

# Storing Up Trouble

AMERICAN HEIRESSSES • 3



# JEN TURANO

USA Today BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *A Change of Fortune*

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*For Al*

*Because surviving thirty years of marriage to me  
certainly deserves a bit of recognition.*

*Love you!*

*Jen*



# CHAPTER 1



SEPTEMBER 1886

The truth of the matter was this—she, Miss Beatrix Waterbury, had been banished from New York, and all because she’d had the great misfortune of landing herself in jail . . . twice.

Granted, misleading her mother about Mr. Thomas Hamersley and the romantic relationship they didn’t share, what with how Thomas was now engaged to another woman, hadn’t helped the situation. Nevertheless, she truly hadn’t thought her mother would make good on her threats to ship her off to stay with Aunt Gladys, but apparently she’d been wrong about that.

Smoothing red curls that had escaped their pins back into place, Beatrix lurched against the small sink of the retiring room as the train came to yet another screeching stop. Realizing the train had probably stopped at Crown Point Station, which meant Chicago was only an hour or so away, she hurried out the door and toward the Pullman car she’d been enjoying on her long journey from New York City to Chicago.

Even though she was hardly looking forward to a stay with her aunt Gladys, a lady she barely knew but distinctly remembered as being a somewhat querulous sort, Chicago was considered an up-and-coming city, which meant . . .

“Watch where you’re going.”

Beatrix stumbled to a stop, her forward progress brought to a rapid end due to the large man who’d stepped in front of her and whom she’d just barreled into, a man who was certainly solid and most assuredly surly, given the tone of his voice. When she lifted her head, the apology she’d been about to voice got stuck in her throat as her gaze settled on the man now blocking her way.

That he was not what she’d been expecting to see in a Pullman car was an understatement.

Dirty dark hair straggled over the man’s face, but it wasn’t the hair that held her attention; it was the vivid white scar running from the man’s hairline down to his chin. It was a scar that suggested the man was used to rough living, a notion further encouraged when Beatrix shifted her attention to his small, beady eyes that were filled with something that caused the hair on the nape of her neck to stand to attention. Uncomfortable with the manner in which the man was looking at her, Beatrix dropped her gaze, sucking in a sharp breath when she realized the man was grasping a deadly looking pistol in his beefy hand—a pistol that was aimed her way.

Her head snapped up. “Have you taken leave of your senses?” she demanded, which had the man blinking his beady eyes. “This is hardly an appropriate setting to have a pistol out, so I’ll thank you to tuck that right away.”

“I ain’t the one that’s taken leave of my senses. This is a holdup, it is, and I’ll thank *you* to stop yapping and hand over that bag you got swinging from your wrist.”

Hoping she’d misheard what sounded like ominous words indeed, Beatrix glanced around the compartment, finding many of the passengers sitting still as statues, the gentlemen looking furious, while some of the ladies were dabbing at their eyes with handkerchiefs.

Any hope she’d been mistaken died in a single heartbeat.

Switching her attention back to the man who was evidently intent on robbing her, Beatrix frowned. “Shall I assume the train hasn’t stopped at Crown Point?”

“‘Course not. We’d hardly be successful robbin’ a train at a station, would we, but enough with the questions. I’ll have that bag, and quickly if you know what’s good for you.”

Beatrix clutched the bag closer to her. “This bag has no monetary value and was made for me by a dear child who’d be devastated to learn I no longer have possession of it.”

The man took a step closer to Beatrix, so close in fact that the pistol he was holding pushed into her side. “You’re tryin’ my patience.”

“I’d give him the bag if I were you,” a gentleman called out from behind the man sticking a pistol in her side.

Although Beatrix knew that was sound advice indeed, the idea of handing over her belongings to a thief left a sour taste in her mouth.

She was not a lady tolerant of those who sought to rob innocents of their possessions. However, the man *was* threatening her with a pistol, which meant her only course of action as far as she could see would be to cooperate—to a certain extent.

Forcing herself to meet the man’s gaze, she refused a wince when she detected a hefty dose of temper in his eyes. “You’re more than welcome to the contents of my bag if you’ll allow me to keep the bag because, as I mentioned, it has no monetary value.”

“If it’ll stop you arguing with me, fine, keep the bag, but get on with it. Hand over all the contents, and fast-like. I ain’t got all day.”

“I’d be a lot faster if I could empty my bag without that pistol distracting me.”

Thankfully, the man took a step away from her, even as he began muttering something about “peculiar women” under his breath. Ignoring the mutters, Beatrix fumbled with the contents of her bag, throwing them into the leather satchel the robber was thrusting her way.

In went a lovely handkerchief that had taken her hours to embroider, an oatmeal cookie that the Waterbury cook had slipped into Beatrix’s bag in case she got hungry, two pencils, one half-eaten apple she’d forgotten to throw out, one lone earring, three pennies, two nickels, one folded-up slip of paper, and . . .

“Don’t think you can fool me by handing over such rubbish,” the man snapped, causing Beatrix to jump. “I’m only interested in your money, and not the measly coins you’ve found so far.”

“You said you wanted the contents of my purse, so that’s what I’ve been giving you.”

“Get to the good stuff.”

Rooting around her bag, Beatrix stilled when she discovered an object lingering at the bottom of her reticule, something she’d completely forgotten about, but an object that could very well put a rapid end to the unfortunate situation currently taking place. Struggling to control nerves that were now jangling, Beatrix pulled out a deceptively innocent-looking rectangular coin purse.

Flipping open the side that held her pin money, she riffled through the accordion compartments, dumping all the change directly into the satchel. After every last cent was gone, she drew out the few bills nestled against the side of the purse, the bulk of her money safely stowed away in a special pocket in the waistband of her traveling gown.

“There you go. That’s all my money.”

“What ya got stashed on the other side of that purse?”

Turning the coin purse over, Beatrix flipped out a trigger that had been expertly concealed against the bottom of the purse, leveling the purse on the man with a hand that was surprisingly steady, even though she was well aware that she’d just put herself in certain peril.

“This is what’s called the Frankenau Pistol Purse, and what’s stashed on this other side is a clever five-shot pinfire revolver, one that, as you can see, is trained on you.”

The man’s brow furrowed. “You say you got a pistol in there? I don’t believe you.”

“Shall I pull the trigger to prove it?”

“You ain’t got the nerve, even if there is a pistol in that purse. You’re a woman, and everyone knows that women ain’t got the stomach for shooting a—”

Whatever else the man had been about to say got lost when



there was suddenly a loud thud, and then the man crumpled to the ground, his pistol and the leather satchel falling from his hands. Glancing up, Beatrix discovered a gentleman standing a few feet away from her, holding a colored glass bottle that still had some water swishing around in it.

For the briefest moment, she merely gawked at the man.

He was unusually tall and his shoulders seemed to be broad, although it was difficult to say with any certainty because his jacket was baggy and ill-fitting. Long brown hair was sticking up in a most unusual fashion all over his head and looked as if it hadn't seen a comb in weeks. His eyes were an icy shade of blue, and his nose, though rather normal, was slightly red on the end, as if he were recovering from a cold.

That this gentleman had been the one to take down the man depriving her of her possessions took Beatrix completely aback. She'd certainly noticed him over the hours and hours they'd traveled together, since he'd been sitting only a seat away from her, but not once had she seen him speak to any of the other travelers on the train, instead preferring to spend his time buried in paperwork.

Frankly, she was surprised he'd even realized the train was being robbed, and . . .

"That was one of the most foolish actions I've ever witnessed in my life, especially from a woman" were the first words out of the gentleman's mouth. "If you'd only taken my advice from the start, I imagine the man would already be on his way instead of lying here unconscious, which is certain to cause us all sorts of trouble."

Beatrix drew herself up. "I don't recall you extending me any advice."

"I told you to give up your bag—advice you clearly didn't heed—instead deciding to take down the man with your purse." The man gave a shake of the bottle he was still holding. "You're fortunate I had the presence of mind to render this man senseless with this because I'm convinced that if I'd not acted, he would have called your bluff—right before he decided to shoot you because you were definitely testing his patience, something that's not advisable when

dealing with a train robber in possession of a seemingly well-used pistol.”

Any thought of thanking the man for his timely assistance disappeared in a flash. “Why would you think I was bluffing?”

“You’re a woman, and everyone knows that women aren’t possessed of the qualities needed to shoot a person—qualities like steady nerves and the actual ability to fire a pistol with accuracy.”

“Given how close I was to the man, I hardly believe that I would have been anything other than accurate.”

“And I believe that there was a very good chance you’d take out your own eye, or worse yet, shoot a fellow passenger. Pistols tend to recoil when they’re shot, something very few women, if any, are prepared for when they fire a weapon for the first time.”

“It would not have been my first time firing a pistol.”

“And while I’m skeptical about that, allow us to put this absurd conversation aside because we have more pressing matters to attend to.”

Beatrix had certainly encountered her fair share of gentlemen who believed ladies were, in essence, useless and expected to leave troubling situations to the discretion of men. But because she *was* Beatrix Waterbury, one of the great American heiresses, she was quite unaccustomed to anyone speaking in such a condescending manner to her.

The gentlemen of her acquaintance were always unerringly considerate of her and her “delicate feminine sensibilities,” as they liked to call them, and none of them would have ever contemplated speaking so rudely to her.

Realizing, though, that now was hardly the time to deliver a blistering lecture, Beatrix swallowed the words that were on the very tip of her tongue. She then gave a jerk of her head toward the man lying in the aisle. “Shall I assume that pressing matter revolves around getting this man secured?”

“You should assume nothing of the sort. The pressing matter I mentioned revolves around us—as in you and me—getting off this train.”

"I have no intention of departing this train with you, Mr. . . . ?"

"Nesbit. Norman Nesbit, and you are?"

"Beatrice Waterbury, but I can't get off the train with you because it would hardly be proper. And, besides, you could very well be a madman out to murder me, quite like the madmen I read about in the gothic novels I enjoy. And I have to believe any danger has vanished because you knocked out the man who was threatening us."

For the briefest of seconds, Mr. Norman Nesbit considered Beatrice, a flash of curiosity flickering through his eyes, but then he stepped over the man lying on the floor and took hold of her arm.

"I'm not a madman."

"I imagine that's a proclamation most madmen make before they do in their victims."

A vein began throbbing on Norman's forehead as his lips thinned. "An interesting theory, but one I have no time to debate with you because we have to get off this train."

"No."

"Did you not hear what the man disclosed to you before I rendered him senseless?"

"He disclosed he was a thief, intent on relieving me of my possessions."

"Not that, the part where he said, and I quote, 'We'd hardly be successful robbing a train at a station.'"

Beatrice frowned. "Are you of the belief he's not acting alone?"

"Of course he's not acting alone, and because the man charged directly for me when he entered this car, something you missed when you made a trip to the retiring room, I'm convinced I was the main target of this train heist. Robbing the other passengers was only a ploy to distract from the real reason behind this particular train being held up."

"How did you know I'd gone off to the retiring room?"

"I'm very observant. I'm also very rational, which is why I feel it's prudent for me to get off this train in order to avoid bodily harm done to my person."

"And you feel it's prudent for me to go with you?"

He nodded. “Indeed.” He gestured to the unconscious man. “There’s little hope that when this man comes to he’ll be feeling charitable toward you, what with you threatening to shoot him.” Norman gestured to Beatrix’s hair. “And because red hair is uncommonly rare, what with how scientists believe it’s only seen in a small percentage of the world’s population, some believing it’s as small as one percent, it’s highly likely this man will recognize you again and likely he’ll be able to give a credible description to his fellow train robbers when they . . .”

“When they what?” Beatrix prodded when Norman stopped talking, narrowed his eyes on something behind her, then snatched up the leather satchel the train robber had dropped.

“We’re running out of time” was all Norman said as he hustled her toward the door, shoved it open, and all but dragged Beatrix through it.