
LAND *of* SHINING WATER

THE
Miner's
LADY

TRACIE
PETERSON



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To Chantel Karch

You are an awesome young woman.
Always look to Jesus!



Chapter 1



ELY, MINNESOTA
OCTOBER 1890

“A Calarco?” Chantelly Panetta looked at her sister in disbelief. “You want to marry a Calarco?”

Seventeen-year-old Isabella shook her head. “Not just any Calarco. Orlando Calarco. We’re in love, Chantel. I can’t tell my heart not to love him. You haven’t been here this last year, so you don’t know him like I do.”

“I may have been gone, but I do know that the Calarcos and Panettas have been at odds for over fifty years.”

Isabella flipped long honey-brown hair over her shoulder. “The feud means nothing to Orlando and me.”

Scrutinizing her younger sister’s womanly figure and full lips, Chantel shook her head. Isabella looked years beyond her seventeen. She seemed just a child when Chantel had left, but now she spoke of marriage and love.

“Have you told Mama or Papa?”

“No, of course not.” Isabella threw herself across the bed. “I wanted to wait until you returned from Italy.”

Chantel sat on the edge of her sister's bed and carefully considered her words. "You know they'll never approve."

Isabella reared up like a cat about to attack its prey. "They'll have to. Orlando and I plan to marry. This feud is ridiculous, and I don't care if I'm disowned. I love him."

"But how did this happen?" Chantel questioned. "Surely Marco and Alfredo would never allow you to be alone with a Calarco."

"Our brothers can't be everywhere. They went with Papa to the iron mine every day to work, and sometimes I slipped away—alone—to meet Orlando there."

"You went to the mine?" Chantel realized she was nearly shouting, and hurried to lower her voice. "You can't be serious. You know we're not supposed to go unless we're with other women—it's dangerous there. The men have no reason to treat you like a lady if you show up at the mines. Only a loose woman would do that."

"You know full well there are exceptions, even in our family. I seem to remember more than once when we delivered food to our menfolk. Anyway, it's not like I made a public spectacle," Isabella said, easing into a sitting position. "I kept myself hidden and disguised. Only Orlando saw me. Even his brother and father have no idea."

The very thought of her sister risking her innocence, even her life, to visit a man she knew her parents would never approve of, gave Chantel a shiver. If spending the last year in Italy visiting their grandparents had taught Chantel anything, it was just how possessive family could be. In the old country young ladies didn't so much as speak to a man without their father's permission.

“Stop frowning like that,” Isabella declared. “It’s not the end of the world. You’ll see. Orlando and I figure this is exactly what’s needed to put an end to the feud.”

Chantel wished she could be as sure as her sister. “You know that this problem between the families won’t go away easily. It’s more likely that your marriage would only cause further division.”

“Nonsense.” Isabella twisted a long strand of hair between her fingers. “If we’re married and produce children, they will belong to both the Calarco and the Panetta families. Think of it, Chantel. It’s really an answer to Mama’s prayers.”

Their mother had long wished for an end to the ongoing feud. As Chantel understood it, the entire affair had occurred in Italy and was over some dispute that no one would speak about. Frankly, Chantel wondered if anyone even knew for sure what had started the matter. She did know that it ended in the killing of a mule, which threatened the livelihood of the Calarco family. Mama said the mule’s death was an accident, but that because there was already bad blood between the two families, it could not be forgiven or seen as anything but a purposeful attack. Chantel had tried to get her Nonna Panetta to speak on the matter, but her grandmother was even more closemouthed about it than Mama.

With a sigh, Chantel forced a smile. “Well, it’s good to see you again, nevertheless. I can’t say the same for this filthy, depressing town. The past year in Italy has only made me realize just how awful this place truly is.”

“It’s a mining town. You know what Mama says about them.” Isabella scooted to the edge of the bed.

“It’s the last stop before the gates of hell,” the girls said in unison and laughed.

Chantel looked around the room she’d shared with her sister since the family had moved to Ely three years earlier. Her father’s years of iron mining work had taken them from back east to Michigan, and now to Minnesota. They had lived for a short time in Duluth near their mother’s sister Marilla. But even that larger town failed to shine in light of Chantel’s memories of the Italian countryside.

“So was your trip as wonderful as your letters implied?” Isabella questioned. “I’d always looked forward to going there myself, but now I suppose I won’t have the opportunity. At least not for a time.”

Their parents had a tradition of sending each of their children to stay with their grandparents in Italy. Upon turning twenty-one, the siblings, if unmarried, would leave home for a year to learn about the old country and their ancestors. Marco and Alfredo had each had their turn, and now Chantel had experienced the same.

“It is truly unlike anything I could have anticipated,” she said. “Nonna and Nonno have such a beautiful home,” Chantel continued. “And the scenery is incredible. You can see the vineyards and orchards for miles and miles. And Nonna and I had great fun tatting and making bobbin lace. I brought a crateful home with me and made more on the ship.”

“You wrote about the family dinners,” Isabella interjected with a wistful look on her face. “They sounded so wonderful. All those people and the music and dancing.”

“They were,” Chantel admitted. “Every Sunday relatives would come from all over, and we would feast. Nonna’s tables

would practically bow from the weight of the food. Oh, and such food! You think Mama is a good cook; well, let me tell you there's nothing quite so wonderful as Nonna's dishes made with fresh ingredients." She put her thumb and middle finger to her lips and kissed. "With all that good food, it was hard to wait for the prayer. Nonno would practically preach a sermon when he stood to bless the food. It was amazing. His faith in God is so strong."

"Yet he allows for this stupid feud between families. And all because some mule was accidentally killed," Isabella muttered. "I don't understand how that's godly."

Chantel shook her head. "No, I don't suppose it is. Forgiveness is something that people in the old country seem reluctant to give, and I don't know why it should follow us here. Old traditions die hard, I suppose, but America is a land for new traditions and opportunities. It seems to me that such grudges should be set aside."

Just then their mother burst into the room carrying a huge stack of clean linens. "*Buon giorno.*"

"Good morning, Mama." Chantel crossed the room to help her mother with the laundry.

"It's so good to have you home," their mother said, beaming from ear to ear. She rattled away in rapid-fire Italian, proclaiming how much she'd missed Chantel and how empty the house seemed without her, before slowing down to return again to English. "Your papa is so happy you have returned."

Chantel placed the linens atop an empty chair. "I'm glad to see you all again, but I cannot say I'm happy to be in Ely."

"E-lee is no so beautiful as Italy," her mother declared. Although she was half French, her accent was decidedly Italian.

“No, it’s not,” Chantel agreed.

The mining town sported twenty-six saloons, compared to only five churches. There were a variety of other businesses: general stores, banks, doctors and lawyers, jewelers and dress-makers. But it was what happened in the backrooms and upper floors of the saloons and brothels that was most distressing. Prostitution, gambling, and all manner of vice went on, and there were almost daily reports of someone having been killed in a fight or of drinking themselves into such a stupor that they fell on the railroad tracks to be run over by the morning freight. The latter was so common, in fact, that the marshal had taken to checking the tracks before the train was due in. Of course, it was rumored that many of the bodies discovered on the tracks had been placed there purposefully to disguise murders.

Mother bustled around the room, tidying things as she went. “And did you find a special boy?” Mother asked. “An *Italiano* boy?”

There had been a bevy of nice-looking young men who paid court to Chantel, but none that drew more than momentary interest. Chantel knew her mother had hoped that romance would blossom and that perhaps her daughter would return to America a married woman bringing yet another Italian to settle the country.

“No, no one special, Mama.”

“Oh, it’s too bad. You’re such a pretty girl. You need to find a good husband.” Mama stopped cleaning and looked at her daughters. “But God will provide. *Non è forse così?*”

“Yes, it is so, Mama.” *Just don’t go trying to do God’s work for Him.* Chantel could tell by the look on her mother’s face that the idea had crossed her mind.

Isabella forced herself up off the bed. “I’m going to take Chantel to the new dressmaker’s shop, Mama. I want to introduce her to the Miller sisters.”

“Sí, and show her the new meat market,” their mother suggested. “Such good meats to be had there. They make a wonderful sausage.”

Mama loved her sausage. Chantel smiled and moved toward the door. “Let me get my walking shoes on.”

“Better to wear boots,” Mama countered. “The rains, they make the streets like-a mud pit.”

The girls nodded in unison and went to the mud porch to retrieve their boots. Chantel took up a woolen shawl and wrapped it around her head and shoulders. The damp October air chilled her to the bone as they began the walk. For several blocks Chantel said nothing.

It looked a little better than it did last year. At least they’d removed a good many tree stumps. Many of the trees that had been cut down for mining use had once littered the area with stumps. But now in their place new buildings were erected. It was a vast improvement.

“It’s colder than I expected.”

Isabella shrugged, doing up the buttons on her brown wool coat. “It is nearly November. In another week or two we’ll be ice skating on the lake.”

Chantel nodded. “I suppose it’s to be expected, but even so, I shall miss the summer warmth of Italy.”

“Winter must come. It can’t stay summer forever,” her sister replied. “Summer here is quite lovely, as you must remember.”

She did. Summer picnics at Lake Shagawa and picking blueberries on some of the small lake islands.

“You’ve missed a great deal around here.” Isabella waved her hand toward the town’s buildings. “The Reverend Freeman left his position at the Presbyterian Church to resume his studies in Chicago. Oh, and we have a brand-new church building for St. Anthony’s. Soon we’ll be holding services there instead of the boardinghouse. Father Buh raised the money and oversaw the building. It’s going to be quite wonderful.”

Chantel considered many of the new structures. “It’s almost like the town grew up overnight.”

Isabella continued. “We have a new drugstore and a new hotel. The Oliver Hotel is quite modern and is said to be just the thing to bring in tourists for fishing and hunting.”

“I’m impressed, I must admit,” Chantel declared. “I even heard some men talking on the train about ice fishing this winter. Of course there were also a fair number of men who were coming to find work.”

“Papa says that with the new iron mines being established, we’ll soon have hundreds more people. Maybe thousands.”

“As if the Chandler Mine wasn’t enough of a destruction to this land.”

Isabella didn’t seem to hear. “Oh, remember Sara Norman? Well, she married Mr. Ellefesen. You know he’s a member of the Ely Fire Department, so the other firemen went together and gave them a sofa and armchair. Mama said it came all the way from Chicago.”

“No doubt that cost a pretty penny,” Chantel replied. She looked around the town, trying to imagine spending the rest of her life here. She doubted that she could be happy even with a new sofa and armchair from Chicago. The dirt and noise, damp cold and unpainted buildings made her long

for Italy. As homesick as she'd been at times while abroad, Chantel suddenly felt completely displaced.

"You should have been here for the Firemen's Ball," Isabella continued, not noticing her sister's mood. "The entire department ordered special suits and looked quite grand. They wore black pants, red flannel shirts with blue collar, cuffs, and breastplate. Whiteside Hall has never held such a spectacular affair. We all dressed in our finest and went to celebrate."

"Celebrate what?" Chantel asked.

Isabella threw her a look of amusement. "Something different. We were just happy to have a diversion. We danced and ate and made merry."

Chantel could well understand that. As they crossed Chapman Street, Chantel felt her boots sink in the muddy ruts of the road. She hurried to regain solid footing on the boardwalk, carrying what felt like five pounds of muck on each foot. Wiping her boots against the edge of the walk, she shook her head.

Isabella was unfazed. "See over there? We've been told that a fruit and candy store will open there in January. I, for one, am quite excited."

Chantel smiled, knowing her sister's penchant for sweets. "Nonna taught me to make some wonderful family recipes, including some candy that Mama used to make when she was a little girl." To her surprise Isabella gave her an impromptu hug.

"It's so good to have you home. I missed you so much."

Chantel returned the embrace. "I'm glad to be home." It wasn't exactly a lie, but neither was it the truth.

Chapter 2



“It’s got to stop,” Dante Calarco told his younger brother Orlando. “You can’t go on sneaking around to meet that Panetta tramp.”

“She’s no tramp!” Orlando shot up to stand nose to nose with his brother. “I love her and intend for her to be my wife.”

Dante rolled his eyes heavenward. “You’re nineteen and have no business even thinking about marriage. You’ve only been working the mine for the last year. You have nothing to your name and certainly cannot afford a wife. Not only that, but you know our father will never allow you to marry a Panetta. And for good reason.”

“Reason, good or otherwise, never has figured into this ridiculous feud.” Orlando pushed back thick black hair and reclaimed his seat at the dining room table. “Am I the only one bothered by the fact that our families are at odds over a stupid mule? I mean, think about it. Two families hate each other because a mule accidentally got killed.”

“Our grandfather apparently didn’t believe it to be an accident. Besides, you know as well as I do there were already problems between the two families.”

“But I don’t have any problem with the Panettas, and I don’t see why I should.”

Dante wanted very much to get his brother to acknowledge the truth. “It matters little whether or not you agree with the two families being at odds. The fact is, Father believes in loyalty to our family.”

“What about loyalty to his sons? What about learning to live in peace like the Good Book says? What about that?”

Dante had never been much for religious nonsense. He believed in God. He even believed that He had a Son named Jesus who died on the cross in some sort of sacrifice for all of mankind. What he didn’t believe in was the nonsense that took place in the church. As far as he’d ever been able to tell, church was useful for one thing and one thing only: heaping guilt upon the weak-minded.

“I’m not going to argue with you about religion. I’m not even going to challenge you on the whole concept of trying to be at peace in a world filled with warring people.” Dante took the seat opposite his brother while their grandmother scurried around to put supper on the table. “But you know how our father feels regarding family. Family is everything. For you to sneak around with her is like putting a knife in his back.”

“That has never been my intention.” Orlando met Dante’s gaze. “You know that. I love my family, but I love Isabella, too.”

“*Ora ragazzi,*” said their Nonna Barbato in her native Italian. *Il papà sarà qui presto.*”

Dante squared his shoulders. She was right. Their father would be here any moment, and it wouldn’t serve either of them well to have him question their discussion.

“I’m sorry, Orlando. I’m sorry that you love her, and I’m sorry that nothing can ever come of it.”

Just then they could hear their father scraping his boots outside the back door. Both young men straightened in their chairs as if they were boys awaiting parental inspection. Nonna put the last of the food on the table and took her seat.

Vittorio Calarco rubbed his hands together and entered the kitchen. “The wind has a bite to it. Hopefully we’ll get a hard freeze and that muck they call a road will harden up.”

Dante couldn’t help but smile. His father stood bootless in his dirty socks. He took orders from the mining captain and no one else . . . except his mother-in-law. Nonna Barbato insisted the men take their boots off before entering the house, and even Vittorio Calarco was obedient. Of course, Dante knew his father had been dependent upon the older woman since losing his wife in childbirth. Nonna had been newly widowed, and the trip to America to care for her daughter’s newborn and eight-year-old sons gave her a new lease on life. Dante’s father had struggled to find the money for such a trip, but with the help of family he had managed to bring Nonna to America only weeks after he’d buried Dante and Orlando’s mother.

Their father took a seat at the table and reached for his bowl of *zuppa de zucca*, his favorite pumpkin soup. Nonna wagged a finger and admonished him. “First we pray,” she said as she always did.

His father gave a nod. When Nonna said they would pray first, they prayed.

Nonna offered grace for the food, then poured her heart out in prayers for the family. She asked forgiveness for each

of her men, pleading with God for their protection. Dante knew this never boded well with his father, but he found it somewhat comforting. Even if he wasn't given to praying himself, it was nice to know that someone else was offering up prayers on his behalf.

"Amen," said Nonna.

Dante and Orlando murmured the word in return, but their father only grunted and reached again for the soup.

Supper was always a time for Nonna to share the latest information from family or the ongoing affairs of neighbors. Dante's father would chime in on politics and matters of the town, while Dante and Orlando picked up the conversation when they had something to add. And always, it was in Italian. Nonna could speak English, though not well. She considered it a vulgar language. It was a rare occasion when Anna Teresa Barbato spoke what she called "that American garble."

Ely was a town of many nationalities, but the far east side was predominantly settled by Slavic-Austrians and Italians. Nonna knew every man, woman, and child in their neighborhood and thought it her duty to keep up on the details of their lives. Often the women washed clothes or sewed together, and while they did they told news from the old country or spoke of problems with their families. Nonna had become something of a matriarch among the women, and she held the position with the authority of a queen.

"The Dicellos have a new baby," Nonna announced. "A fat, healthy boy." She extended a rose-colored glass serving bowl to Dante. "You should marry and have children, Dante. Goodness, but you are twenty-seven years old. Well past the

time a man should settle down. You need children of your own to carry on the family name.”

Orlando opened his mouth as if to comment on that, but Dante quickly silenced him. “Nonna, you always said that marriage was the hardest work a man and woman would ever do. Frankly, the mine exhausts me. I don’t have the energy to marry.”

She laughed and motioned to the bowl he’d just taken. “Eat up and you’ll have energy aplenty. This is your favorite *agnolotti*.”

Dante smiled and began to spoon himself a healthy portion of the ravioli. Each little pasta pocket was filled with tender roast beef and seasoned vegetables. His grandmother had such a way with the dish that he had to admit he’d rather eat extra helpings of this than have dessert.

The table talk continued with Nonna telling of her visit to the meat market with several other women. She spoke of new families moving to the area to accommodate the growing mine industry. At this Dante’s father joined in.

“Papers have already been drawn up to make Ely an incorporated town,” he told them. “Once this officially happens, we will see many more changes. There are plans to put in sewer and water lines, as well as better streets.”

“That is good,” Nonna said, nodding. She tore off a piece of bread from a large round loaf. “The streets here are terrible.”

Dante paid only a token interest to the conversation. His mind was focused on Orlando’s interest in Isabella Panetta. Dante had had suspicions for some time that his brother was sneaking off to meet with a young lady, but never could he have imagined it would be a Panetta.

The boy was insane. He had to know the relationship would never be allowed, and if Orlando insisted, their father would simply disown him. And then what? Would the two marry and move in with her family? The shame of it would cause their father no end of grief, and that in turn would trickle down to affect Dante and Nonna.

As he ate, Dante tried to reason how he might best deal with the situation. There was always the chance that Isabella's family didn't realize what was going on. Perhaps if Dante cornered one of her brothers at the mine, he could explain what was happening and get their help on the matter. Of course, it wasn't likely that a Panetta would give him the time of day, much less listen to him.

"They say the Pioneer Mine will deliver the same quality Bessemer ore that the Chandler has," Dante heard his father declare. "And there are other mines opening, as well. If they're all Bessemer quality, we'll be making the owners quite wealthy."

Bessemer ore held the richest iron content. The problem with some iron ore was a high percentage of phosphorus. Henry Bessemer, an English iron master, had created a way to burn away the impurities from iron to make steel. Because of this wondrous contribution, the finest ore had been named after him.

One benefit of the Chandler Mine and the rich Bessemer ore was that it didn't require a great deal of processing in order to make it useful. Not only that, but the vein of ore had endured a massive folding during its creation. This resulted in the ore breaking naturally into pieces very nearly the right size for the mills, which eliminated the need to run

it through a crusher first. This, along with the fact that the ore was readily available and not at all laborious to mine—at least not in the early pit mining years—proved very valuable to the stockholders. It was said that the mine paid out \$100,000 a month net profit. Of course, Dante found that hard to believe, but if the growth of the city and digging of new mines was any indication, it must be true.

“Dr. Shipman intends to see those terrible houses of ill repute closed,” Nonna declared. “He makes a good village president, even if he isn’t Italiano.”

“He is a good man,” Father replied, “but if they close down the brothels, how will they fund the town?” He gave a laugh. “It’s only the fines brought in by the marshal that pay Ely’s bills.” It was a well-known fact that the marshal visited the brothels on a monthly basis to “arrest” the madams. They simply paid a large fine and returned to business. It served to give the pretense of law and order, make money for the town, and keep the miners happy.

“Bah!” Nonna said, waving him away with her hand. “We will be a better city without them.”

“Well, if they have their way and incorporate the mines into the city limits,” Father said, reaching for the bread, “they will have money enough. The state may receive a penny a ton on what is shipped out of the mines, but the city gets nothing. That will change soon enough if the incorporation goes through.”

Dante tired of the politics and again found himself thinking about Orlando’s situation. His brother had crossed a line that would not easily be forgotten if their father learned the truth. So the trick would be to find a way to get Orlando back on the right side before he could be found out.

I could just threaten him, Dante thought, then very nearly smiled. His brother was not easily intimidated. They had endured many a brawl in their younger days, and Orlando could put up quite a fight. He was strong and muscular like Dante, although he was shorter by two or three inches. If anything, that only served to give his brother an advantage in maneuvering around Dante's attacks.

I could bribe him to let her go. But Dante knew that wouldn't work, either. He knew his brother couldn't be bought off. Not when he fancied himself truly in love.

He was still lost in thought well after Nonna had served dessert. When his brother and father got up from the table, Dante continued to pick at the pear tart his grandmother had put in front of him.

"You no like?" she asked in English.

Dante, surprised by her change of language, glanced around the room. Seeing his father and brother gone, he shook his head. "I'm just worried about Orlando."

Nonna waggled a finger at him. "You worry too much." She switched back into Italian and began clearing the table. "Your brother will be fine."

Lowering his voice to a whisper, Dante replied, "Not if he keeps thinking with his heart instead of his head."

His grandmother straightened for a moment and shook her head. "Ah, Dante, the heart it cannot be controlled by anyone save God. It will choose whom it will choose. It's *amore*."

"It's dangerous," Dante said, getting to his feet. "And it's foolish."



At seven the next morning, Dante, Orlando, and their father were back to work at the mine. The shifts ran in ten-hour segments, two shifts a day, every day but Sunday. Vittorio Calarco and his sons were contract miners. They handled dynamite and nitroglycerin—blasting holes in the iron ore to sink shafts or create the horizontal drifts. This dangerous job allowed them additional pay, for it required steady hands and even stronger nerves. Vittorio Calarco preferred it this way. He answered only to the mine's captain, as they called the big boss, but paid nominal heed to the instructions of the shift foreman. Luckily Dante's father liked the man whom he called "Mr. Foreman" in a sort of mock salute to the position.

What Dante's father did not like was the fact that Panettas worked in the same mine. Dante fervently hoped that their enemies might transfer to another mine. At best they were often working in one of the other four shafts. But even with five separate areas to work, their paths would cross and words would be exchanged. The latter was usually only between the two patriarchs, while their sons silently observed, watching and waiting lest one man or the other decide to do more than talk.

As Father stood instructing Orlando, Dante couldn't help but study his brother. He seemed so carefree, so unconcerned with his deception. Would he truly risk being ostracized from the family for the love of a woman?

"Are you going to help us or just stand there?"

Dante met his father's stern expression. "Tell me what you want done."

"We will drill blasting points here and here," his father said, pointing. The iron deposits were removed in a stoping

system that was well suited to the area's formations. Segments of ore were taken out parallel to the drift or horizontal shaft, creating a sort of stepped appearance at the top of the stope—the ever-expanding hollow created by the mining work. Underground iron miners always tried to let gravity work for them, using the overhand or upward method. This allowed the ore to fall to the bottom of the stope, and from there it would be scraped into chutes and loaded into the ore cars located below the floor of the work area. It was tedious work, often referred to as caving. Eventually all of the ore would be mined in that area, and the Calarcos would blast the surrounding rock to fill in the stope. The process went on and on in order to recover as much ore as possible.

Dante tried not to give much thought to the dangers they faced, though they were many. Walls of the stopes often collapsed without warning. Blasts could go off prematurely, although the Calarcos had not been victim of that due to their father's vigilant care in everything he did. Of course, just because they were careful didn't mean everyone else was. There were plenty of new muckers who had no idea of the risk.

Fires were always feared in the mines, but it was often accidents with the machinery or tram cars that caused injury and death. Dante had seen men lose fingers and feet because of being less than aware of their surroundings.

“This is no place to daydream,” his father admonished.

A knot of fear and embarrassment sat in his gut at his father's words. He knew better. “Sorry,” Dante said.

Father handed him a twisted roll of fuse. “Sorry will get you blown up, son.”

Dante met his brother's curious gaze. With a quick grin Orlando went back to work, mindless of what was truly bothering his older brother. They would simply have to settle this later, Dante determined, and pushed the problem to the back of his mind.