She lowered her head, placed a trembling hand to paper and began to write.

Later that afternoon, Carson sat at his desk, head in hands. Along with English, he taught Art and Physical Education. Between the academic subjects and herding a bunch of sixth-graders through PE, the first day of school left him exhausted. Added to that, the memories which bombarded him from the moment he picked up Laurel Conner's name tag haunted him throughout the day.

Anger pummeled through his veins. Slapping his palms on the desk, he pushed the chair back with such force it toppled, the crash intercepted by the window frame behind his desk. A low growl sounded in his throat. He pivoted on his heel to stare out the glass panes. His stomach roiled. Bile rose in his throat. He swallowed hard and scrubbed the heels of his hands over his face. He ground his teeth until his jaw ached then clenched them in determination. He would not speak aloud the tragedy, would not give this thing any more power over him.

Sleep was far from peaceful. Carson awoke more than once drenched in sweat, his heart at a gallop so fast he thought the organ would explode. He rubbed the spot in his chest until the desperate pace eased, then drifted back to hell. When the alarm rang at five a.m. he slapped it off and tumbled from the bed. On automatic pilot Carson dressed, downed a glass of juice and headed out for his morning ride. The sleek mountain bike, fresh air, and soft dew refreshed his weary soul and helped him prepare for the day ahead.

After the children read their essays aloud on

Thursday and Friday, Carson picked them up to examine. This would enable him to see which student needed help and where. Whether in basic points of English or specific aspects, he learned a lot about his student's level of understanding from this first assignment of the year.

Laurel's paper reverberated through his brain. He frowned. No doubt she'd made up most of her life story, but why? What could be in an eleven-year-old's past that would make her lie? He'd have to ask her mother at Open House if he wanted to find out the truth. Friday night he waited, even stayed late, but neither Laurel nor her mother showed up at the event.

Saturday morning dawned bright and clear. Brilliant hues of orange and gold splattered across a baby blue sky. Warmth and light bathed the earth in vibrant colors of early fall. Scents perfumed the air as Carson set out on his bike. Pine, magnolia, honeysuckle. He breathed deep and picked up his pace.

Over the hump and through the woods to grandmother's house we go. The ditty flitted through his mind and made him chuckle. Laughter was a welcome relief after the last few days. He relished the opportunity to ride away the tension. He wasn't on his way to grandmother's house, but to 123 Horseshoe Lane, the address on Laurel Connor's school records. Her mother's name wove through his thoughts and shuddered through his entire being—*Lorelei Connor*. Goosebumps rose on his flesh. He clamped down on the dark emotions swirling, and shoved them from his mind. Rounding a curve, he slowed his bike and turned into the drive, then stopped to study the tiny home.

His spirits lifted at the sight of the A-frame structure that resembled an overgrown doll house. Lace-shaped shutters framed pale yellow windows set in vinyl siding a shade creamier. Cheery curtains swayed in the breeze. A wrap-around porch extended handrails on each side of the steps and welcomed visitors like open arms. Small flowerbeds on either side offered a smorgasbord of fragrance to tease the nostrils. He pedaled closer, careful not to disturb anything, and dismounted the bike. He snapped the kickstand into place then sauntered to the door and rang the bell. The door opened with a jerk.

“May I help you?”

“Ms. Connor?”

A wary expression crossed her face. “Who’s asking?”

He extended a hand toward her. “I’m Carson Alexander, Laurel’s English teacher. I’d like to speak with you a moment if it’s not too much trouble.”

She ignored his outstretched hand, stepped through the entry, and yanked the door shut behind her. “About?”

Surprised at her coldness, he took a step back and allowed his hand to drop to his side. “I asked the students to do an essay on their life so they would know a little more about each other and for me to get an idea of their strengths and weaknesses in English. Laurel’s paper was...shall I say...inventive?”

Her eyebrow arched, annoyance darkened her gaze. “Was there something wrong with the paper, Mr. Alexander?”

“No, the writing is very articulate.”

“Then I don’t see what the problem is.”

He cleared his throat. “The problem is that the

entire story is made up. I've taught long enough to know kids will embellish what they consider a boring existence to a certain degree but I've never had one write an outright fairytale."

"Were there misspelled words, poor sentence structure, or improper grammar?"

He shook his head.

"Then I suggest you concentrate on how well-versed she is in the English language and not the validity of her life story, which is none of your business, anyway." She turned back into the house and slammed the door in his face.

Carson stood for a full minute before indignation set in. He ground his teeth and fought the urge to knock again. Swiveling on his heel, he tugged the bike from its rest, wrenched the kickstand into place and strode back up the walk. About half-way home the absurdity of what happened struck him. He chuckled and slowed his pace. Boy, what a beauty! Rich dark hair, crystal-green eyes like her daughter's, finely-chiseled features, ivory skin, *and a mixture of fire and ice in her veins*. His heart executed a happy little flip. He'd found his woman. All of his life he'd known what kind of woman he wanted as a wife—strong, passionate, and beautiful. Lorelei Connor fit the bill perfectly.

The next morning he drove to church, surprised and pleased to see Laurel and her mother seated a few rows ahead of where he sat. No mistaking the identical-shaped heads, similar curve of cheeks, sweep of lashes, mysterious smile. Had he not known better, he'd swear the two were sisters, instead of mother and daughter. The only obvious difference in them besides age was hair color. Where Laurel sported thick, golden locks tied in a ponytail, her mother's sleek, sable

strands were pulled into a French twist. A few errant curls escaped to frame her face and caress the elegant arc of her neck.

His heart hammered against his ribcage, stomach quivered. Apprehension rose to choke him. Carson clutched his hands, sat back, closed his eyes and fought the demon within.

Chapter Two

Lorelei stood in the driveway and surveyed the property before her. The tiny log cabin charmed her with its authenticity, but the lawn insulted her landscaper's sensibilities. No flowers or shrubs. No bordered walkway to the house. Not a single item to accentuate the beauty of the land on which the cabin stood. She shuddered. Nothing hurt her soul more than to see an undeveloped lawn, especially one with such promise.

"Think you can fix this one up as pretty as you did yours?"

She turned to face the real estate agent who happened to be her landlord, as well as her employer. "Depends on who lives here. We'd want the décor to complement the tenant as well as accentuate the design of the home."

He chuckled. "Since the tenant is a bachelor I guess you ought not choose those frilly looking shutters."

She smiled. "I have a few ideas. When can I start?"

"Bring your sketches to the office tomorrow morning, early, and we'll decide from there."

The next morning, she arrived at the real estate office within minutes of dropping off Laurel at school. Mr. Flaven led her into a conference room where she spread the sketches across a large table. She waited

while he put on a pot of coffee to brew. He sat across from her and surveyed the various designs. He sat back and contemplated her over steepled fingers, an expression of awe on his face.

“Can you really do all this?”

She nodded. “Depending on which arrangement or combination you approve.”

“You sure your title is Landscape Architect and not Magician?”

A flush warmed her cheeks. “Not magic, just passion. When other little girls played dolls, I built their houses out of sticks and stones.”

He laughed. “I’m sure there’s a wealth of passion inside you.”

A chill washed over her. She shifted in her chair and crossed her arms over her chest. Something in her demeanor must have alerted him to the fact he’d overstepped his boundaries.

He eyed her a moment. A kaleidoscope of emotions flitted across his features—suspicion, intrigue, and finally, concern. The interest in his gaze turned to tenderness. He leaned forward to close the gap between them. “That was not a come-on, Ms. Connor, merely an observation. I’m a happily married man.”

Tiny bubbles of hot air burst beneath her skin and scorched her cheeks. “I apologize for misunderstanding.” She held her breath and sent silent, fervent pleas for grace heavenward, until he lowered his gaze to the plans once more.

Thirty minutes later, she left the office and drove to the nearest lumber yard to pick up tools she’d need to cultivate the lawn. She perused the garden center and made a mental list of what plants and shrubs they

had in stock. She also noted the faux rocks and boulders as well as stones and rough wood she could use in the design her employer chose.

Excitement paved the way to the home across town from where she and Laurel lived. She parked her car, climbed out, and leaned against the door for a moment. Visions of new grass, green shrubs, and a stone walkway filled her mind. Instead of flowers, he'd have a rock garden. In place of roses, a barrel cut in half and filled with local wildflowers would suffuse the area around the front entry with scent, and add a splash of color to the otherwise masculine decor.

Makes no sense to stand around and daydream about the end result. Time to get to work and make it happen.

She slathered sunscreen on her bare arms and face, pulled on canvas work gloves, then slapped the cap on her head. She took the spade, shovel and rake out of the car, then set to work.

About mid-morning she sat on the porch, pulled a water bottle out of her lunch cooler and took a sip. The cool liquid relieved her parched throat. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Contentment rolled through her. It had been so long...the smell of freshly turned earth, the vision of what would be...

The hours flew by. When her stomach growled Lorelei glanced at her watch in surprise and decided to go home for an hour or so, eat lunch, and rest before tackling the afternoon chores.

The first thing she did when she got home was to shower off the grime from her activities. Her sandwich had wilted despite the coolness of the lunch bucket, so she prepared another and poured herself a tumbler of milk. Carrying the plate and glass into the living room, she sat on the couch and propped her feet on the coffee