

Love

FINDS A HOME



HISTORICAL ROMANCES
MAKE FALLING IN LOVE
SIMPLE AND SWEET

WANDA &
BRUNSTETTER



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For more information about Wanda E. Brunstetter, please access the author's website at the following Internet address:
www.wandabrunstetter.com

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**DADDY'S
GIRL**

DEDICATION

To my husband, Richard. . .
Thanks for your interest in history.
I appreciate your love and support.



CHAPTER 1

August 1879

All aboard!” The conductor’s booming cry pulled Glenna Moore to her feet. She glanced down at her father, slouched on the wooden bench outside the train station in Central City, Nebraska. His head was supported only by the unyielding plank wall, and his mouth hung slightly open.

Glenna bent down and gave his shoulder a good shake. “Wake up, Daddy. The train’s here, and we’ve got to go now.”

Her father groaned and swiped one hand across his unruly goatee. “Leave me alone, girl. I wanna sleep.”

Glenna dropped back onto the bench with a heavy sigh, making no effort to conceal her disgust. “You can sleep all you want once we’re on the train.” She poked him in the ribs with a bony elbow. “You don’t want to be thrown in jail, do you?”

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Glenna's harsh reminder of their dire circumstances seemed to be enough motivation for Daddy. He opened one eye, then the other, yawning widely as he attempted to stand up. His equilibrium was not what it should have been, however, and he was forced to grab hold of Glenna's arm in order to keep from falling over.

Allowing Daddy to lean on her small frame, Glenna complained, "If you just hadn't been so determined to finish that bottle of whiskey, you might not be in such a state right now!"

The empty bottle was lying on the floor by their bench, and she sneered at it as though it were her worst enemy.

"Needed it," her father mumbled. "Was dealt a raw hand."

No, Daddy, Glenna lamented silently, *it was you who dealt the bad hand*. Ever since Mama died in childbirth, along with her little brother, Glenna had been Daddy's girl. She needed him as much as he needed her, so she would make every effort to bridle her tongue where his problem was concerned.

"If we don't get on board that train heading west, it's going to leave without us." Glenna shuddered. "And if we stay here, the law will either put you in jail or some sidewinder's bound to shoot you."

Her father snorted and gave the empty whiskey bottle a hefty kick with the toe of his sable-colored boot. "Humph! Can I help it if I'm better at poker than most of those snakes in the grass?"

In all her eighteen years, Glenna could never remember her daddy admitting he was wrong about anything—not even cheating at the card tables. She was well aware of Daddy's

special vest, with a single strip of elastic sewn inside. She'd seen those marked cards he kept hidden there, too. Glenna had no right to complain or judge her father though. After all, he protected her and took care of her needs. Well, most of them anyway.

Glenna glanced down at her dark-green, cotton day dress with its formfitting bodice and tight, short sleeves. The lower part of the gown consisted of both an underskirt and an overskirt, pulled slightly up in the back, giving it a somewhat bustled look. While it had cost a tidy sum when she'd purchased it a few years back, it was now quite out-of-date. Daddy hadn't done too well at his trade recently, and new dresses weren't a priority—at least not to his way of thinking.

Smoke and cinders belched from the diamond-shaped stack on top of the Union Pacific's mighty engine. The imperious screech of the locomotive whistle and another "All aboard!" drove Glenna's troubled thoughts to the back of her mind. "We've got to board that train, Daddy."

Her father bent down and grabbed his well-worn suitcase, and Glenna followed suit. Due to their rapid departure, they were traveling light. Since they had no additional luggage, there wasn't a need for anything to be placed in the baggage car.

Gripping Daddy's arm, Glenna guided him toward the conductor.

"Tickets, please!" the gray-haired gentleman barked, thrusting out his hand.

Glenna set her suitcase down and fumbled in her handbag. She retrieved the tickets and handed them to the conductor,

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just in time to grab her father's arm before he toppled over.

"Too bad you're not in a private Pullman car," the conductor said with a sympathetic look. "Granger, Wyoming, is a ways off. It appears as though your traveling companion could do with a bit of privacy."

Glenna gritted her teeth and offered the man a curt nod as he helped her board the train. No one wished more for a private car than she. Funds were low just now, and spending what little they did have on something so unnecessary was not a good idea. Until they got settled in the town of Granger, their money must be spent wisely. That meant riding in a dismal, overcrowded emigrants' coach for third-class passengers who soon would become a congregation of aching spines and flaring tempers.

Visions of more affluent times flashed into Glenna's mind. Just thinking about their present situation sent a chord of defiance through her soul. She hoped things wouldn't always be like this. Daddy kept assuring her that someday he would hit it really big. Then he'd build a house they could call their own, buy lots of fancy clothes, and give Glenna a horse and buggy fit for a princess. It would probably never happen, but dreaming of better days was all that kept her going.

Her father had already stumbled up the steps and was slouched against one wall when Glenna joined him moments later. "We must find a bench," she said in a voice laced with frustration. If Daddy kept standing there like a disfigured statue, they'd not only have trouble securing a seat, but they would probably be the laughingstock of the entire coach!

With another one of his pathetic groans, Daddy pulled away from the wall. Grabbing Glenna's free arm, he began shuffling down the aisle.

Glenna felt, rather than saw, the curious stares from the other passengers as they awkwardly made their way toward a vacant wooden bench. She kept her eyes focused on her goal so she wouldn't have to view the pity or disgust from those nearby. Why couldn't Daddy have stayed sober today? Why must *she* suffer the humiliation of his actions?

She drew in a deep breath, then blew it out with such force she felt the tiny curls across her forehead bounce. As far back as she could remember, things had been this way where Daddy was concerned. She hated to admit it, but barring some unforeseen miracle, she knew things would probably never be any different.

Daddy dropped his suitcase and gave it a good kick under their seat. Then he flopped onto the hard bench. Glenna placed her own piece of luggage next to his and slid in beside him, thankful they would no longer be viewed by the entire car. Maybe now she could find a few moments of peace.



David Green pulled methodically on the end of his recently trimmed beard as he studied the young woman in the seat directly across the aisle. Dark ringlets framed her oval face, and her high-necked dress, though slightly outdated, fit just right. He couldn't help but notice her flushed cheeks, wary expression, and the obvious tension in her body. She probably

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had her hands full with that man who sat beside her. Was the drunkard her father, perhaps an uncle, or even a much too old husband?

David shook his head. Surely this delicate beauty could not be married to such an uncouth fellow! Those long, ebony curls and fetching brown eyes could easily have wooed a younger, more distinguished, and pleasant man than the one sitting next to her. Why, the paunchy, middle-aged man was slouched in his seat as though he hadn't a care in the world.

How despicable. Then a verse of scripture popped into David's mind. "*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*" He swallowed hard. *Thank You for reminding me, Lord. But for the grace of God, there go I.*

David's thoughts were pulled aside as the man who shared his seat spoke up. He blinked. "What was that?"

"I said, 'When do you think the train will pull out?'" the young man asked. "We've already had several delays today, and I'm getting anxious to see this trip come to an end."

David turned his full attention to his chum—a name given to those who shared seats on the emigrants' coach. The man was already onboard the train when David got on in Omaha, Nebraska. He'd introduced himself as Alexander P. Gordon, a Scottish author and poet. He boasted of having a modest reputation as a "travel writer."

Before David could open his mouth to reply to Alexander's question, the train whistle blew three quick blasts, and their humble coach began to rock from side to side. The swaying motion was almost gentle and lulling at first, but as the train

picked up speed, David could hear the familiar *clickety-clack, slap-slap-slap* of the wheels. Soon their car began to bounce like a rolling ship at sea.

David tried to ignore the distraction and smiled at his companion. “Guess that answers your question about when we’ll be leaving Central City.”

Alexander nodded. “Yes, indeed.”

A boisterous hiccup from across the aisle pulled David’s attention back to the lovely young woman and the inebriated man whose head was now leaning on her slender shoulder. She looked so melancholy—almost hopeless, in fact. His heart went out to her, and he wondered what he might do or say to make her feel better. After all, it was his calling to minister to others.

“Tell me about this place where you have been called to serve, Reverend Green.”

David turned back toward Alexander, but the man’s attention seemed to be more focused on his red, irritated wrists, which he kept scratching, than on what he’d just said to David. Alexander had told him earlier that he’d acquired a rather pus-tulant itch. Probably from the cramped quarters aboard the train he’d ridden before meeting up with David.

“I’ll be shepherding my first flock in a mining town known as Idaho City,” David replied, averting his gaze from Alexander’s raw, festering wrists back to the woman across the aisle.

“Hmm. . .that would be in Idaho Territory, if I’m not mistaken.”

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David nodded. "Quite right."

"And you said you recently left divinity school?"

"Actually, it was Hope Academy in Omaha. I just finished my training a few weeks ago."

"Ah, so you are what some Americans refer to as a 'greenhorn'?"

David chuckled. "Some might say so. However, I have had some experience preaching. In fact, I spent a few years as a circuit rider before I decided to attend the academy and further my ministerial studies."

"I see. So, are you married or single?"

David's eyebrows shot up. "I'm single. Why do you ask?"

Alexander frowned. "Most men of the cloth are married, aren't they? I would think it might even be a requirement."

"Why's that?"

"Too many temptations. The world is full of carnal women who would like nothing better than to drag a religious man straight to the ground."

David chewed on his lower lip as he pondered this thought. Perhaps Mr. Gordon was right. It could be that he'd been too hasty in accepting this call from the good people of Idaho City Community Church. He thought about the letter inside his coat pocket. It was from one of the church deacons, and as he recalled, it made some reference to him being married. In fact, the deacon's exact words had been: "The ladies here are anxious to meet your wife. I'm sure she will feel quite welcome in our church and soon become a part of our growing community as well."

I wonder what could have given them the idea that I'm married, David reflected. Perhaps Alexander is right. It could be an expected thing for the shepherd of a church to have a wife.

A deep rumbling, followed by a high-pitched whine, drew David's attention back to the young lady across from him. The man's loud snoring was clearly distressing to the woman, and she squirmed restlessly in her seat.

If only my chum would keep quiet a few moments, I might think of something appropriate to say to her.

Though more than a bit irritated, David listened patiently as Alexander began a narration of the many illnesses which had plagued him all of his twenty-nine years. David was twenty-six, and he hadn't had half as many ailments as this poor chap.

As though by divine intervention, Alexander suddenly became quiet. David cast a quick glance in his direction and found that his chum had drifted off to sleep. Drawing in a deep breath and sending up a quick prayer, David made a hasty decision. He would get out of his seat, walk across the aisle, and see if that young lady was in need of his counsel.



CHAPTER 2

*Two men dressed in dark suits sat in the seat directly across from Glenna. One seemed intent on scratching his wrists while the other man kept staring at her. At least she thought he was looking her way. Maybe he was just watching the scenery out her window. *But why wouldn't he watch out the window nearest him?* she wondered. *Surely there's nothing on my side of the tracks which would hold any more appeal than what he can see over there.**

Glenna swallowed hard as she glanced across the aisle again. This time she studied the man's features. They were strong and clean—a straight nose, dark-brown hair, parted on the side and cut just below the ears, and a matching well-trimmed beard. She couldn't be sure of the exact color of his

eyes from this distance, but they appeared to be either green or perhaps a soft gray. They weren't dark like hers, of that much she was certain.

Her heart did a little flip-flop when he nodded slightly and offered her a pleasant smile. He was easily the most handsome man she'd ever seen. She returned his smile with a tentative one of her own.

Daddy was snoring loudly now, and she elbowed him in the ribs, hoping to halt the irritating buzz. How would she ever catch the eye of an attractive man if her father kept making such a spectacle of himself? If Daddy appeared disagreeable, then so did she. At least, that's the way Glenna perceived it. If only she had a jar of canned tomatoes to cure the hang-over he would undoubtedly have.

Her mind wandered back in time as she remembered how they'd been staying at Prudence Montgomery's Boardinghouse in Sioux City, Iowa. Daddy had come back to their room late one night. He'd been "working" and had guzzled a few too many glasses of whiskey.

Glenna shuddered as she thought about the scene he'd made, yelling and cursing at poor Prudence for not keeping his supper warm. When he'd finally ambled off to bed, Prudence had turned on Glenna. "Gambling is evil—spawned by the devil himself." She sniffed deeply and lifted her chin. "If you don't watch yourself, young lady, you'll grow up to be just like your drunken daddy. Like father, like daughter, that's what I have to say!"

Maybe it's true, Glenna thought ruefully. Maybe I'll never be

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anything more than a gambler's daughter.

“Excuse me, miss, but I was wondering if you might like to borrow a pillow.”

A melodic, deep voice drew Glenna back to the present, and the distinct fragrance of bay rum cologne tickled her nose. She jerked her head and looked up at a pleasant face with a pair of soft-green eyes. Her heart jumped into her throat when he sent her a melting glance.

“A pillow?” she squeaked.

“For your companion.”

Glenna swiveled back toward her sleeping father, whose head drooped heavily against her shoulder. Daddy would probably be more comfortable with a pillow, and so would she. Should she accept anything from a complete stranger though? Despite his present condition, Daddy was well learned, and among other things, he'd taught her to be wary of outsiders—especially men.

As if the young man could read her mind, he extended a hand. “I'm Reverend David Green.” He motioned toward his seat companion. “Between the two of us, my sleeping chum and I possess three straw-filled pillows, so we can certainly spare one.”

Glenna shook the offered hand, though somewhat hesitantly. Even if he was a man of the cloth, she was still a bit uncertain about speaking to Reverend Green. “My name's Glenna Moore, and this is my father, Garret.” She tilted her head in Daddy's direction. His mouth was hanging slightly open, and she felt the heat of embarrassment creep up the

back of her neck, then spread quickly to her face.

“It’s nice to meet you, Glenna. May I use your given name?”

She smiled shyly and nodded. “Yes, Reverend Green.”

“Then please be so kind as to call me David.”

Glenna had only met a few ministers, and those had all been “fire-and-brimstone” parsons who stood on the street corners shouting out warnings of doom and gloom. As she looked into David’s kind eyes, she decided there would be nothing wrong with calling him by his first name. After all, he had asked her to, and what could it possibly hurt?

She lifted her chin and smiled. “David, then.”



David’s throat constricted, and he drew in a deep, unsteady breath. He hoped Glenna didn’t realize how nervous he was. He’d met lots of attractive women in his life, but none had held the appeal this young woman did. He’d noticed how breathtakingly beautiful she was from the moment she had boarded the train. Was it her long, curly, dark hair or those penetrating mahogany eyes? Maybe it was her soft, full lips that made his palms begin to sweat. Perhaps it was her forlorn expression that drew him like a moth charging toward a dancing fire. He imagined how she might feel held securely in his arms. What would it be like to bury his face in her deep-brown hair? How would her ivory skin feel beneath his fingers?

David shook his head, trying to clear away such errant thoughts. He shouldn’t be thinking this way. What had come over him all of a sudden? Maybe he was merely in need of

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more pleasant company than Alexander—the poet with itchy wrists, stories about ill health, and tales of lengthy journeys.

The train made a sudden, unexpected lurch, and David grasped the back of Glenna's seat to steady himself. His ears burned at the thought of being pitched into her lap. As it was, the disconcerting jolt had brought his face mere inches from hers.

Garret Moore's eyes popped open before David had a chance to right himself and gain his composure. "I say there," the man sputtered. "And who might you be?"

"Daddy, this is Reverend David Green," Glenna answered, before David could even open his mouth. "He's seated across the aisle."

David extended one hand, while hanging onto the seat back with the other. "Nice to meet you, sir."

Garret wrinkled his bulbous, crimson nose and made no effort to shake hands. "What's your business, son?"

"I—I'm a minister of the Gospel."

"Not your profession, you idiot!" Garret bellowed. "What business do you have with my daughter?"

Taken aback, David began to stutter—something he hadn't done since he was a young boy. "I—I—w—was—just—"

Obviously aware of his distress, Glenna came quickly to the rescue. "David was kind enough to offer me one of his pillows, Daddy."

One dark eyebrow shot up as Garret tipped his head, apparently sizing David up. "Is that so?"

David nodded. "The pillow was actually for you, sir. I

thought it might be more comfortable than your daughter's shoulder." Feeling a bit more sure of himself now, he smiled. At least he was no longer stuttering like an addle-brained child.

"Just what do you know about Glenna's shoulder?" Garret shouted at the top of his lungs.

David dipped his head. "N—nothing at all."

Glenna's father squinted his glassy-blue eyes and waved a husky hand toward David. "We're not some kind of charity case, you know. If either Glenna or I have need of a sleeping board or pillow, I'll hail the news butcher and purchase one."

Glenna offered David an apologetic smile. "Thank you for the kind offer, but we'll manage just fine."

David felt sure this was her way of asking him to return to his seat. From the irritated look on her father's face, he was also quite certain the unpleasant man would probably create a nasty scene if he didn't leave soon. He nodded slightly, looking only at Glenna. "If you need anything, you know where to find me."

She smiled. "Thank you. I'll remember that."

David shuffled back to his seat, feeling much like a whipped pup coming home with its tail between its legs. Groveling went against his nature, yet he knew it would be wrong to create a scene. *You're a new man in Christ now*, a small voice whispered. *Let Me fight your battles.*



Glenna glanced at her father, hoping he wouldn't say anything about her making conversation with a complete stranger.

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Surely he must realize that David, being a man of God and all, wouldn't cause me any harm.

Daddy gave her a grim frown, followed by a raucous yawn. "I can't believe you, Glenna. I lay my head down to take a little catnap, and what do you go and do behind my back?" Before she could reply, he continued his tirade. "You started getting all cozylike with some man, that's what you did. And a black-suited, Bible-thumpin' preacher at that!" He shook one finger in her face. "What's gotten into you, girl? Have you no more brains than a turnip?"

Glenna cringed. Daddy's deep voice had raised at least an octave, and the last thing she wanted was for David Green to overhear this ridiculous tongue-lashing.

"I wasn't getting cozy with the preacher," she defended. "I was merely being polite after he so kindly offered us one of his pillows."

"Humph! That man has designs on you," her father snapped. "I know the look of a man on the prowl. Why, I oughta speak with the conductor and have the cad thrown off this train!"

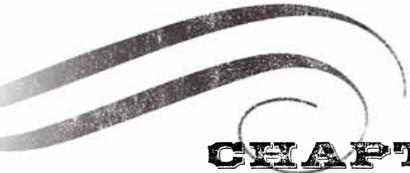
Glenna grabbed her father's coat sleeve. "Please, don't. David. . . I mean, Reverend Green has taken his seat. I'm sure he won't bother us again."

Her father gave the end of his scraggly goatee a few sharp pulls, then he shrugged. "I'll let it go for now, but if that scoundrel bothers you again, I'm going to report him immediately. Is that clear?"

Glenna nodded solemnly. She knew Daddy meant what he said. He was not a man given to idle threats. If he said he

would do something, he most certainly would. She scowled. *Of course, that doesn't include winning big. Sometimes, when the cards are in his favor, he makes a real killing. Other times, like last night, Daddy gets caught cheating, and then . . .*

Glenna clamped her teeth tightly together. She wouldn't dwell on last night's happenings. Daddy had been cornered by those professional gamblers, threatened with his life, then run out of town. Their brief time in Central City, Nebraska, had come to an end, and that was that. It wasn't the first time something like this had happened, and it probably wouldn't be the last. Glenna knew she should learn to accept things as they were and quit wishing for a miracle which would probably never happen. She closed her eyes and tried to relax. She wouldn't think about that good-looking man across the aisle, and she wouldn't keep hoping for Daddy to change!



CHAPTER 3

David had just closed his eyes and was about to doze off when his chum spoke up.

“Would you like to hear one of my poems?”

The last thing on David’s mind was poetry, but he nodded agreeably. “Sure, why not?”

Whipping a crumpled piece of paper from his coat pocket, Alexander opened it with a flourish. There was obvious pride on his face as he began reading. When he finished, the poet turned to face David, a questioning look in his eyes.

Never having cared much for poetic rhyme, David offered a forced smile. “That was. . .unique.” It was the kindest thing he could think of to say.

Alexander’s face broke into a smile. “You really think so?”

David nodded, feeling much like a rabbit caught in a trap. “Unique. . .yes, very.”

Alexander refolded the piece of paper, this time being careful not to rumple it. David’s encouraging words must have bolstered his confidence, for the twinkle in his eyes gave indication that he was a man with a mission. Alexander placed the poem back into his pocket. “I’ve written an essay, too. It’s entitled ‘Travels in the Mountains on Foot.’ ”

David raised his eyebrows. “A rather unusual title, isn’t it?”

Alexander nodded. “Perhaps, but it’s an account of a journey I made about a year ago. It took me through the mountains in southern France.”

I can’t imagine this sickly little man making such a trip, David mused. *There must be more to him than meets the eye.*

“The adventures from this train trip will also become an essay,” Alexander continued. “I believe I shall call it ‘Across the Plains.’ ”

David smiled. “An appropriate title for now, but once we leave Nebraska, our journey will take us through some rugged mountain ranges.”

Alexander frowned. “At least I won’t be overtaking it on foot.”

“The train is much better transportation,” David agreed.

“Even with all its irritating stops and starts. I couldn’t believe it when the train was held up for nearly an hour because a silly cow was standing stubbornly on the tracks.” Alexander squirmed uneasily. “And these uncomfortable benches are far too short for anyone but a child!”