

TRACIE PETERSON



The Way of Love



WILLAMETTE BRIDES • 2



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For all who are suffering.
For those who feel less than worthy.
For anyone who needs to know they aren't alone.
You are loved.



“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.” —Jeremiah 31:3 (NIV)



CHAPTER 1



DECEMBER 1879
PORTLAND, OREGON

Faith Kenner looked around the room and nodded. “It’s perfect. I believe I’ll be very happy here.”

Her cousin Nancy Carpenter went to the window and pulled up the shade. “It should be quiet here for your studies. Although the house is never all that noisy, even for a boarding-house. Except for ours, everyone else’s bedrooms are upstairs. We hope to convert more downstairs rooms into bedrooms eventually, but for now, it should be peaceful.”

“I can usually study without fearing disruption. My mind is like that.” Faith began unpacking her trunk. “It always has been. Just give me a space to spread out my books, and I’m quite content.”

“I think it’s wonderful that the university has brought the medical college to Portland. It’ll be nice to have you close. And the trolley is nearby and will take you right downtown to classes.” Nancy ran her hand over the large armoire. She looked at her fingers as if inspecting for dust. Appearing satisfied, she turned back to Faith. “What can I do to help?”

“Nothing. I don’t have all that much to unpack except for books. Father has always kept track of the number of book crates. He swears they double each time I move.” Faith went to the corner where those crates had been stacked. “And, frankly, he might be right. But I need all of them. There’s so much to learn.” She frowned. “I don’t think I have a pry bar. If you have one, I’ll be able to get these open and the books put away. By the way, the shelves you provided are perfect.” Faith glanced across the room at the two large mahogany bookcases against the wall.

“David, the young man who delivered your things, arranged for his father to make them. The man is positively a genius with woodworking. He’s made several other pieces for the house. As for a pry bar, I’ll ask David if he has one. He’s out tending our horse at the moment.”

“That’s fine.” Faith went back to the trunk and began pulling out stacks of folded clothes.

At thirty years of age, Faith was determined to be happy in life, and as long as she was practicing as a doctor, she was. She had loved helping her aunt and mother whenever they were called upon to deliver a baby, but most of all she loved going with her aunt Grace to tend the sick. Faith found it fascinating to mix various herbs and procure a remedy for whatever ailed their patient. Nancy’s mother, Grace Armistead, had an uncanny knack for healing. It was a gift that her mother and grandmother also had, and now Grace proclaimed that gift had passed to Faith.

“I find it so impressive that you even want to attend college,” Nancy said. “I was glad to be done with school, and much to my mother’s regret, I have no interest in the healing arts.”

“I was glad to be out of school too, but in this day and age, a degree and certificate from a college means a great deal to people. At least some people. Honestly, I know far more than some of

the younger students graduating with their certificates—and that’s not just me bragging. I’ve been helping your mother since I was fifteen. When she called on patients, I always tried to tag along. She trained me, and I’m quite proficient, if I do say so myself.” Faith laughed. “Although my professors say it too. They’re always surprised when I come up with a diagnosis before testing, or a cure or treatment that they’re unfamiliar with. They sometimes debate me on the usefulness of said treatment, but it usually proves right. And if for any reason it doesn’t, I’m not too prideful to change my methods.”

“If Mother taught it to you, I’ve no doubt it proves right. She has a gift, just as you said.”

Faith pulled another stack of gowns from her trunk and placed them on the bed. “I’ll need to press these.”

“There’s a laundry room just off the kitchen by the pantry. You’ll find everything you need there. Or, if you want me to tend to them, I charge three cents a dress.” Nancy grinned. “After all, I can’t play favorites.”

“Thank you, but I can manage. You’ve been so generous and kind. I feel at home already.” Faith returned to the trunk and took out a stack of white pinafore aprons. “This is my self-designed uniform. I wear the dark dress and white apron, and I have a nicely tailored jacket to go over it all. I look very professional.” She grinned at Nancy and placed the aprons beside the dresses. “Well, that’s one trunk down and two to go. Plus the books. I should have plenty to keep me busy.”

“Are you sure the room suits you?”

Faith glanced at the flowery wallpaper and matching drapes. “Well, it’s a little more frilly than I would normally choose, but I honestly believe it will be cheerful and perhaps even inspiring. When times are difficult, it might even help me to press on.”

Nancy gave her a sad look. “And are you happy, Faith?”

“What a strange question.” Faith stopped and looked at her cousin. “Of course I’m happy. I’m doing what I’ve always wanted. You know they haven’t always allowed women to attend medical school. Letting women become doctors is the stuff of my dreams. Why would you ask?”

“I just think it’s a pity you don’t feel you can marry and settle down with a family.”

Faith shrugged. This was a matter that had been discussed at length with her parents. “God calls some to remain single. I’ve always figured, given my heritage, that He’s planned that for me. Of course, I suppose something could happen to change the laws. Or maybe I’ll find a handsome man like Uncle Adam who is part Indian, and he won’t mind that I’m half Cayuse.”

“Do you think about it a lot?”

“Being half Native?”

Nancy nodded. “I mean that . . . and how your mother was held hostage when the Indians massacred the men at the Whitman Mission. When I finally heard the truth of what happened there, it was all I could think about for a long time. I still think about it sometimes. How awful it would be to be forced to . . . be intimate against your will.”

Faith sat down on the end of the bed. “I know. I think about it from time to time. I can’t imagine my poor mother learning that she was with child. It would have been terrible for others to find out, and I can’t believe she was the only one who ended up in that condition.”

“You truly think there were others?”

“As I understand it, every woman and girl over the age of twelve was imposed upon during that month of captivity. My mother couldn’t have been the only one to conceive. The women

involved just don't dare to talk about it. Not even among themselves. It would have been, and still is, considered the height of disgrace to bear a child who is even part Indian. And those who did no doubt freed themselves of that baby as soon as possible.

"I think Mother did the only sensible thing by going to live with Isaac and Eletta Browning far from Oregon City and all of their friends. It saved my mother and her family the embarrassment of having to explain. The Brownings became my first parents, and I loved them dearly. I love too that they were missionaries and that I grew up with the Native people along the Rogue River. It was a wonderful thing for me—especially since I'm half Native. Although the tribes are vastly different."

"Do you ever feel concerned about passing yourself as white?" Nancy asked, then looked mortified. "I'm sorry. Of course you're white too."

"Don't be upset. I think about that all the time. Am I living a lie to call myself white? After all, I am half of each, so I don't think it's wrong to choose one over the other. Although I know I am living the life that is easier, given all the government has done to the Indians." Faith lowered her head. "Some of my happiest days were living with the Indians, but I know that life is gone forever. I talked to Aunt Mercy about working with them on the reservation, but she said it wouldn't be the life I used to know and that if I was going to do it only for that reason, I shouldn't come."

"But you still talk about being a doctor on the reservation."

"Yes." Faith looked up and smiled. "I want to help the people there. I don't want them thinking everyone is against them. They get so little care, and while they do have their own healers, I could offer something different. So I wouldn't be going there just to reclaim my childhood memories."

"Would you tell them you're half Indian?"

Faith often asked herself that same question. Half-breeds

weren't very well received by either race. "I don't know. If I had to choose today, then I'd say no. I want to do as much good as I can, and I don't think I can accomplish it being Indian. Neither side would be inclined to accept me into their circles if they knew the truth."

"Well, I suppose you're right on that account." Nancy moved toward the door. "You have a few hours before supper. I'll let David know you need a pry bar. I think he's still here, tending the horse." She paused and smiled. "I'm really glad you've come to live with us, Faith."

"I am too."



Nancy had just finished setting the table when her sister-in-law, Clementine Carpenter, entered the dining room followed by Nancy's brother, Gabe. Nancy had shared a friendship with Clementine since childhood, and Nancy's husband had been best friends with Gabe.

"One more for supper?" Gabe asked with a devilish grin.

"Of course. I didn't know you were in town. I'll fetch another place setting. What have you two been up to?"

Gabe moved toward her. "We'll tell you all about it at supper." He kissed the top of her head.

Clementine followed Nancy into the kitchen. "I'll help you finish up. Is Mimi home?"

Mimi Bryant and Clementine worked at the small private school just a few blocks away. Mimi was the perfect boarder, a Christian widow who was just approaching the one-year mark of having lost her husband. She was outgoing despite her season of mourning and always helpful.

"She returned nearly an hour ago. I figured you had prob-

ably gone shopping. Little did I think my brother would be in town.” Nancy gave her friend a teasing look.

“He just got in this afternoon. He said he wanted to surprise us. He showed up at the school and took me for a little drive.” They gathered the food Nancy had prepared and took it into the dining room. “Mmm, this smells so good. Fish stew?”

“Yes. I thought for this cold day it would be just the thing.”

“Did your cousin arrive?”

Nancy placed a platter of sourdough bread on the table. “She did. She’s in the downstairs bedroom just beyond the sewing room.” She headed back to the kitchen to pick up a bowl of peas and potatoes, as well as the butter crock.

Clementine glanced around the kitchen. “Do you want me to bring the cake?”

“No. We’ll get it after everyone’s eaten. I don’t think there will be room on the table otherwise. But if you don’t mind, please bring the coffeepot.”

“Got it.”

They stepped into the dining room just as Mimi and Faith were taking their seats on the far side of the table by the sideboard. Gabe was chatting with Faith about the farm, but Nancy didn’t hear what was being said because Seth chose that moment to make his entrance.

Nancy put the food on the table and went to her husband for a kiss. “I’ve missed you.”

“Not nearly as much as I missed you.” Seth embraced her and kissed her tenderly. “Handling legal cases isn’t half as much fun as being here in your arms.”

“Handling me, eh?” Nancy raised her brow and grinned.

Her brother tossed a linen napkin at them. “Knock it off, you two. I’m starved.”

“Gabe, you haven’t missed a meal since you were born.” Nancy sighed and separated herself from her husband. “But I agree. Let’s eat while it’s still hot.”

“Is Mrs. Weaver coming down to join us?” Clementine asked.

Mimi shook her head. “No, Nancy already took her a tray. I stopped to check on her, and she said she was just fine.”

Clementine placed the pot of coffee beside Gabe. “She’s such a sweet old woman. I wish she felt more open to joining us.”

“She’s made great progress since she first arrived last summer.” Nancy allowed Seth to help her into her chair. “In time I’m sure she’ll be dining with us more and more.”

Seth took his seat. “I’ll bless the food, and we can begin.”

Gabe helped Clementine with her chair. “The aroma’s so grand, it’s almost as good as eating.”

Nancy glanced heavenward. “Then I won’t serve you any food, and you can just sit and sniff all you like.”

“Hardly, sister dear.” Gabe threw her a wink. “I happen to know you’re an amazing cook.”

“The sooner I pray, the sooner we eat.” Seth bowed his head, not waiting to see if Gabe heeded his comment. “Father, we thank you for this abundance and for the hands that prepared our meal. Bless all who live here and those who visit. Amen.”

“Amen,” the others murmured in unison.

Nancy handed her bowl to Seth. “If you pass your bowls around the table, I think it will be easier than trying to pass the stew. As you can see, I used my very largest tureen. Seth can fill each bowl and pass them on. Meanwhile, we can pass around the bread and butter and peas and potatoes.”

It wasn’t long before everyone was amply served. Nancy couldn’t help but sigh. She loved managing the boardinghouse. It gave her a sense of satisfaction that she couldn’t explain.

Everyone dug into the meal with gusto and complimented her as they ate. She knew she was a good cook but appreciated hearing it from her guests. Seeing that everyone was content, she picked up her spoon and began to eat.

“How’s everyone back home?” Seth asked.

“Doing good.” Gabe picked up a knife and buttered his bread. “They’re doing a lot of fence repair before winter sets in fully. Pa wanted everything done well before Christmas so that Mama would relax. But you know her.”

Seth nodded. “Well enough. I don’t think any of the women in your family sit still for long.”

“Except for Meg. She would sit and read all day long if she could.”

Nancy smiled at this. Their little sister was always borrowing books from the library, even though the selection was limited. She didn’t care if it was a novel or a studious text.

“Are you all planning to come home for Christmas?” Gabe asked before stuffing a good portion of the bread in his mouth.

Seth shook his head. “I’m not sure. It’s hard to get away from work. A lot of folks want to straighten out legal matters at the end of the year, and this year has been no exception. Nevertheless, we hope to be there.”

“Well, I know they’d love to see you. Clementine and I are both planning to go back.” Gabe turned and grinned at the redheaded woman beside him. “Especially now.”

Nancy looked up. “Why especially now?”

Clementine’s cheeks flushed as she turned to Gabe and grinned. “Because we’re engaged.”

“You are?” Seth looked at Nancy. “Did you know about this?”

She shook her head. “Not at all.”

“I stopped by your folks’ place before coming to Portland.

I asked your father's permission to marry Clementine, and he eagerly agreed. He was so quick about it," Gabe said, giving his bride-to-be an endearing glance, "that I feared perhaps something was wrong with her that I hadn't yet learned."

Seth shook his head, smiling. "No, I'm sure it was their desire to have another Armistead in the family. No one has a better name in the community than your family. Your folks' reputation alone would be enough reason to want her to marry you."

Gabe's brows came together. "Hey, I was kind of hoping it was because they wanted me as a son-in-law."

Seth laughed. "I'm sure it was. I know I'm delighted. Brother and sister married to brother and sister. That will simplify things. Our children will be double cousins."

Nancy sipped her soup and listened to them go on about the future. She was thrilled by the news and could clearly see how happy Gabe was about the situation.

"Where will you live?" Seth asked.

"I talked to the family about that. Pa wants me to take charge of the sawmill here in Portland, so I guess we'll be living here."

Nancy was delighted at this prospect. Over the last few months, she and Clementine had renewed their childhood friendship, and Nancy hated the idea of losing her so soon. "How wonderful! I'm so happy to hear that. I will enjoy having you close by. Perhaps we can attend events together."

"When will this wedding take place?" Seth's question caused all gazes to turn toward the happy couple.

"We neither one feel the need for a long engagement," Gabe replied, looking to Clementine for her confirmation.

She nodded. "We thought maybe in the spring. Perhaps May. We just figured a small collection of family in Oregon City would suffice."

“Once all of our family gathers in one place, it won’t be small by any means,” Gabe teased.

“That sounds wonderful.” Nancy calculated quickly. “That should give us plenty of time to create a beautiful wedding dress and veil.”

Clementine seemed surprised. “Are you offering to help do that?”

“I am.” Nancy smiled and passed the platter of bread around again. “It’s the least I can do for my dear friend. We’ll start planning out what you want immediately. I’m sure Mrs. Weaver would be happy to help as well. She’s quite talented with a needle.”

“I’d like to help too,” Faith said. Until now she’d been rather quiet. “I’m not that gifted at sewing, but I’m sure I can help in some way.”

“Of course.” Clementine couldn’t seem to stop smiling. “The more, the merrier.”



That night as Faith took inventory of her new room, she sighed in satisfaction to find her things were in order. Seth had just removed the last of the trunks and crates, and the room looked even larger than before. It was certainly larger than the room she had shared with three other girls down in Salem.

Faith went to the desk that stood beneath one of two windows. Atop it sat the black doctor’s bag her parents had given her. She ran her hand over the soft leather and smiled. She was doing what she wanted to do. She was studying to become a doctor so she could truly help people. Perhaps one day she would work on or near the reservation and offer her services to the Native people. But as much as this appealed to her, she

couldn't help feeling a little envious of her cousin Gabe and his engagement.

All of her life, she had longed for someone to love that way. But from the time she'd been old enough to share such thoughts with her mother, Faith had had to face the very real situation of her circumstances. It was illegal for her to marry a white man. She was half Indian, and such marriages were forbidden.

"But what if I just break the law?" she'd once asked her mother.

"Would you want to put the person you love at risk with the law? Would you sacrifice their well-being because of your selfish desires? If so, that isn't love."

Faith had carried that conversation close to her heart. She knew her birth—her very existence—had come from cruel circumstances. It wasn't her fault that it had happened, but it was a part of who she was. She couldn't change it and was just fortunate that she could pass for white, or the entirety of her world would be different.

She looked again at the black bag and thought about her previous conversation with Nancy. God did call many people to remain single. If that was His calling for her, then Faith would accept it and move forward.

Running her hand along the side of the bag, she smiled again. "This is where my future will be. This is who I am and who I will continue to be. It will be enough. It must be enough."