

# The Snippy Miss Sophie

By Laurel Joseph

©2011 Blushing Books Publications and Laurel Joseph

Copyright © 2011 by Blushing Books® and Laurel Joseph  
All rights reserved. No part of the book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or  
by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any  
information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the  
publisher.

Published by Blushing Books®,  
a subsidiary of  
ABCD Graphics and Design  
977 Seminole Trail #233  
Charlottesville, VA 22901

The trademark Blushing Books® is registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office.

Joseph, Laurel  
The Snippy Miss Sophie  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-60968-498-3  
Cover Design: ABCD Graphics

Blushing Publications thanks you whole-heartedly for your purchase with us!  
There are plenty more stories such as the one you've purchased from Blushing Books!  
Visit our online store to view our mighty selection!

<http://www.blushingbooks.com>

This book is intended for adults only. Spanking and other sexual activities represented in this book are fantasies only, intended for adults. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as advocating any non-consensual spanking activity or the spanking of minors.

## Chapter One

"I don't like the idea of leaving you here, daughter. Why, you'll be out here all alone with Jenkins gone to Skylar. Won't you change your mind and come with me?"

"No, Papa! I will be just fine." Sophie looked at her parent in disdain. "You know perfectly well I will be safe enough. Why, it's common knowledge that I can shoot as well as any man!"

"Yes, it is common knowledge," Clarence Foster said sadly. "You are never going to get a husband if you keep acting like a man, Sophie. Men want a woman for a wife. They want to hear petticoats rusting and get a whiff of perfume. They don't want to see britches and smell horse liniment."

"Thank you, Papa, for once again pointing out what a terrible disappointment I am to you." Sophie tried to pretend that she didn't care, but it hurt to know how her father felt about her. It hurt to know that all the men within a hundred miles thought she was to be avoided at all costs. She made the mistake of going to the last dance in town... she even put on a dress for the occasion... and not one man asked her to dance, well, except for old Mr. McCrae, and he wanted a mother for his six boys. She certainly told him 'no' fast enough.

"Sophie, I love you, but your Mama had dreams for you, and she would be real upset to see what I've let you come to. While I'm gone I wish you'd try putting on a dress and acting like the woman you are. Who knows, maybe you would like it, Sophie." Clarence Foster kissed her on the cheek and then took his leave. He didn't see the tears in her pretty blue eyes.

Sophie quickly pulled herself together. She'd been looking forward to having time alone ever since she learned of her Papa's trip to Clear Lake. With their farmhand, Jenkins, gone she was in charge of their boarding house and livery stable. At present, they were empty of guests, and that suited Sophie just fine. True privacy was a rarity, even though they were a mile from town. She couldn't recall the last time they were without a boarder, or that Jenkins and her Papa were both gone at the same time, and she intended to enjoy the time alone. She quickly made sure the barn work was all done, their livestock all cared for, and then Sophie filled the bathtub with hot water and she undressed and climbed in. She added some sweet smelling rose water to the tub and the fragrance filled the room. It felt delightful to soak in the water until it started to cool to the point of being almost cold. Sophie reluctantly got out and wrapped herself in a clean towel. She brushed her long, dark hair in front of the fire until it was dry, and then she put on her flannel nightdress and went to her bedroom, which was downstairs. She made sure her gun was within reach, and she climbed into bed, along with her book, and she enjoyed the simple pleasure of reading... without being told that it was late and she needed to shut off her light and go to sleep. For all that her Papa wanted her to be a

woman, he still treated her like a little girl, dictating her day and her night. She worked hard, and he seldom gave her a moment of free time to read or go for a ride. She planned to enjoy every moment of freedom, and she prayed that no one showed up wanting to rent a room. Sophie finally went to sleep, knowing she would be up early as usual.

The next day started well. Sophie woke before dawn, and she quickly dressed, and her father would have been shocked to see her in a skirt and shirtwaist, with her hair put up in a roll on top of her head. She also wore perfume, and wondered if the cow and chickens would notice...? Laughing at her own whimsy, she hurried to tend to her critters, as she called all of the various animals depending on her for their care. The horses were happy to see her. She fed them well and took the time to pet them and talk to them a bit. The cow munched on hay while Sophie milked her. She scattered feed for the chickens, and then gathered eggs, pleased with the amount. With no boarders, she would have more she could sell to Mr. Cline at the General Store. Taking care of the critters always put her in a good mood. The animals loved her unconditionally, and they didn't care how she dressed or fixed her long hair. They loved the sound of her voice and her touch.

Sophie fixed herself breakfast, peeling a potato and dicing it small, adding onion, and putting the vegetables into a skillet with some butter. She then sliced off some bacon and put it in another skillet to fry. While that was cooking she made herself some orange juice, and got out a plate and silverware. When the bacon was done, she used the drippings to fry two eggs. Sophie always ate a huge breakfast. She needed it to face the day, and cleaning the entire house, top to bottom. When you provided lodging and meals for paying guests, part of the job was to keep the house as clean as could be, and that meant dusting furniture and floors, cleaning rugs, washing sheets, scrubbing floors, and cooking great meals. To provide food for all those people, Sophie tended a big garden, and she kept a milk cow to make her own butter, cream, and milk. And the chickens kept her in fresh eggs. Sophie baked daily, too. It was a treat to have a day off. The house was clean enough to welcome an unexpected guest, but she planned to take the entire day and spend it as a lady of leisure. She was going to hitch up the buggy, take the milk and eggs to town and sell them to Mr. Cline, and then spend the money, plus a bit she had saved, on whatever caught her fancy. She would leave a note on the door to welcome any guests who might stop by and let them know she would return soon, and in the meantime to make themselves at home.

After she ate, she made quick work of the dishes. Cleaning up after one person was not like work at all! Within a short time, she'd removed her apron, hung the note on the front door, hitched up Clementine to the buggy, and she was on her way to Apple Creek. She'd considered changing her clothing, but for once she wanted to feel like a lady instead of the hard working hand she considered herself to be. The only difference, a hired hand got paid... she didn't. Her father didn't feel he should have to pay his daughter for her efforts. Sometimes, when she was feeling especially tired of all the work, Sophie considered leaving. She wondered just how much her Papa would have to pay to hire a woman to do all she did. Knowing him as she did, he might hire a woman, but within a short as time as he could manage it, Clarence Foster would put a ring on the woman's finger, and she wouldn't see another cent for all the work she did. The one time

that Sophie suggested he pay her, he'd laughed and said that he had a right to expect her to work for her room and board, and that was that.

Sophie often thought that her Mama died from all the work, and not a bit of thanks or praise from Clarence Foster. After giving birth to her, her Mama suffered miscarriage after miscarriage. She learned a couple of years ago that Doc told her Mama she needed more rest if she hoped to carry a baby, but her Papa thought that nonsense and said he didn't believe in coddling women or children. Her Mama hemorrhaged and died before the doctor could get there. Sophie knew it was her Papa's fault, but all he said was that her Mama was a weak woman. Sophie missed her, and she supposed he did too. When he wanted his scolding to have an effect, Clarence Foster invoked her Mama's name.

"Good morning, Miss Sophie," Mr. Cline looked up from the counter he was wiping down. "You surely do look right purty this morning," he complimented her.

"Thank you, Mr. Cline," she answered with a shy smile.

"What do you have for me today?" he asked, looking at the basket she was carrying.

"Eggs, milk, cream, and butter," she replied.

"Oh, bless you, child! I am out of eggs and butter, and short on cream and milk. You are saving my life," he said, exaggerating his plight, of course.

Sophie gave him a grin and then said, "Well, then you'll be wanting to pay me a bit more today...?" His face turned red as he stuttered just a bit, telling her he couldn't make a profit if he paid more than the normal rate. She just giggled at him, and then he smiled, too.

"You and your teasing, young lady!" He shook a finger at her, but the scolding wasn't sincere and they both knew it. He gave her the amount and asked if he should put it on account like usual.

"No, Mr. Cline. I would like a bit of spending money today."

"Now, I sure don't blame you. It never does seem fair that your Pa always makes you put it on your account and you doing all the work."

"Papa only sees the bottom line, Mr. Cline," she said, her tone giving away none of her feelings. She accepted her money, and then started looking about the store. A couple of women came in and she lowered her voice and said quietly, "Please go ahead and wait on them, Mr. Cline. I will enjoy looking around."

"Fine, Miss Sophie. You just let me know when you find something you want."

"I will do that," she agreed. It was so enjoyable to spend all the time she wanted looking around the store, and not having to worry about having the next meal ready on time, or sheets that needed to be taken from the clothesline, folded, and put away for the next morning's bed changing. She was not used to having time for herself, and she was going to enjoy every precious second.

"Is that you, Sophie Foster?" elderly Mrs. Graves asked as she spotted her.

"Yes, ma'am. How are you feeling, Mrs. Graves?" Sophie asked politely, just as her Mama taught her to do.

"I'm just fine, girl. You look pretty today, and wearing a skirt, too! Why on earth you wear those pants all the time is a mystery to me. You are too pretty for that, girl."

"Pants are easier to work in, ma'am," Sophie explained, as she always did.

"You should be trying to look pretty for the young men, Sophie," Mrs. Graves insisted. "Your Papa does you no favors by allowing you to dress so... And he makes you work too hard. You tell him I said so."

"Yes, ma'am." Sophie would never say a word, but she did not wish to upset the elderly woman.

"Are you trying to decide upon that piece of yard goods?" Mrs. Graves asked, looking at it with a critical eye.

"I rather like it," Sophie explained.

"Well, hold it up next to your face, child. Let me have a good look," the elderly woman bossed. "Yes, it goes well with your complexion and those pretty blue eyes of yours. Matches well. I think you should buy it and sew it right up and wear it to church next Sunday." She looked around for Mr. Cline. "Adam, cut off enough of this for a pretty dress for Sophie. She needs some lace and some buttons, too."

Sophie smiled and nodded at the man. "It's been a long time since I had a new dress, Mr. Cline. I think it will make a nice project for me while Papa is gone."

"I think you need a new hat, too," Mrs. Graves announced as she walked across the store. "Adam, when are you going to get some decent hats in here? These are suitable for the women who flaunt themselves in the saloon, but there is nothing here for a sweet girl like Sophie!"

"I can't afford to carry hats no more what with Penny Carlson opening her millinery."

"That's right. We'll go there and look for a new hat, Sophie."

“I’m not sure I want to buy a new hat, ma’am,” Sophie protested. What she didn’t want was to set foot in Penny Carlson’s store... Not after the way she’d treated her since her son tried to force himself on her. Mrs. Carlson seemed to think it was Sophie’s fault!

“Nonsense, Sophie. It’s been at least three years since you’ve had a brand new hat, thanks to your father’s penny pinching ways. You just come with me, young lady. I’m going to see you have what you deserve!” She headed for the door, and then turned back. “Cut off a small piece of that fabric so we can take it with us for matching purposes, Adam.”

He did as he was told.

“I’ll be back, Mr. Cline,” Sophie promised. She wasn’t sure she could afford a hat... and still buy the new books she planned to buy. Not getting her books would be a huge disappointment to her, but then, she hadn’t had a new hat since she finished with school.

The bell tinkled on the door of Penny Carlson’s hat shop. “Penny, are you here?” Mrs. Graves called out.

“Yes, I am here,” the woman replied, pushing aside a curtain and walking into her display room. She had a smile for Mrs. Graves, but she looked at Sophie in distaste. “What can I find for you today, Mrs. Graves?” she asked.

“Nothing for me, but Sophie needs a hat that will match or compliment this fabric.”

“Well, I’m not sure I have anything,” the woman answered with a frown of annoyance, not even bothering to look at the fabric in her hand.

“Mrs. Graves, let’s go. Mrs. Carlson has an obvious dislike for me because I slapped her Rory when he tried to paw me a few weeks ago. For some reason Rory thought I was easy, and he made a fool of himself.”

“Why, how dare you make such accusations?” the woman sputtered indignantly.

“Probably because you and half the other women in this town sweep your skirts aside when I am in town. I’ve never done one thing to earn that kind of reputation and it makes me mad to know that you women think I have!” Sophie was angry and her blue eyes were snapping with unbridled temper.

“Is this true, Penny?” Mrs. Graves asked in shocked disbelief.

“She’s out there with all those men all the time, isn’t she?”

“Her father lives there, too!” Mrs. Graves stated. “What is she supposed to do? Turn away boarders who aren’t female? As if her penny-pinching father would give her a



choice! Sophie works hard, Penny. If your boy made improper advances to her, then it is his own fault he came away looking a fool. This child is as innocent as they come.”

“I don’t believe it!”

“Well, perhaps you can believe this. I won’t do business with you, and if I have my say, no other decent woman in this town will either. You might as well close your doors, my dear. You are done.” Mrs. Graves jerked open the door, causing the little bell to fall to the floor. “Come along, Sophie. We’ll let Adam know he’d better restock his hat department.”

Once they were outside, she stopped and took Sophie’s arm. “This is just plain stupidity with these people, my dear. I’ll deal with it, you may be sure. In the meantime, we’ll see what we can do with what Adam has on hand.”

Sophie listened in no little amusement as Mrs. Graves told Adam to restock the ladies hats because Penny Carlson would be out of business within a week or less. She also picked up several of the man’s creations and proceeded to demolish two of them in order to make a lovely hat that was suitable for Sophie’s age. “Try this on,” she bossed, and Sophie admitted she loved it, pleasing Mrs. Graves to no end. “I think it lovely,” she nodded in satisfaction, and then ordered, “Adam, you put this on my bill, please. I don’t care what it cost, it certainly is worth it, and I’ll make darn sure it is known all over town that Penny Carlson did not have a thing to do with it. When I was newly married I worked in a hat shop in Boston. It seems I remembered a thing or two!”

“You certainly did, Mrs. Graves, but I can’t let you pay for it!” Sophie argued.

“Why, you can’t stop me, either, young lady!” the woman blustered.

“It certainly isn’t any of my business, Miss, but I think you should listen to the lady,” a strange man said from the counter where he was leaning and watching the entire hat pageant play out. “You look right pretty.”

“Do we know you, young man?” Mrs. Graves turned her attention to him, stepping in front of Sophie protectively.

“No, ma’am, and I was raised to have better manners than to offer such an opinion to a lady whose acquaintance I hadn’t made. My apologies,” he said, tipping his hat as he gathered the few purchases he’d made and headed for the doorway. When he reached it, he turned and grinned. “Take the hat, Miss. You look as pretty as a clear blue sky!” Once he made his point, he left.

## Chapter Two

“Well, if that young man doesn’t beat all!” Mrs. Graves declared, shaking her head. “He was kind of cute, but I’m sure he is just some drifter passing through town. Don’t you pay him no never mind, Sophie, hear me?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Sophie replied, doing her best to hide a smile. A lot of drifters had spent a night or two in the boarding house, and most of them were harmless. Still, with her father gone, and the man who farmed for them visiting relatives a town away, Sophie wasn’t about to take in a drifter. She would only accept females or married couples. It was best to be safe, and besides, she wasn’t about to give the Penny Carlson’s of the town a chance to gossip about her supposed lack of morals again!

Mrs. Graves went about her own shopping while Sophie spent some time looking through the books on the store shelf.

For a small town, Mr. Cline made sure to carry the things that people craved as much as they needed. He did a good business because he realized that farm hands and ranch hands also liked to read as much as the citizens who lived and worked in town. Sophie had a lot of books at home in her father’s personal library, but she’d read her way through them... and most were law books and dealt with case histories. While her parent thrived on such reading in order to keep himself up to date as an attorney, the subject matter was of no import to Sophie. She preferred romances and poetry and biographies of famous people. She picked out a few books that looked good, and mentally totaled them, trying to decide what she could spend without catching too much of her father’s ire.

“I believe I will choose these two books, Mr. Cline,” she said quietly after he finished with another customer.

“Why, you had a good half dozen books out there, Miss Sophie! What about the others?”

“I don’t wish to upset Papa,” she admitted, blushing.

“You work hard enough running that boarding house that Clarence shouldn’t offer one word of complaint. You have more than enough money on credit, young lady, to buy a dozen more books. You take all of them; I insist!”

Sophie hesitated, wanting to listen to Mr. Cline, but she also knew her father, and she feared he would punish her if she gave in to temptation. “I’d better not, Mr. Cline. Please tell me how much I owe you.”

He added up her yard goods, buttons, trim, and the two books she was treating herself with, and came to a total that was lower than she’d expected. Sophie paid him and

waited patiently while he wrapped her purchases into a neat parcel. Sophie thanked him, and then hurried to get to the buggy and make her way on home.

At the edge of town she had the misfortune to run into Rory Carlson, and it was soon evident that he'd been laying in wait for her. "Well, if it ain't old maid Sophie! You gettin' tired of bein' so missish?"

"If by that you mean to ask if I'm interested in having you paw me, the answer is a big fat NO, Rory Carlson! I will never get that desperate."

"You have a smart mouth, and it's about time someone took you down a few pegs. Maybe once you've been rode good and hard you'll change your tune."

"I'm not interested, Rory. Now go on home to your Mama, and this time tell her the truth of the matter. Your lies have caused her a powerful lot of trouble, and the blame is all on you!"

"You threatening my Ma?"

"No. But, I did tell her the truth, Rory, and she decided that you were perfectly innocent. Unfortunately for her, Mrs. Graves believes me."

"I heard you was in to see my Ma today and she refused to sell you a new hat... I reckon I could get you one if you was to be nice to me...?"

"You are just as stupid now as you were when we were in school!! Now get out of my way!"

"You bitch." Rory spit the words at her, but he moved aside so she could pass.

Sophie had a bad feeling about giving Rory Carlson her back, but she had no choice if she was going to drive past him. It was mere seconds later when the rope settled around her shoulders and her arms, effectively trapping her. She tried to wriggle free, but he merely pulled the rope even tighter so she couldn't move her hands one inch! "You let me go, Rory Carlson!" she yelled at him.

"Now who's in charge?" he crowed.

"Never you!"

"You might as well settle down. What is it they say? You might as well not fight it, bitch, because you're going to get fucked and fucked real good."

"I'd rather die first!" she told him, meaning the words. "If you touch me, I'll see you dead. Do you hear me, you son of a bitch? I will see you dead."

“Big words from a female who’s about to learn she ain’t so snooty after all.” He dismounted, keeping the rope taut around her. When he reached for her, Sophie kicked him as hard as she could, sending him sprawling. His hold on the rope never faltered, and Sophie found herself jerked off the seat, only to fall on top of him. The rope slackened then, but he was holding on to her.

In this situation Sophie was dangerous. She fought with desperation, using the age old knee to the groin to stop Rory in his tracks. While he was puking out his guts, she was climbing back on the seat of the buggy and hurrying down the road, vowing that she would never again be caught without her gun strapped around her middle. Dressing as a lady was simply nothing but trouble.

“I’ll get you for this, you ugly bitch. I’ll make you wish you’d never been born!” Rory’s threats were barely loud enough to reach her, but all the same she knew she’d have to keep a watch for him while her Papa was away. Maybe she should hope for a new border?

Sophie was home rather quickly and she decided to go inside and change into her pants and put on her gun belt just in case Rory came looking for trouble. She was inside the foyer and almost to the door of her bedroom when she realized she wasn’t alone in the large house. Sophie whirled around and looked at the man sitting in one of the best chairs in the parlor. “You! What are you doing here?” she demanded, her hands on her hips as she crossed in front of the steps that led upstairs to confront him.

“Is that any way to greet a new boarder, Miss Foster?”

“We aren’t taking new guests at the moment. Please leave.” It was the outrageous man from Mr. Cline’s store, and she was most definitely out of her league. She frankly didn’t know what to do with him, but permitting him to stay was out of the question!

“I tore this note off the front door, Miss Foster. Don’t you know that lying is spankable?” His tone of voice was teasing but she was wary of him. The dark eyes he was leveling on her told her that he was more than capable of taking her over his knee if he chose to do so, which was perfectly outrageous!

“I am a grown woman and much too old to be spanked. I’m afraid I hung the sign automatically when I left. I am not taking boarders,” she insisted.

“You are lying again, and that makes two. No woman is ever too old to be spanked, and you’d best remember that, little lady. If you try that lie on me again I’m going to have to take you over my knee and teach you not to lie to me.”

“What!!! How dare you talk to me like that!? You just get your butt out of that chair and on out of my home... right now! I told you that I am not taking boarders while my Papa is gone and that is my final word on the subject. Leave!” she ordered, pointing at the front door. The man merely smiled and crossed his arms over his chest, leaning back and

making himself even more comfortable. “I see. Well, you’ll damn well leave one way or another!” Sophie whirled to run to her room, where her gun was waiting for her to pick it up and drive the unwelcome drifter out of her home.

“Miss Foster, I think you need to come here. I warned you against lying to me again and you chose to go right ahead and do so anyway. That tells me you must need a spanking in the worst of ways. Come here and don’t make me come after you or I’ll turn up your skirts and take down your drawers and spank you with my hand until you are begging to give me a room.”

Sophie was so angry she couldn’t speak. She ran for her room, intending to grab her gun and run him off. However, he must have anticipated her move because he was on his feet, giving chase. When she tried to shut the door in his face, he gave it a powerful shove and she went flying across the room, only to land on the padded window seat. He followed her, his long strides crossing the room before she could get to her feet and run for her weapon.

“Running from me was a bad idea, little lady.” He pulled her to her feet and then sat down on the small bench and hauled her over his lap. Sophie was kicking and bucking and trying to free herself from the hold he had on her, but it was all to no avail.

“You can’t do this!” she screeched. “I don’t even know your name!”

“Well, I guess that is true,” he admitted. “My name is Trevor Morrison. Does it make a difference?” he asked, his voice teasing as he wrapped his left arm around her waist to hold her down.

“You let me go, you bastard!” Sophie screeched.

“Cussing now? It has been a long while since someone paddled you good and hard,” Trevor stated matter-of-factly as he brought the flat of his hand down on her posterior.

Sophie went perfect still as she felt the burning handprint on her bottom. She couldn’t believe this was happening to her, but the next hard smack had her trying vigorously to escape. His hand was as hard as could be and she did not want a spanking, not at her age! “Let me go! I am not a child!”

“I never once called you a child, little lady,” Trevor stated, spanking her once again. “Now, you earned this spanking for lying to me... and for cursing. That won’t be tolerated, either.”

“You have no right!” Sophie argued, tears of frustration, anger, and pain filling her blue eyes.

“I surely do,” Trevor answered. “The moment I laid eyes on you I knew you were the woman I want to marry. You just don’t know it yet.”

“You’re crazy! HELP! HELP! Someone HELP me, please!” Sophie screamed as loud as she could.

“Settle down right now. When you are due a spanking, Sophie, I expect you to take it like a grown woman. That means you lie here and stop with all this kicking and fussing. I was only teasing about tossing up your skirts, but if you keep this shrieking up, I’ll make you pay for it.”

“You have no right to do this!” Sophie tried desperately to reason with the man.

“I guess that doesn’t matter all that much right now, honey. You just lie still and accept what you’ve earned.”

“I most certainly will not cooperate with you while you beat me, you mangy polecat! Let. Me. Go!” His hand cracking on her tender bottom was his answer. Sophie fought wildly, but he held her down and spanked her as easily as he would have a small child. She was furious, but there was simply nothing she could do! Then she saw his leg, and she realized that she could bite him... hard. When he released her she could run for her gun! Without considering the possible consequences if her plan backfired, Sophie opened her mouth and bit down hard on the pants covering his calf.

“Goddamn it!” Trevor yelled. “You bloodthirsty little witch. That is going to cost you!”

“Noooo! You let me go!” She tried to free herself, but he didn’t let go as she thought he would. “I am serious; let me go!”

“No way in hell I’m going to go easy on you now, little lady. You’ve earned the spanking of your young life and I’m just the man to see you get it.”

Sophie was shocked when her skirts were flipped over her head. Then she felt his hand tugging at her drawers. “No! No! I’m not that kind of woman! You stop right there! Oh, I am going to kill you the first chance I get. I didn’t stop Rory Carlson from raping me just to come home and deal with the likes of you! I swear by all I hold holy, I will kill you!”

“That young bastard tried to rape you?” Trevor was furious. He whacked her cotton covered bottom when she didn’t answer. “Tell me the truth, Sophie? Did he...”

“I didn’t let him, and I won’t let you, either!” Sophie yelled, even though she didn’t have a clue how on earth she was going to stop him. He was stronger than Rory.

“I didn’t mean to make you think I would harm you, Sophie. I promise I won’t do that. I intended to give you a little spanking to settle you down. I would never harm a woman like that.”

“Then prove it and release me right now!”

“No, that is not going to work. You still have a serious paddling coming to you, and until you settle down and accept it, you’ll be lying right here. I will let you keep your drawers, though,” he added as if she should be grateful for being allowed to keep her modesty in tact.

“But, you have no right to punish me!” she wailed as the spanking started again, his hard hand landing on her upper thighs and the area between her legs and her bottom cheeks. “Stop! You are hurting me!”

“Am I finally making an impression, little lady? I should have tossed up those skirts right away.” Trevor continued to spank her, making sure to spank hard enough she could feel every smack. He could hear her grunts of pain and knew that she was almost to the point where she would settle down and tell him she was sorry. He patiently continued to spank her rounded backside.

Sophie was mortified. She never cried in front of people. “Please stop! Please!”

“I’m waiting for an apology,” Trevor told her, spanking her sit spots even harder.

“I don’t owe you an apology! It’s my choice whether or not I want to rent a room out, and I don’t!”

“That is not the truth, little lady. You might not want to rent a room to me for some reason, but you hung that sign because this is a business and you know better than to turn away a boarder. Your Pa would be furious with you if he found out. Tell me, little Sophie, would he turn you over his knee and give you a spanking?” Trevor asked, teasing her a bit.

“Damn you, you have no right to ask me about him. Let me go!” To her shame, Sophie burst into tears.

Trevor didn’t know what to think. He decided it was best to push a bit. “How would he punish you?” he asked, his tone telling her he expected an answer.

“I don’t want to talk about it. Please stop. I’m sorry I lied to you about the room. Please, no more!”

“Ten more for the lies and we’ll be done with it, Sophie. These are going to be hard and to the point and I want you to count each one. If you are a good girl, we’ll be done soon and then we’ll deal with your biting me. If you fuss and refuse to count, you’ll be here a long time learning that stubbornness costs.”

“I don’t want ten more! I am in so much pain already I can’t stand it! Please, Mr. Morrison! No more!”

“Stop fussing, girl. We’ll start now.”

Sophie let out a yelp of surprise and pain when Trevor spanked her again! It was the hardest he’d struck her and it was terrible on her sore skin!

“If you don’t speak up, it won’t count, little lady.” He spanked again, just as hard as the first time.

“Two!” Sophie screamed.

“No, the first one didn’t count. That was one. Repeat it.”

“But, it was two!” she reasoned, and then his hand landed once more. “Three!”

“One. You are going to learn this lesson the hard way it seems.”

“One,” Sophie repeated, sobbing. He continued to spank hard, and it grew increasingly difficult to speak since she was crying so hard. Somehow Trevor seemed to understand her, and finally she was able to sob out the word, “Ten!”

“Good, now we’ll deal with your biting me. How many more? I should take off my belt and really blister you, but I’m in a kind-hearted mood. I’ll give you another ten, and we’ll call it done.”

“No, don’t! I’m sorry for biting you!” Sophie tried to protect herself by apologizing. She was in terrible pain and she truly did not think her poor butt could handle another spanking. “Please don’t spank me again!”

“Sophie, I am trying to be kind to you. You earned every last spank of this spanking. Remember to count,” he ordered, positive that the brunette needed discipline more than anything else in her life at this point.

Sophie was no fool. This time she tried to count, but her bottom was so sore that she couldn’t think straight and she soon messed up. Trevor made her start all over, and she simply started sobbing, lying limp over his lap, too tired to fight any further.



## Chapter Three

Trevor realized he'd pushed Sophie past her limit, and he carefully gave her the rest of her spanking, counting for her since it was clear to him that she was unable to do so. When he was done, he raised her up to sit on his lap and he held her while she sobbed and he offered comfort. Finally, she stopped crying and pushed away from him.

Trevor stood her on her feet, and then called himself a fool when she slapped his face as hard as she could. He saw stars and shook his head to clear it. Then, to his absolute shock, he was looking down the barrel of a gun!

"You get out of my home, Trevor Morrison, and be very thankful I don't shoot you dead. No one would blame me if I did!" Sophie was beyond furious, and she was also humiliated at the shabby way he'd treated her.

"Sophie, you don't want to do this. Please put the gun down so we can talk. There isn't much time."

"No way. Get out. This is your last warning."

Bloody turnips! Her hand wasn't even shaking and the look in those blue eyes told him she was dead serious. Trevor had underestimated this young woman... and if something didn't happen fast, he wasn't going to have to worry about anything much longer. "Sophie, honey, I understand you are upset. Will you please give me a chance to explain?" He gave her the smile that his sisters told him should be outlawed because it was deadly.

"No. I will count to five, and if you aren't moving by then they'll be carrying you out of here, and if you think anyone will fault me for killing a drifter who was hiding in my bedroom when I got back from town, well you'd better think again!" Sophie was reluctant to kill anyone, but she would if she had to. The man had spanked her until she was reduced to a blubbering mass of female, and she hated him for it! "Move, drifter."

"Make that U. S. Marshal 'Drifter,' Miss Foster. I need your help. There is a man on his way here that we have been trying for the last nine months to capture. So far he's stayed one step ahead of us... until now. Now we know where he is coming, and we're planning to be right here, waiting for him. Your father is his target," he added. When Trevor saw that she was listening, albeit in disbelief, he asked, "Does the name George Freely mean anything to you?"

Sophie blinked. "That is the man that Papa was going to see."

"Right. Your father is in danger, Sophie. Freely starts out by writing letters to wealthy businessmen like your father. He usually offers them a deal to make money that they

can't refuse because the return is high. Once they gather the money to invest, he kills them, takes their money, and flees. Then he starts looking for another victim to fleece. I'm here to prevent that from happening. Your father and Freely are leaving on tomorrow's train."

"Tomorrow? I did not expect him back until the end of the week at the soonest." She frowned, clearly disappointed.

"He will be here before supper tomorrow. That is why I have to be moved into one of the guest rooms upstairs. I've been assigned to protect your father and arrest Freely."

"How do I know you haven't snooped through the papers on and in my father's desk to glean all of this information?" Sophie demanded, irritated.

"Oh, I will admit that I went through the entire house, including your father's desk and papers. We needed to make sure he was innocent of collusion with Freely, and he is. This is pretty serious business, Sophie." Trevor took his hand and reached into his pocket, doing so warily as she kept the gun trained on him. "This is my badge."

The badge was real. "Did you shoot someone and take his badge?" she wanted to know.

"No. I earned this badge the hard way and it was offered to me after my brother-in-law was murdered. This badge was his and I am damn proud to wear it and represent our family."

Sophie saw the sincerity and pain in Trevor's eyes and knew he was speaking the truth. She dropped her gun and said, "I'll show you where you are to sleep, but know that I will take my gun to bed with me and if that doorknob turns even once, I will shoot to kill. Breakfast is at seven; lunch is at noon; supper at six."

"There is no need for you to fix meals, Sophie. I will gladly take you out to eat somewhere in town...?"

"I will cook. We want things to appear normal, and most boarders eat the meals that are included in the weekly rate. I do expect to be paid," she announced.

"I wouldn't have it any other way." He smiled again, but Sophie turned her back to him.

"This is my room, Marshal. I will also expect you to observe the proprieties and stay out of here."

"Look, Sophie," he said as he took a step in her direction. "I know you are a bit upset with me right now, but you are safe, I promise. No harm will come to you or your father. I want you to know that."

She whirled to glare at him. “No harm? Well, I have already been harmed and I don’t plan to forgive you, either. Now get out of this room and stay out.”

Trevor decided it was better to retreat... for now. Sophie obviously wasn’t used to discipline, and she would need some time to come to terms with the fact that she’d misbehaved and been punished for it. He didn’t tolerate lies, not from anyone. He’d been raised to know that lying was wrong, and the couple of times he’d thought to try it he’d spent time in the woodshed with his Pa, getting his backside tanned.

Sophie followed the aggravating man from her bedroom and shut the door with a bang. “Your room is upstairs. You can follow me and I’ll make sure you have towels and such.” The last thing she wanted was for the handsome man to spend time in her home. Sophie vowed to lock her bedroom door before she went to sleep that night. She marched down the hallway and opened a door. “Here you go.”

“Sophie, could I have a room closer to the steps, please?” he asked hopefully. “That way I can hear if Freely leaves his room and starts snooping around.”

Sophie shut the door to the guestroom with a bang, and then stomped back down the hallway to the first door in the hallway. “You can use this room, then, although it is the hottest one this time of year.”

“It’ll do just fine. Thanks.”

“Don’t thank me,” she tartly replied. “If my father’s life wasn’t at stake, there is no way I would permit you to stay here. You are intruding on time I planned to have just for myself and I am not one bit happy with you.” She went on to tell him the rates, and she hiked them up considerably, just for him... and watched in satisfaction as he winced when he paid her in advance for one week. “I will have a meal on the table at noon.” She left him standing there and stomped away, furious as she could be.

Sophie marched downstairs and went straight to her bedroom, closing and locking the door for good measure. It did not take her long to strip out of the dress and petticoats she was wearing, and, feeling ashamed, she lowered her drawers to take a peek at her flaming red bottom! She was going to have bruises! Even more angry than before, she gently eased the drawers over her bottom cheeks once more, and then she found an old pair of worn pants to pull on over her aching posterior. A clean white shirt followed, and she rolled up the sleeves to just below her elbow. She had to stand to pull on a pair of socks and her boots, but she managed. Finally, she took out her gun belt and wrapped it around herself protectively. If she’d been able to reach her gun earlier, her poor bottom wouldn’t be on fire right now! Damn Trevor Morrison for treating her like a little girl!

Sophie looked longingly at the books she’d brought from town, but a paying guest was a paying guest, and she had work to do, as much as she hated the idea. Trust her parent to lie to her about the length of time he would be gone. He was always hoping to catch people at a disadvantage, and she was no exception to this. She could only imagine what

he would say if he came home to find a dish out of place in the kitchen, or a light film of dust on a wooden surface anywhere in the large house! Thankfully she knew of his plan and everything would be tiptop and with a boarder to boot.

Sophie was skilled in the kitchen, and it did not bother her that she had very little time to come up with a good meal for her boarder. She threw a cake in the oven and put on a pot of ham and beans and potatoes. It wasn't fancy, but it would be hot and good... and filling. There was no way she would give the lawman a reason to complain... or her picky father.

While the food was cooking she set a place for one at the dining room table. She would eat in the kitchen, she decided. There was no way on earth she was going to socialize with that barbarian of a lawman! Sophie was furious with him for daring to spank her. Her bottom still smarted over an hour later! She'd love nothing more than to throw one Trevor Morrison out of her home, but she couldn't... Not if her father was in danger like he claimed. That part was hard for her to swallow. Her parent was no fool; he was intelligent and could read people like a book. It was a skill that made him a good attorney. He could look at a man, talk to him a few minutes, and know whether or not he was innocent of wrongdoing, or if he was guilty as sin. One thing she admired about her father was the fact that he would not defend murderers or rapists. He said he would not use his skill to protect those men from the punishments they'd earned. Yes, Clarence Foster was a very judgmental man; he was well respected, too.

By the time she'd taken the cake from the oven, allowed it to cool, and then frosted it, the green bean dish was ready to serve. She cut slices of bread, and put bowls of food on the dining room table, added a pot of coffee, and then whirled around when Trevor came into the room. He'd taken the time to shave and to put on a clean shirt. He was hatless, but he was wearing his gun and holster, and she suspected he rarely took it off. "Your meal is ready. You may call for me if you need anything else." She moved toward the kitchen, but he reached out and grabbed her hand.

"Not so fast, little lady. I'm not a leper and I don't like to eat alone unless I am on the trail by myself. Bring a plate and join me."

"No thank you. I don't eat with the boarders." She was lying again and to her dismay her face flooded with color!

"Sophie, I gave you time to get over your pout, but if you are still sulking then it is obvious I didn't spank you nearly long enough." Her blue eyes widened in shock and he had to refrain from smiling. "Now, I know full well that you normally sit at the table with your borders. Your Pa says it is his belief that people like to feel like family when they choose a boarding house over a hotel."

"I don't want to sit with you!" The words came unbidden, but they were the honest to goodness truth and she couldn't be sorry for saying them.

“Pouting,” Trevor said, nodding his head.

“I am not pouting; I do not like you!” she declared.

“Pouting.”

“I am not pouting! You’d best sit down and eat before your food gets cold!” She backed away when he took a step in her direction. She didn’t like the look in his dark eyes, and she already knew that he was completely ruthless and would spank her again if he took a notion.

“Sophie, be honest with yourself. You are pouting, and I’m going to take you over my knee again if you don’t put a stop to it right now.” He gave her a few seconds to digest his words, then said politely, “I would very much like your company at the table, Sophie. Would you join me, please?”

Sophie wanted to tell him to go straight to hell, but her behind was much too sore for her to risk the repercussions. “Very well, I will get my plate and silverware, but I warn you right now that I am not in the mood for conversation.” She turned on her heel and came back a couple minutes later, carrying a plate that she’d filled in the kitchen, not wanting to take away from the food she put out for him. She sat it down on the table, as far away from him as she possibly could, and then went back to the kitchen to get a cup and saucer so she could have coffee, too. Then she glared at him and went to the parlor and returned a few seconds later with a pillow she plopped on her chair. She gingerly eased herself down on the soft pillow, still hurting like crazy. “Damn you!” she stated. “If you weren’t here to protect Papa I would shoot you dead!”

“I thought you weren’t in the mood to make conversation?” he asked, grinning. He took his seat and helped himself to a heaping helping of the ham, green beans, and potatoes. “This looks like something my Ma cooks; fresh green beans and new potatoes from the garden. I haven’t had a meal this good since I was home last. Thank you, Sophie,” he said.

Sophie wanted to stay mad at the man, but the sincerity in his voice and in his eyes was her undoing. Trevor was telling her the truth; he was pleased with the meal. She forced herself to be polite. “You’re welcome.”

“In my folks’ house you wouldn’t be permitted to have that pillow you’re sitting on.”

“Well, this is my house, and if I want to sit on a dozen pillows I will!” she told him, her blue eyes flashing with pure temper.

“Don’t push your luck, little lady. I just might decide to prove different.”

“Not unless you want me to poison every bit of food I give you to eat!”

“Still pouting, huh?”

“Damn you, I am not pouting! I am angry with you. There is a difference. I never pout!” she informed him, waving her fork around to make a point.

“I can see you are angry and that is a form of pouting.” He continued to eat, helping himself to seconds. “Do you want some more?” he offered, trying to be polite.

“No! There is more in the kitchen, so eat your fill.” It seemed insane to be fighting and having normal, polite conversation at the same time. U. S. Marshal Trevor Morrison was making her crazy! “I never pout, and I wish you would stop trying to bait my temper.”

“Bait your temper?” he repeated, amazed. “I am doing no such thing.” He dumped the rest of the serving bowl on his plate. He was hungry after two days on the trail with nothing but hardtack to eat, and frankly, he wasn’t expecting much in the way of food, especially after he took her over his knee and gave her a sound spanking.

“Yes, you are baiting me. I told you I never pout, and you keep insisting that I do. What else would you call it but baiting me to make me lose my temper?” She got to her feet, walked to his end of the table, picked up the serving bowl and marched to the kitchen and filled it again. The man was starving, and no one ever left her table hungry, even if she hated them! She entered the dining room and put the bowl down in front of him.

“Honey, I wouldn’t have to bait you to make you lose your temper; you are one firecracker, ready to explode in a second!” he told her as she took her seat again. The look on her face was priceless when her butt met with the hard wooden seat.

“You took my pillow!” Sophie jumped up and rubbed her injured bottom. “You heartless bastard!”

“Do not call me a bastard, little girl, unless you want your mouth soaped good and proper, plus another spanking that makes the last one look like love pats. Calling me a bastard insults my Ma and I won’t have it, do you hear me?”

His eyes were hard, as was his voice, and she swallowed hard before grabbing her dishes. “You can go straight to hell, Trevor Morrison!” She left the dining room, tears stinging her eyes.

## Chapter Four

Sophie couldn't believe the man dared to take her pillow from her chair while she was in the kitchen refilling the serving bowl for him! It was insulting and her feelings were hurt. Tears were burning her eyes and it was all she could do not to start bawling like a little girl. She dipped hot water from the stove's reservoir into a dishpan, added soap and some cold water from the pump, and then she put her dirty dishes in the water for washing. She filled another dishpan with hot water for rinsing, and went about the routine task of cleaning up after a meal. There were green beans left and she would put them on the table again for supper, along with a roast she planned to put in the oven later. It would not need a lot of attention, and she could stay in her room and avoid Trevor Morrison. Never had she disliked a man so intensely. Not even Rory Carlson made her feel the way Trevor did; Rory was just plain stupid and ignorant. Trevor was smart enough to know just what to say to strip away her pride and leave her feeling vulnerable and hurt. She couldn't wait for her Papa to come home so this charade could be over with. If this George Freely was guilty of all they claimed, then Trevor could arrest him and take him away, and she'd never have to set her eyes on the impossible man again. Instead of making her feel better, the thought was depressing, and she couldn't imagine why.

Trevor came through the door carrying dishes. He sat them on the kitchen table, then left without a word, only to return with the rest of the dishes. "You fixed a wonderful meal for me, Sophie. I enjoyed it a lot. Thank you."

She ignored him, afraid she would start crying if she said anything at all! The next thing she knew, he gently put his hands on her shoulders and turned her around, and then he used his finger to tip up her chin so he could look at her. "It was mean and spiteful of me to take away your pillow when you were trying to be nice by getting me more food, Sophie. I apologize." Sophie felt her control slip, and then she was crying, and the crying turned to sobs, and she was mortified. She tried to run past Trevor, but he caught her and held her close.

"I'm sorry, honey. Sometimes I can be a mean jackass. You've been sweet to me, and there was no call for me to bait you the way I did." He felt like kicking his own ass, and he would if he could kick that high. He didn't know what it was about the pretty woman, but he was attracted to her. He'd already told her he intended to marry her, and damned if he didn't mean it. He was doing what his brother had done... falling head over heels for a woman he'd just met. He'd given Tomas grief over it time and time again, but he and Julia had been together for five years now. Trevor didn't know why he was being so mean to Sophie. "I'm sorry," he said again. "I know you won't believe me, but I'm acting like an ass because I took one look at you and fell in love. I made so much fun of my brother for doing the same thing, and I think I'm trying to push you away because I don't want to apologize to the jerk." He kissed the top of her head. "Will you forgive me, honey? Please? I promise to stop baiting you."

Sophie was so full of mixed emotions she didn't know what to say. She swallowed hard before speaking. "I will forgive you, but don't think that means I am in love with you! Right now I could cheerfully shoot you!"

"Now, that is my Sophie," he said, then laughed. "I promise I'll grow on you." He kissed the tip of her nose. "I am sorry for hurting your feelings, and I'll prove it right now." When she looked at him warily, he smiled and picked up the clean dish towel she'd taken out. "I'll dry, and I'd appreciate it if you don't tell anyone. I'm supposed to be a tough lawman, and it would hurt my image if the bad guys heard about me drying dishes."

His dark eyes were full of good humor and Sophie had to smile in spite of herself. "I won't tell," she promised, giggling. To her surprise Trevor kept her smiling and giggling as he told her humorous stories about his siblings, parents, and some of the men he worked with. Before she knew it all of the dishes were done and nothing was keeping him in the kitchen.

"Thank you for helping me with the dishes. It wasn't necessary."

"I enjoyed helping you, Sophie. I'm afraid I came on a bit strong this morning, but I am not joking when I tell you that it is like you belong to me. I really don't like lies, big or small, so please don't fib to me again. I did not enjoy making you cry in pain." When she nodded and lowered her head so he couldn't see into her eyes he decided to change the subject. "Are you going to start on your new dress this afternoon?"

"I'd planned to, but..."

"No buts about it, Miss Sophie. You go right ahead. I don't need any special consideration. In fact, if it won't upset you, I'd like to watch. I have always wondered how you ladies make dresses and stuff. Ma sewed for the girls, but I always had chores and was outside when she was teaching them how. So, would you mind educating me?"

"Are you serious or just pulling my leg?" Sophie asked in disbelief. Her father couldn't care less how she made a garment. All he wanted to know was how much she was spending.

"I'm serious. This is the perfect time for me to satisfy my curiosity."

"It isn't anything special or secret," she assured him. "The first thing is to decide how to make it, meaning the bodice type, the sleeve type and length. If there is to be a collar. Just the details. Then the fabric needs to be cut out... carefully."

"Okay. Where is everything, and where is your sewing machine?"



“The sewing machine is in my bedroom, but I need to get my patterns and go from there. I do all of that out here,” she explained.

“Go get the patterns,” he bossed and smiled when she went without arguing. Trevor could only imagine how little free time she had. With a houseful of guests, she had to be busy constantly, and her stingy Pa didn’t give her a dime for all her hard work, either. He’d heard enough from that elderly Mrs. Graves to know that the entire town felt sorry for Sophie. It wasn’t fair of her father to expect so much. He’d also touched on a nerve when he asked how the man punished her. He would bet it wasn’t with a spanking given in love. She’d reacted like he’d slapped her when he asked.

Sophie was soon back, and he watched as she planned the dress. He even made a couple of suggestions, which she outright laughed at, the lower neckline for one. “I wouldn’t dare make a neckline that low,” she told him. “Papa would have a fit.”

“You aren’t a little girl; and the neckline isn’t that low. Come on, Sophie. The only way your Pa is going to see you as a woman is for you to act and dress like one.”

She bowed her head. “If he doesn’t like it he will throw it in the stove. Do you know how long it has been since I’ve had a new dress?” There was pain in her pretty blue eyes and he wanted to kick himself.

“It’s okay, Sophie. Make it the way you want. I’m sure it will be very pretty, especially with the lace Mrs. Graves suggested you get.”

He kept his big mouth from making suggestions and was surprised when she said the pattern was ready. She told him she would get the fabric and she headed outside.

“Where are you going?”

“Outside to the clothesline,” she answered. “If you don’t wash fabric before sewing it will shrink the first time you do wash it and then the dress won’t fit. I hope it’s dry,” she added as she went outside.

Trevor followed, looking around the neat yard. He suspected that she was responsible as well for the flowers in the beds and the general appeal of the boarding house. “Did you plant all of these spring flowers?”

“Not all of them. My Mama planted some of them years ago, but I take care of them, and raise others to plant. It looks nice to have flowers around the house.”

“I agree. Ma feels the same way, and I spent some time weeding her flower beds when I was a kid. I spent hours in the garden, too... Hoeing and pulling weeds, picking green beans and peas. She did a lot of canning. We never went hungry during the poorest of times thanks to Ma’s garden.”

“It sounds like you have a wonderful family. Why would you leave them to do the job you do?”

“Like most kids, I wanted to see what I was missing in the world. I felt that there was something better than ranching and babysitting cattle and horses. I was raised with a clear knowledge of right and wrong, and when a deputy sheriff job opened up in town, the sheriff offered it to me and I took it on the spot. Then a U. S. Marshal worked with us on a bank robbery, the one where my brother-in-law was killed, and he offered me a job, and I took it. To tell you the truth, Sophie, that ranch is looking better and better all the time. I’m ready to settle down with the right girl and raise a family.”

Sophie felt her cheeks turn pink. When he was being nice, Trevor Morrison turned her head as no man ever had. Still, her bottom was very sore and she couldn’t possibly marry a man who believed in corporal punishment! Still, he was very handsome, and he made her feel all warm inside. The way he looked at her as he listened to what she had to say was a new experience, too.

“I’m not just saying pretty words, Sophie. I’m serious, and I promise I’m not going to do one thing to jeopardize our future together.”

“What do you mean by that?” She looked at him curiously, her clear blue eyes telling him she honestly had no idea.

“Honey, some men will tell a pretty woman anything, just to share her bed. I’m not that way. I want a future with you, and I’m planning to court you and put a ring on your finger before we have a wedding night. You are safe with me.”

“I wouldn’t let you in my bed anyway!” she told him, putting her hands on her hips in indignation.

He grinned. “I love your feisty side.”

“Some people already think I am an immoral woman because male boarders stay here,” she told him, unable to meet his gaze.

“They are fools, Sophie. I knew you better than that the first moment I laid eyes on you in the general store.” Her eyes flew up to meet his and he smiled at her. “No one will say those things around me or they’ll wish they hadn’t.”

“Thank you,” Sophie whispered, so touched she could cry. She felt the fabric on the line and then took it down and folded it over her arm, smiling. “You can’t know how much that means to me, Trevor.”

“Enough that you’ll change into a pretty dress for supper?” he asked, grinning. “I promise you won’t need your gun for protection from me.”

“I normally wear my gun, Trevor,” she confided. “Especially when I am alone out here. Not all the boarders we get can be trusted.”

“Have you had to defend yourself from them?”

“A time or two, but nothing that I couldn’t handle. Our hired man, Jenkins, is usually here when Papa isn’t, and Papa is here in the evenings most of the time. I can’t say that I’ve ever been afraid, but that is because I make sure I am able to protect myself.”

They went inside and she laid the pattern on the fabric and within a short time she was finished cutting. “Now, you need to disappear, Trevor, and let me get some work done. I need to start supper, and I can work faster without you out here looking at me.” Her smile softened the words.

“It’s okay, Sophie. I have some letters I need to write.” He got to his feet, then leaned down and kissed her cheek. “Thanks for sharing this afternoon with me, Sophie.”

Sophie watched him leave the kitchen and then smiled to herself. Maybe Trevor Morrison wasn’t so bad after all. She fixed dinner, shared the meal with him, and they spent the evening in the parlor, talking and talking. Finally it was time to turn in, and they went to their respective rooms.

Sophie was sound asleep when she came awake and realized she was not alone in her room. She let out a scream when she saw a man’s shadow in the moonlight, and in the next minute the man was on top of her, muting her cries with his hand over her mouth.

“Not so brave now, are you, bitch!”

Sophie recognized Rory Carlson’s voice and she did her best to dislodge him, but all that seemed to do was lodge him even more firmly on top of her. He tugged at her nightdress with one hand while keeping her mouth covered with his hand. Sophie thought she was going to throw up when he ripped her gown and bared her breasts. She expected him to touch her next, but instead his weight was suddenly lifted off of her and she heard Rory’s groan as he hit the floor hard. She grabbed the sheet and pulled it up to cover herself.

“Do you know this piece of horse dung, Miss Foster?” Trevor asked, jerking Rory up off the floor.

“Who the hell are you?” Rory asked, shaking his head as if to clear it. “And what are you doin’ here? She’s s’posed to be alone!”

“Lucky for Miss Foster that I asked for a room, isn’t it? I heard her screams. I’m going to take him to the Sheriff, Miss Foster. Do you think you’ll be alright? Do you need a doctor?”

“A doctor? What the hell would she need the doc for?”

“Because you tried to rape her, you bastard,” Trevor said, picking him up by his shirt and shaking him back and forth. “You need to be behind bars.”

“For what? She was asking for it in town this mornin’!” Rory maintained and in the next instant Trevor’s fist connected with his mouth.

“Are you all right?” Trevor asked.

“I’m fine. I’m sure I’ll have bruises.”

“Come with me. I want the doctor to see the bruises so he can testify to what this bastard did. A few years for assault and battery and attempted rape might teach him a good lesson.”

“You’ll need to leave the room. He tore my gown.”

“You’re a real son of a bitch,” Trevor growled, jerking Rory out the door. He wanted to pound him to death, but he didn’t dare. He had to pretend to be a regular boarder so his cover wouldn’t be blown. He took the time to tie Rory’s hand and feet, and then he gagged him with his own kerchief. Trevor then hoisted Rory over his own saddle, and tied him there. He went back inside to see to Sophie.

“Honey, are you all right?” he asked, his voice a mere whisper as he took her in his arms. “If he hurt you, you need to tell me. It wouldn’t be your fault,” he said.

“No, you came in time, Trevor. Thank you so much. I couldn’t get free of him, and I couldn’t reach my gun. I think he came in my window.”

“Something woke me, and then I heard you scream. I came as soon as I could,” he said quietly, hugging her close. “Thank God I got down here before he hurt you.” He paused, and then said, “We have to pretend that I am just a boarder, Sophie. Do not mention that I wear a badge, or that we have spent time getting to know one another. Your father’s life could depend on that.”

“I understand,” she answered.

“I’ll get the horse hitched to the buggy,” Trevor told her and then he sat her down on the porch while he headed to the barn.

The Sheriff was only too happy to throw Rory Carlson in a jail cell. The very second he removed the gag from Carlson’s mouth he started cursing Trevor and calling Sophie names. Before Trevor could get to him, the Sheriff hit him on the jaw, knocking him unconscious. “I’ve wanted a reason to do that for years,” he said. “Miss Sophie, I reckon you should let Doc see to those bruises coming up.” He looked at Trevor and said, “It sure is a good thing that you were boarding at the Foster’s place, young man. That

Carlson boy is hot on any girl he thinks he can force. This time it's not just her word against his."

## Chapter Five

Doc tsk-tsk'd over Sophie's bruises, but he was able to write out a concise statement that would be enough to see Rory Carlson behind bars. "I hope you know that you're lucky, Miss Sophie. A few other ladies in this town weren't able to get away from him, and then he claimed it was their word against his. He said they were willing. You need to remember that."

Sophie nodded, and then Trevor took her back to the boarding house. She insisted she was fine and that Trevor go on up to bed. She closed the window to her room and locked it, and then she climbed in bed. The tears fell then, but she actually did go to sleep. Morning came soon and she was up at the crack of dawn, dressed, and out the door to care for the animals. By the time she returned to the house Trevor was already up and invading her kitchen.

"I hope you like flapjacks?" he asked with a big smile. "It's one thing I can fix. That and bacon."

"You don't have to cook!" she exclaimed.

"I know I don't have to cook, but I sure want to. I know you didn't get much rest last night, and it's the least I can do. I think the coffee is ready," he told her.

While they ate he went over what he expected to happen with George Freely once more. Sophie asked questions, but promised she would stay out of the way and allow Trevor to do his job.

"I'm perfectly serious, young lady. You mind me and stay away from Freely." He was using that stern voice that she disliked so much.

"Don't you go bossing me around, Trevor Morrison! This is my home and I'll go where I please!" she fired right back at him, her voice sharp and snippy.

"You will do as I say," he countered.

"Unless I think I need to protect Papa!"

"Okay, it's time for another spanking, isn't it, Miss Sophie?"

"Absolutely not, Trevor. I'm not a little girl, and..."

"And yet you are acting like one," he cut her off to say. "You are sassing me because I am trying to keep you from getting in the middle of this situation and getting hurt."

“That’s not true! You are treating me like I am stupid, and I don’t like it!”

“Why are you acting like this, Sophie?”

“Like what?” she demanded.

Once again her voice was snippy and rude, and Trevor made the decision to deal with her attitude here and now... before she got in the way later and got herself shot for her efforts. He struck without warning, bending her over the table and giving the seat of her britches a firm spank. Sophie hollered and he smiled grimly. Trevor managed to reach under her and he removed her gun belt. He continued to spank her backside until she started crying. “Are you ready to behave now?” he asked. She nodded. “We’ll see about that.” He put her on her feet, warning, “No rubbing unless you want me to spank you again.”

“But I hurt so much!” she wailed.

“A spanking is supposed to hurt,” he said, giving her no sympathy. He pulled her over to an empty corner and put her nose against the point the two walls met. “You stand right here and think about that attitude of yours, little lady. When I finally decide to let you out, your attitude and the way you speak and answer my questions is going to determine whether or not I finish the spanking I started. Is that clear?” he asked. When she squirmed and didn’t answer, he gave her bottom another hard spank.

“Ouch!”

“Answer me, Sophie.”

“Yes, it’s clear!” Her eyes were swimming in tears and her bottom really hurt. She wasn’t over the spanking he gave her just yesterday morning, and it wasn’t even twenty-four hours later that he was doing it again! How could he treat her so shabbily?

Trevor did the dishes and when the kitchen was clean he crossed the floor to stand beside the pretty brunette. “Well, Sophie, do you think you can obey me and do as I said without all of the sass?”

Sophie wasn’t a fool. If she argued with the man he would spank her once again, and she was much too sore for that to happen. “Yes, I will,” she said.

“I thought you might see it that way.” He pulled her around to look at her. He walked her to the kitchen table and sat her down on her well-spanked backside.

“I don’t want to sit right now, Trevor!” she squealed. “Please, let me get up!”

“You’ll get up when I say so, Sophie, and that isn’t going to happen until I see some obedience and compliance of the rules I gave you. Now sit still on that chair while I get some paper and a pencil.”

Sophie couldn’t believe that Trevor was doing this to her, but he was... and she was just sitting here permitting him to get away with it! It was awful, and he wasn’t even her father!

Trevor returned and put a few sheets of paper on the table in front of her. He also handed her a pencil that had been sharpened to a point. “You are going to sit here and write an essay on the rules I gave you, Miss Sophie. I want to know that you truly understand. You can end the essay by promising to obey me and then signing it. I guarantee that you will not be getting up off that chair unless you do as I say.” He turned and walked out of the kitchen, leaving her to decide for herself how long she would sit on the wooden chair.

It was an hour before he returned, and she practically shoved the paper at him. “I need to use the necessary!” she exclaimed.

“As soon as I’ve looked this over,” he insisted, but it didn’t take him long to read the rules, and the apology she added at the end. She’d also made the promise and signed the document.

“Trevor!” she begged.

“You may go,” he agreed, and she ran out the kitchen door in a big hurry.

Trevor wasn’t in the kitchen when she returned, for which she was thankful. She had a noon meal to prepare, and she was already running behind schedule. She also needed to do a light dusting in the other guest rooms to make sure they were ready to rent should someone stop by. The parlor also needed to be cleaned; her father would throw a major fit if the house wasn’t up to his standards when he got home.

The day passed quickly, and Trevor left her alone, except at lunchtime. He had lunch with her and she was thankful he didn’t notice the pillow she’d sneaked onto her chair while their food was cooking. During the afternoon she did some baking, worked in her garden, and she started dinner, well aware that her father would be planning to surprise her with his presence.

When Clarence Foster arrived he greeted her and introduced George Freely. Freely was much younger than Sophie expected he would be and he turned on his full charm. Sophie was polite, but managed to turn her attention to her parent instead. “Papa, you are home much earlier than I expected. Is everything alright?” she pretended surprise, just as Trevor asked her to do.



“Why, yes, my dear. Everything is just fine. George and I decided that we could discuss our business right here where it is more private. I hope you are prepared to serve supper on time?” he asked, raising an eyebrow in the critical manner she knew so well.

“Of course, Papa. This is a boarding house, and I am always prepared. Besides, I took in another boarder yesterday morning, and I ran into a couple of ladies in town this morning who said they might decide to stay in Apple Creek. I fixed plenty in the chance they might arrive at mealtime.” Clarence nodded. Her decision made good sense to him, and any leftover food went to feed the hogs they raised for meat. His daughter was a good manager.

“Which room should I show George to so that he may freshen up after our trip?” Clarence asked.

Sophie chose her words carefully. She knew her picky father well. “They are all freshly cleaned, Papa, so it really doesn’t matter which one you choose. Our boarder is in the first room, however, so any but that one.”

“You didn’t put him in the blue room?” Clarence was surprised. It was the nicest room they had to offer, and the one they used most often.

Sophie was glad that Trevor thought to come up with a logical excuse. “Mr. Lane doesn’t like the morning sun streaming in his window, and asked to sleep on the other side of the hallway, Papa. Of course I accommodated him.”

“You did well, my dear.” A rare compliment and an equally rare smile from her parent made her feel warm inside, and despite her promise to Trevor, she would do whatever she had to do to keep him safe. “Supper will be at six, Mr. Freely, but feel free to enjoy the parlor or the porch if you wish.”

“Thank you, Miss Foster. I am already enjoying my visit here and I will enjoy getting to know you better over supper tonight, and perhaps later you will sit on the porch with me for a spell?” The man was trying to charm her for some reason, and she wouldn’t have fallen for that even if she didn’t already know of his character.

“I am sure that you and Papa have plenty to discuss, Mr. Freely, and I would just be in the way.” She pretended to be a bit shy, and then excused herself to check on supper. A few minutes later her father joined her in the kitchen.

“I was surprised to see you wearing a pretty dress when I walked inside, daughter. You look as pretty as your Mama.”

“Thank you, Papa. Papa, there is something you should hear about from me...” she hesitated.

“What is it, Sophie?”

“It was well known that I was to be alone out here and Rory Carlson sneaked in my bedroom window and tried to force himself on me.”

“What?” Clarence was enraged. “Did he...” He couldn’t bring himself to say the word ‘rape’. “Did he... succeed?” he finally asked.

“No. Mr. Lane said he was awakened by a noise, and he heard my scream. He came in time to save me from that. Mr. Lane insisted on taking him to jail, and he thought Doc should examine my bruises so he could testify. I hope you aren’t upset with me?” She sounded like a little girl!

To her surprise, Clarence hugged her and said, “I am so grateful to this Mr. Lane for protecting you, daughter, and the only person I am upset with is the son of a bitch who tried to hurt you. I am going to see to it that he is sent up for this. You are unharmed?” he asked, his eyes full of pain and concern.

“I have a few bruises, Papa, but I am just fine. Doc told me that there are a few other girls in town who weren’t so lucky, but it was Rory’s word against theirs. I feel as though we are getting justice for all of them, too.”

“Yes indeed. I am proud of you for doing what is right and for not trying to hide this as if you did something shameful. You did not do anything wrong. I know damn well and good you did not encourage that spoiled brat. His parents have ruined him, and that mother of his could use a horsewhipping in the middle of town.”

Sophie had to giggle. It wasn’t like her father to get so worked up, but he was. “I don’t think any judge would go along with that, Papa, but the mental picture is nice.”

Clarence smiled. “You do look pretty today,” he said. “And, Sophie, thank you for telling me about this straight off. It isn’t the sort of thing I would wish to hear from the Sheriff or Doc.”

At that moment, Trevor walked into the kitchen. “Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to interrupt.”

“Nonsense. Are you Mr. Lane?” Clarence asked. When Trevor nodded, Clarence introduced himself and thanked Trevor for coming to his daughter’s aid the night before. Trevor shook hands, and told him that he had five sisters, and there was no way he would permit a man to harm a woman if he could prevent it. He made himself sound just a little less intelligent... and Sophie knew he was purposely doing that to make himself less of a ‘threat’ to Freely.

The next week passed slowly, with George Freely doing his best to talk Clarence into investing in his ‘deal’. Clarence was no fool, and he asked a lot of questions, and Freely managed to answer them, and then he would produce false documentation to support his

claims. Finally, Clarence agreed to back him, and promised he would get the money out of the bank as soon as it opened the next morning.

Trevor didn't like it one little bit when George Freely changed his normal routine and said he would wait at the house for Clarence to get back from the bank. He normally went with his victim, got the money, and killed his benefactor before getting out of town. The fact he was staying behind worried Trevor. He didn't know whether Freely had a partner whose job it was to get the money and kill the witness, or if he intended to kill Clarence at home... and Sophie, too! It was obvious that Freely was attracted to the beautiful Sophie; he couldn't keep his black eyes off of her. Sophie seemed oblivious to that fact, however. "Miss Foster, why don't you ride into town with your Papa and get that spool of thread you need? I recollect you mentioned it to me in passing yesterday that you ran out of some color you needed to finish a new dress you're making." He prayed that she would take the hint. Then he could protect both of them.

"Now, that is a splendid idea!" George spoke up. "We could make an outing of it!"

"An outing?" Clarence repeated. "Going to the bank and the general store?"

"Don't be stuffy, Clarence. Sophie works hard, and I am sure that Mr. Lane won't mind if she doesn't fix lunch one day...?" He looked at Trevor and smiled. "Would you, sir?"

"Of course not. You do work awful hard, Miss Foster. Take the morning off. I can fix myself a sandwich for lunch, and keep an eye out in case someone comes by wanting a room. I can put them upstairs and fix them a sandwich, too." He smiled a bit too brightly, aware that it made him look like an idiot.

"Sophie, get these dishes done up as quickly as possible while I hitch the buggy. We'll all go to town. I didn't know you were making a new dress," he said with a smile. "What color is it?"

"Blue, Papa. I wanted to have it finished for church this Sunday. I've been working on it for over a week now. And," she said with a smile, "Mrs. Graves made me a hat to go with it!"

"I'll have to be sure and thank her." Clarence was actually smiling. "Let's finish eating, everyone. The scrambled eggs are going to get cold!"

Trevor was relieved when Sophie was still wearing a dress when they left for town. He half expected her to put on her pants and strap on her gun! She'd obeyed him so far, and he hoped she continued to do so. He kept his distance on the way into Apple Creek. Once there, Sophie went to the general store, and the two men to the bank, although Freely remained outside. Freely kept his eyes on the general store and Trevor was convinced that the man planned to take Sophie with him! Sophie remained in the store a lot longer than it took to buy a spool of thread, and Clarence walked out of the bank, spoke to Freely, and then led him to his office. Trevor heard a gunshot and took off

running, cursing himself for not stopping to think where Freely would make his attempt on Clarence Foster's life. If Foster was dead, Sophie would never forgive him.

He threw open the door, expecting to see Clarence Foster lying there, but he was kneeling over the body of George Freely, and Sophie was standing there, gun in hand, trembling.

"What happened?" he asked, taking out his badge and pinning it on his shirt. Clarence Foster's eyes narrowed as he saw the badge.

"On the way into town Freely mentioned wanting to see Papa's office, Trevor. I felt he would make his attempt here. I went to the store and Mr. Cline let me out the back door, and I came through the alley and in through the back door here. I hid and waited. Papa turned his back to Freely, and he pulled a gun and was going to kill him, so I fired."

"My daughter is an excellent shot, Marshal; Freely is dead."

## Epilogue

“Oh my goodness! Weren’t you frightened? I would have been so frightened! But I don’t know how to use a gun! Would you teach me, Sophie?” Mimi, Trevor’s youngest sister asked.

“No. My wife is not going to teach any of my sisters to use a gun. There is no need for any of you to learn something like that!” Trevor growled.

“Of course I will teach you,” Sophie said, giggling.

“Not unless you want a spanking for each bullet fired,” Trevor told her, his voice stern.

“Trevor!” Sophie’s cheeks turned red with embarrassment. She knew the threat was not an idle one. Her new husband did not tolerate disobedience. She learned that lesson as soon as he could get her alone after she defended her Papa. He told her that he understood why she did what she did, but she still disobeyed him... and he paddled her long and hard. Her Papa heard her cries from inside the house and came running, and it was all she could do to convince her parent to butt out and not have Trevor arrested. It was harder still to convince him that she was in love with the man and wanted to get married. Clarence finally agreed and Trevor wasted no time in putting a ring on her finger. This was her first visit with his family, and she found his sisters, Mimi in particular, to be adorable. They made her feel right at home. His parents were good people, too. Loving with each other and their children and children’s spouses.

“I would prefer you not teach my daughters how to use firearms, Sophie, honey,” her new father-in-law stated. “If I catch any of you at it, I’ll cut switches and wear them out. Married or not!” he added with a glance at his two eldest girls. “You know your husbands wouldn’t approve.”

“Do you understand, wife?” Trevor asked of Sophie.

“If you feel so strongly about it, then I won’t do it,” she obediently promised.

“Papa and Trevor are such spoilsports!” Mimi declared. “We are old enough to decide for ourselves!”

“And you’d better make the right decision, or Pa will help you change your mind,” Trevor said quietly.

“Why are you two so set against women learning to protect themselves?” Sophie asked curiously.

“We do the protecting around here.”

“Well, you didn’t protect Sophie’s Papa, and what if she hadn’t been there?” Mimi asked.

“Sophie should have sent Adam Cline to tell me what was happening, or better still, if she’d gone from the store to the office, I would have been there before her Pa and Freely got there. It is my job to protect.”

“Not anymore,” Sophie reminded him.

“What does that mean, son?”

“Pa, I’ve turned in my badge, and I bought the Nixon spread. It needs a lot of work, but I reckon I can turn it into a good working ranch.”

“I knew you’d settle down one day, Trevor,” his Ma spoke up, and her smile warmed his heart.

“Sophie is responsible for that, Ma. I fell head over heels the very second I set eyes on her. She is a snippy little thing, but I reckon a lot of hard work will fix that, too. Maybe fifty or sixty years from now she’ll be all sugar without the spice.”

“Don’t let him fool you; he loves a bit of spice with his snippy,” Sophie said, giggling when he kissed her in front of everyone.

The End.