

Reading Ebook Marrying Miss Marshal (Wild Wyoming Hearts Book 1) By Lacy Williams



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"I'm all right, Chas." Her quiet words stopped his erratic movements but not the frantic beat of his heart. Before he could think, he leaned in and took her mouth in a kiss. Lacy Williams is a USA Today bestselling author of the acclaimed Wyoming Legacy and Cowboy Fairytale series. About MARRYING MISS MARSHAL: She's no lady... Danna Carpenter is town marshal. And a darn good one. Even if she has to handle saloon brawls and rustlers alone. Who needs deputies anyway? All right, she'd welcome the help if any of the men in town would offer it. When a bank robbery goes bad, she has no choice but to accept the help of a city slicker... He's on a quest for revenge. Chas O'Grady came West in search of cattle rustlers and found himself on the trail of a killer--one who took everything from him. Crossing paths with the pretty marshal was happenstance, but he can't leave her deputy-less when she's facing such grave danger. Everything changes when Chas and Danna are stranded together in a snowstorm. The town council forces a marriage. And attraction turns to something more... Will Chas give up his quest for revenge? Or will he lose the woman he loves forever? MARRYING MISS MARSHAL is a Wild West marriage of convenience story. This book was originally published in 2011 by Harlequin's Love Inspired Historical series line. It has been re-edited and now includes an extended epilogue.

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Review "warmly romantic with a hint of adventure and an unconventional heroine" - Publishers Weekly, August 2011 2011 Reviewer's Choice Nominee "Williams' debut is a great story with a twist, and it will keep readers riveted." - RT Book Reviews, August 2011 About the Author By day, Lacy Williams is a stay-at-home mom battling dirty diapers and dog-hair dust-bunnies. By night, she is an award-winning novelist. Lacy combines a love of dogs with her passion for literacy by volunteering with her therapy dog, Mr. Bingley, in a local reading program. Her current projects include more books for Harlequin's Love Inspired Historical line (cowboys!). Lacy loves to hear from her readers at lacyjwilliams@gmail.com or via her website www.lacywilliams.net Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Wyoming Territory, September 1889

The report of a rifle echoed through the red-walled canyon, ringing in Marshal Danna Carpenter's chest. A second report sounded close after the first. She reined in her mount and pushed back her Stetson, instantly alert and scanning the area for trouble. The shots could've been someone hunting game— although there wasn't much of it to be found in these washed-out ravines southwest of town—or it could've been someone discharging their weapon for a more nefarious purpose. As town marshal, she had to be prepared for both possibilities. Danna's horse shifted beneath her, its movements telling her it sensed something wrong, as well. But what? Then she saw him, in the last rays of sunlight slipping over the canyon's edge. A man staggering along the canyon floor, booted feet dragging in the sandy soil. He carried some kind of luggage over his shoulder. From this distance, she couldn't see a rifle... Too far away to determine his identity, Danna guessed she didn't know him. His clothes were too fine for these parts—dark pants, vest, jacket and a bright white shirt. Most folks around here wore woolen trousers or denims, and plain cotton shirts. What was he doing so far from town? And on foot? Any halfway-intelligent person knew you didn't traipse around the unforgiving Wyoming landscape without a horse, or a mule at the very least. Before she could decide whether to waste the last of the sunlight to check on the stranger, or to head out of the canyon toward home, her horse's ears flicked back and his shoulder quivered beneath her gloved hand. The ground trembled. From around a natural bend in the canyon, a cloud of dust rose like steam from a kettle and sent fear skittering down Danna's spine. And the terrible sound she was hearing began to make sense: hundreds of pounding hooves, getting closer every second. Stampede. She couldn't leave an injured man to be trampled to death. Danna kicked King's flank and gave a shouted "Hiyah!" The horse rocketed toward the figure still too far away. Peripherally aware of the canyon walls racing by, Danna watched the greenhorn pause and looked up toward the sky. What was he doing? A few hundred yards behind him, cattle began to round a bend in the canyon. The beasts bellowed, and that must've jarred the tenderfoot from his stupor, for he turned and faced the approaching wall of horns and hooves. He froze, the item he carried sliding to the ground. Words rose in Danna's throat but she had no breath to call out, not when all her concentration centered on reaching him in time. He wouldn't be able to hear anyway. As the cattle closed in, the man's sense of self-preservation seemed to kick in, for he turned to flee, caught sight of Danna and began to run in her direction. Danna fisted her mount's mane with both hands, leaning forward until her torso rested against his foam-flecked neck as she pushed the animal even faster. The man looked up and, for a moment, time seemed to suspend itself. His eyes—a bright, clear blue—met Danna's, and she saw his fear and surprise. A solid wall of cattle closed in behind the man. Too close. Clinging to the saddle horn with her right hand, gripping with her knees, she caught hold of the tenderfoot under one arm, and used her horse's forward momentum to sweep him up behind her. "Hold on!" she cried. The man's arm slung tight around her waist, Danna pulled the horse into a tight turn and fought to keep the stallion from unseating them both. She knew the fear of death in that moment, her twenty-four years playing out before her eyes, so many mistakes made... mistakes she desperately wanted a chance to rectify. They weren't going to make it. A squeeze of Danna's legs sent the horse into a smooth canter, but it was too late. Several cattle overtook them, one bumping the horse's flank. The animal stumbled, but somehow managed to keep its feet. Fear stealing her breath, gasping, Danna clung to the horse's neck as it sped forward, quickly outrunning the cattle and their thundering hooves. Thank God. What had the fool man been thinking? "Do you have a death wish?" the woman—woman!— who'd saved Chas O'Grady's hide

shouted over her shoulder. He barely heard the words over the din of the cattle still surging around them. Her glossy black braid flopped over one shoulder and thwapped him in the chin. "Didn't you hear the stampede?" Chas sucked in breath after breath of wonderful, fresh air before he could force any words—like I thought the racket was distant thunder—out of his frozen jaw. "You're a woman!" His arms still around her, he felt her stiffen infinitesimally. But the pounding adrenaline and building anger in his system kept his words flowing. "Are you entirely out of your head? You could have been killed riding straight into a stampede!" "Perhaps you'd rather I hadn't rescued you? Because you would've been killed—trampled—if I hadn't scooped you up out of there." He felt her inhale deeply, then she blasted him again. "And I certainly didn't see any men around to do the job properly!" The woman's fiery retort stymied him for the moment, because it was true. There hadn't been anyone else in the canyon, and he would never have been able to outrun the cattle. The thought of what she'd risked—her life—brought bitter memories to the surface. Chas blinked away the images of another woman falling, her blood spilling. This woman, whose name he didn't even know, wasn't dead. Even though she'd put herself in danger for him. Memories and self-loathing churned in his gut until his rescuer turned her horse up the canyon wall, nearly unseating him with the sudden movement. Chas clung to the woman's waist, eliciting a huff from her. Her faded denims and wide-brimmed hat had caused him to assume she was a man from a distance, but with his arms wrapped around the curve of her waist, there was no mistaking his rescuer was pure female. He couldn't get a good look at her features from behind her, but she must be nearly as tall as his six-foot stature; the brim of her hat rested only inches in front of his nose. Several dark strands of hair escaped from her braid and curled along the nape of her long, slender neck. Her head was in constant motion, darting left to right, and it gave Chas fleeting glimpses of her cheekbones, the soft bow of her lips, the dark sweep of her lashes. She was beautiful. And she guided the horse as if she and the animal were one. In any other circumstance, she would have turned his head, trousers notwithstanding. Instead, with his detective's nose for curiosity already piqued, his mind swirled with questions. Why was she riding alone in this rough part of the country? And dressed as a man? Could she possibly work for one of the ranching outfits in the area? What rancher or foreman would hire a woman to work on their range? "What are you doing out here alone, anyway?" he demanded, trying to force back his darker emotions. "It's dangerous." "I could ask you the same," she returned sharply. "You're obviously from a big city, and this isn't a populated area. These arroyos are subject to occasional flooding. You're on foot. What happened to your horse? Have you gone astray from your destination?" Her questions implied he couldn't take care of himself, and they sparked his irritation. "I'm not lost." That statement was a bit of an untruth, but Chas wasn't about to admit that his sense of direction had been compromised by the winding canyon. He'd been operating as a private detective for several years. Being a little out of place was not the worst situation he'd ever managed to escape from. He would've found shelter eventually, if this female cow-poke hadn't come along. Probably. "And if you must know, I had a horse. I bought her in Cheyenne, but...well, let's say the man who sold her to me may have exaggerated her condition." He thought he heard a small noise of amusement from his unusual companion, but he couldn't be sure. His curiosity got the better of him and he couldn't resist asking, "Tell me, do all women in the Wyoming Territory dress the way you do? Or are you attempting to pass yourself off as a young man?" "No" came the sharp retort. "No to which question?" She didn't answer, but he felt her draw back on the reins, and the horse slowed. "Are we stopping?" he asked. "Why?" They hadn't even attained the canyon's rim yet. He'd hoped to make it to the small town of Calvin before evening set in. "It's getting hard to see." The woman's voice was soft and melodic, but her words were clipped and terse. "I won't risk my horse or our lives trying to climb this shale in the dark." Chas glanced at the purpling sky, realizing how long the shadows had gotten along the canyon walls. He was no outdoorsman, but even he could tell it would be full dark in minutes. "We can't just stop, can we?" Chas brought to mind the hotel room he'd hoped to find tonight. With a bed. A chance to wash away the trail grime he'd accumulated since leaving Cheyenne. "It looks like there's a level patch up ahead." She nodded, though he couldn't see what she was talking about. It all looked the same to him—an uphill climb. "We'll stop until the

moon comes up.""Are you sure it wouldn't be better to keep going?" Chas persisted, not ready to give up on the idea of that bed.She ignored him.As the last of the sunlight faded into pitch-black, the woman pulled up her horse on a somewhat flat piece of land.<...

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