

A movie poster for 'Reluctant Bridesmaid'. The background shows a man and a woman standing in a scenic landscape with mountains and a building. The man is on the left, wearing a white shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a brown scarf. The title 'WENDY DAVY' is at the top in a blue, stylized font. Below it, the text 'A SARA MERRITT AWARD-WINNER' is written in red. Further down, the tagline 'THE MAN WITH NERVES OF STEEL JUST MET HIS MATCH' is in red. The main title 'RELUCTANT BRIDESMAID' is at the bottom in a large, white, stylized font with blue outlines.

WENDY DAVY

A  
SARA MERRITT  
AWARD-WINNER

THE MAN WITH NERVES OF STEEL  
JUST MET HIS MATCH

RELUCTANT  
BRIDESMAID

# Reluctant Bridesmaid

Wendy Davy

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.

### **Reluctant Bridesmaid**

**COPYRIGHT 2010 by Wendy Davy**

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 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.

Contact Information: [titleadmin@pelicanbookgroup.com](mailto:titleadmin@pelicanbookgroup.com)

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

Cover Art by *Nicola Martinez*

White Rose Publishing,  
a division of Pelican Ventures, LLC  
[www.whiterosepublishing.com](http://www.whiterosepublishing.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, 2011

Print Edition ISBN 978-1-61116-057-4

Electronic Edition ISBN 978-1-61116-058-1

**Published in the United States of America**

## Dedication

For those who have lost loved ones. May God bring  
you peace in the storm.



Praise for award-winning author Wendy Davy

*Snow Angels*

"I loved this story....If you enjoy characters that you "live" along with, moving conflicts, and impossible romance, then Snow Angels is a book for you!"

~Reviewer: Steph B.  
The Romance Studio

*Night Waves*

"This is a very entertaining inspirational romantic suspense! Very enjoyable!... I like how Ms. Davy focuses on one fundamental lesson rather than diverging into several. Throughout Cali's efforts and struggles Nick has to gently but consistently remind her that God is the one in control of our lives and she has to learn to trust Him in all things. It is done as a natural extension of Nick's character and not at all preachy. This is a good romantic suspense that I think anyone would enjoy as a very satisfying read! "

~ Reviewed by: Martha E.,  
You Gotta Read Reviews

*New Beginnings*

Night Owls Reviews Top Pick!

"I really enjoyed this Inspirational Romance and I couldn't wait to see how Ms. Davy would end her story...I'm new to Ms. Davy and her writing, but I'm definitely a fan now!"~ Night Owl Romance



“...The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

~ 1 Samuel 16:7







# 1

“Get out of the way!” Jordan Harrison shrieked as she jammed the brake pedal into the floor. She released one white-knuckled hand from the steering wheel to smash her palm against the horn, but the blaring sound did nothing to deter the bewildered deer standing on the narrow country road.

The SUV’s tires hydroplaned on wet asphalt, sending the vehicle sliding out of control. Shock stole her breath, and she braced for impact. At the last possible moment, the deer bounded across the road and disappeared into dense foliage. Momentarily relieved, Jordan didn’t see the tree approaching until it was too late.

The passenger door smashed against the huge oak’s trunk, jerking her sideways. Her seatbelt snapped tight, tearing into flesh. Pain erupted in her shoulders and shot up her neck. Bark splintered. Metal crunched. Seconds later, a quiet stillness replaced the grating, metallic sounds.

The tension headache she’d had a few moments ago paled in comparison to the intense throbbing in her skull now. Nausea threatened, and she closed her eyes as her breathing came in short, rapid bursts.

*Lord, I don’t need this. Not now.*

Tires screeched on the road behind her, but the sound didn’t register until her driver’s side door jerked

open. "Are you OK?"

Jordan looked toward the anxious voice, and her breath caught. A tall, broad-shouldered man leaned in the doorway. His dark-haired good looks and handsome features stunned her nearly as much as the accident had.

Concern creased his brow as his light blue eyes roamed over her. "Should I call an ambulance?"

Jordan drew in a shaky breath and whispered, "No. I-I'm OK."

"Are you sure?" His deep voice sounded apprehensive. "I saw what happened. You hit that tree hard."

"I'm a little shaken, but I'm not hurt."

The man's tense features relaxed, and he nodded. "Sounds like someone up above was looking out for you."

"I have no doubt about that." Jordan pried her fingers from the wheel and raked a hand through her hair. "You must be the guy in the white truck that's been following me."

"I wasn't following you. We just happened to be heading in the same direction. There aren't many places this old country road leads. You must be headed for the lake, too."

"I was. I mean, I still am."

"Come on. Let's get you out of there." His muscular arm brushed her shoulder as he leaned across and released her seatbelt. Heat slid along her skin where he touched her, and Jordan stilled. With all the problems she faced, she had no time to deal with a spontaneous attraction to a stranger.

She steeled her nerves and took his offered hand. His warm, solid grip helped steady her as she stepped

out on shaky legs. The rain-freshened air calmed her but did nothing to ease her churning stomach as they walked around the vehicle to view the damaged side. Jordan's heart lurched at the sight of the crumpled passenger door and flat right, front tire. She shook her head at the unexpected and costly delay. "I'm going to be late for dinner."

The man's startled gaze snapped to her. "You could have hit that deer and been seriously injured or killed. I'd hardly think being late for dinner is something you should be concerned about."

"It's a little more involved than that, but you're right. At least I'm alive." She rubbed her temples as she surveyed the remote, desolate area. "The travel brochures claimed this road to be a picturesque, winding drive toward Smith Mountain Lake. I agree with the winding part, but I'm not so sure about how scenic it is. I haven't seen anything but trees and fields for the past hour."

He knelt and studied the deflated tire. "Don't forget about the Virginia wildlife."

"Oh, yes. The deer are scenic."

"Unless you run into one." He stood and dusted his hands. "Do you have a spare tire?"

"Full-sized."

"Then you can probably drive out of here. If you're up to it."

"I can drive." She eyed her SUV with speculation. "Are you sure the engine isn't damaged?"

"I don't think so. But, if you don't want to take the chance, it would be my pleasure to give you a ride."

She shook her head. "Thanks for the offer, but if you dropped me off I'd have no way to escape if I needed to."

He gave her a questioning look but didn't comment. "Let me grab a few tools, and I'll give you a hand."

"Thanks, I appreciate your help."

"No problem." He headed toward his truck with long, purposeful strides.

A curious wasp buzzed by Jordan's head, weaving back and forth as if sizing her up. "Go away." She nearly swatted the pest but stopped herself. She did not need a nasty sting adding to her misery.

Securing her shoulder-length hair in a clip, she blew her thin, wispy bangs from her eyes and crossed to the vehicle's rear, placing some distance between her and the roving insect. She lifted open the back door and unzipped her suitcase. Shuffling through her hastily packed items, she found a bottle of ibuprofen. Swallowing two pills on a dry throat nearly gagged her, as they left a bitter, gritty texture on her tongue, but she managed to get them down. She swallowed again to dislodge the horrid aftertaste.

With hopes the pounding in her head would soon ease, she dropped onto the bumper and took in her surroundings. The momentary silence after the accident had given way to a cacophony of insect and animal sounds, most of which Jordan didn't recognize. She did pick out the sound of tree frogs from among the various inhabitants and a set of crows screeching their distaste at her presence.

"Yeah, well." Jordan slapped at a thirsty mosquito as she lifted her gaze to a set of black birds circling overhead. "I don't want to be here either."

The man returned with a lug wrench and a jack. "So, what kind of dinner are you attending that you need a way to escape? Is it a blind date or something?"

“No. It’s not a date. I’m meeting my mother’s fiancé for the first time.”

“And that’s not a good thing?”

Jordan scoffed. “All I want is to talk sense into Mom and take her home.” Her fears and anxiety came back in full force as she thought of her dire circumstances.

“Talk sense into her?” The man tossed the words over his shoulder as he dropped the tools and ducked under the SUV, paying no mind to dirtying his clothes.

Jordan waited for him to drag out the spare tire before she answered. “Yes. Sometimes I think an unpredictable stranger has replaced my sensible mother. She was always so level-headed before. Now I don’t know what she’s thinking.”

He rolled the tire toward the front, and Jordan followed with the jack and lug wrench. Setting down the tire, he knelt and draped an arm across his knee. “So what’s changed?”

“Mom met some wealthy architect and lost her common sense. She’s only known him three months, and she’s already agreed to marry him.” She rubbed the nape of her neck, soothing muscles rigid with tension.

The man stilled as astonishment crossed his features. “Jordan?”

Startled, she took a step back. “H-how did you know my name?”

He grinned and ran a hand over his clean-shaven jaw. “I’m Tanner Breckenridge.”

Dumbfounded, she struggled to intake a lungful of air. “You’re Maxwell’s son?”

“In the flesh.”

Of all the people to witness her mishap, it had to

be her mother's fiancé's son? "Scoot over. I need to get to the lug nuts."

"Jordan, I can change the tire in five minutes."

With enough problems to face already, she did not want to be indebted to the Breckenridge family—for any reason. "I can manage just fine on my own."

He hesitated and then relented. "If you insist." He stood, eased around her, and leaned a shoulder against the injured oak tree, casually crossing his ankles. He twirled a finger around a waist-high blade of grass, absently plucking it from the earth as if he had no care in the world.

Jordan didn't know much about Tanner, but she did know he lived with his father. Not wanting to make a fool of herself if she had trouble loosening a lug nut, she suggested, "Why don't you go on home? I don't want to make you late for dinner."

He said nothing and Jordan's irritation mounted, but she focused on her task. The sooner she worked her way out of this mess, the better. The evening sun peeked through the remaining clouds, warming the June air and drying remnants of the brief rain shower. A trickle of sweat rolled from her creased brow, and she swiped it away. With damp palms, she placed the wrench on the nut and pressed hard. Sore from the accident, her muscles complained and the tool slipped. Her hand smacked against the blown tire's rim. Pain seared through her fingers. She dropped the tool, and it brushed her new Capri pants before hitting the ground, leaving a smudge of dark, greasy dirt on the material.

*Great.*

"Let me know if you change your mind."

Jordan twisted and looked up. "You're not going



home are you?"

"Nope. I'm not sure what kind of men you're used to, but around here, we don't leave stranded women alone to fend for themselves."

Jordan might have warmed at his chivalry if she hadn't been so aggravated. "Suit yourself."

She felt his gaze on her back as she placed the wrench on the nut again. Careful not to lose her grip this time, she yanked hard. Her knuckles felt the impact, but the nut didn't budge. Biting her lip to keep from screaming in frustration, she took a deep breath and yanked harder.

No luck.

"Try applying a slow, steady pressure." Tanner's calm voice penetrated her efforts.

Jordan glanced over her shoulder, dismayed to find him kneeling close behind her.

He nodded. "Slow and easy."

Swallowing her pride, she scooted closer and pressed slowly, leaning her weight into the task. The nut slipped a quarter of an inch. Trying again, she managed to loosen the nut. She turned to Tanner, expecting to see traces of smugness but found none.

"Thanks," she murmured. Using the same technique, she loosened the other nuts and set the jack under the SUV.

"Your mom tells us you own a website design business."

"That's right." Not in the mood for small talk, Jordan didn't elaborate. She pumped the jack, slowly easing the vehicle from the ground. After removing the nuts and the tire, Jordan heaved the spare into place. Beads of sweat rolled down her temple, back, and her chest as the temperatures continued to climb. Absently

swiping her forehead, she secured the lug nuts. Pleased with her work, Jordan let a small smile escape. She stood and dusted her hands, trying unsuccessfully to remove the grease from her fingers.

"I'm impressed." Tanner rose alongside her, his lips curving into a smile.

"About what? The fact I own a business or that I changed a flat tire?"

He lifted a shoulder. "Most women I know wouldn't even attempt to fix a flat."

"Well, I'm not most women."

"I can see that. You're not at all like I expected."

"Oh?" Curiosity sparked. "And what did you expect?"

Tanner shrugged again, and his smile revealed a dimple on his right cheek. "I thought you might be a little more like your mother. Sweet and delicate."

"Sorry to disappoint you."

"On the contrary, I'm intrigued. But it wouldn't have hurt my feelings if you really needed me. As a matter of fact, it probably would've boosted my ego a little."

Jordan doubted the handsome son of a famous, wealthy architect needed an ego boost, but she refrained from commenting. She plucked her shirt, lifting it from her damp skin and letting it fall back into place, wishing she wasn't so grimy and sweaty. She must look wretched and smell horrible.

"I'd better finish the tire. I need to shower before dinner." She released the jack. The wasp suddenly appeared again, threatening her with a painful sting. It danced around her face as if coming in for a closer look. She leaped up and backed away, running into Tanner's solid, hard chest.

“Easy now.” He grasped her upper arms, steadying her.

Jordan jumped from the unexpected contact. Taking a step away, she spun in circles looking for the precarious insect.

“Hold still. Don’t give him any reason to hurt you.”

A tiny wisp of air touched the nape of Jordan’s neck, and she cringed.

*Hold still? Yeah, right.*

Ducking her head, she ran behind the tree. When the wasp followed, she called over her shoulder, “I think he likes me.”

“I don’t blame him.”

Jordan stumbled over the tree’s winding roots, barely keeping herself from falling as she came back around. “We just met. How do you know if you like me?”

“Well, so far, I haven’t experienced a dull moment with you. Aside from the fact you slammed into a tree, it’s all been very entertaining.”

Jordan stilled and drew her brows together. “I am so glad you’re amused.”

His lighthearted chuckle added to her annoyance.

“Well, don’t just look at me. Do you see the wasp? Is it gone?”

“It’s gone.”

“Good,” she answered but kept a pensive eye on the area. “We’d better get going before he decides to come back.”

Tanner nodded and straightened. “All right. Let’s get your luggage. I’ll give you a ride.”

Jordan lifted her chin and planted her hands on her hips. “I didn’t spend the last half hour fighting

with lug nuts, hauling tires, and evading a wasp for nothing. I'll drive myself."

He lifted an eyebrow and tilted his head. "Will you?"

Confused, Jordan looked behind her. The tire had flattened under the SUV's weight. She blinked as if she could make reality go away. It didn't work. She had replaced a blown out tire with a flat spare tire. The irony hit her, and a bubble of laughter escaped. Then another came.

Tanner chuckled and humor danced in his eyes. "I'm glad you can laugh about this." He collected the jack and lug wrench, took them to his truck, and returned. "I'll give Turner's Garage a call. He should be able to tow your SUV and fix the flat tire. He does great body work too, if you'd like him to repair the door."

Jordan's laughter subsided. "How long do you think the repairs would take?"

He grabbed her suitcase from the back and strapped the laptop over his shoulder. "Probably only a couple of weeks."

"Weeks? I can't go that long without transportation."

"Aren't you staying with us through the wedding anyway?"

"I came for the engagement party tomorrow night."

"I know. But, you *can* work from anywhere with Internet access, right?" Tanner eased the backdoor shut. "Might as well stay and help your mom with the planning. She seems to be enjoying herself, but I'm sure she would appreciate help. There's not much time left before the wedding."

Jordan zoned in on his last comment. "Not much time? They only became engaged a few days ago. When is the wedding?"

"Two weeks from tomorrow."

All lingering traces of humor died. "You're kidding, right?" Holding onto a slim thread of hope, she held her breath, waiting for confirmation.

"You didn't know?"

"Mom didn't reveal that tidbit of information. She only told me she was engaged." Jordan's sense of urgency mounted, and her rising panic nearly crushed the breath from her lungs. She had to see her mother. She had to talk sense into her. "We'd better go." She grabbed her purse, locked the SUV, and jogged toward Tanner's truck.

He caught up and opened the passenger door. "What's the hurry?"

How could she explain? She couldn't. Not now.

Ignoring his question, Jordan lifted herself into the truck, so distracted she didn't notice the legal-sized envelope until it crinkled beneath her. Slipping it from under her, she waited until Tanner settled into the driver's seat. "I'm sorry. I hope I didn't hurt anything inside." The return address caught her eye. "Match Made in Heaven." The company's name sounded familiar, but she couldn't quite place it, and Tanner's startled expression convinced her not to ask.

He took the envelope and tossed it behind him. "Don't worry. No harm's done." He cranked the ignition, set the air conditioner to high, and pulled onto the road.

Dismissing the envelope, Jordan chewed on her bottom lip. A two week engagement? Her throbbing headache returned, and acid churned in her gut.