

SAY SOMETHING

PINE FALLS - BOOK TWO



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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

CHAPTER 1



Sheriff Dawson Nolan and his fiancée, Cecelia Adams, were smiling and laughing as they sat across the table from their good friends, Fred Miller and the lady he'd been courting, Rose Kincaid. They were planning Dawson and Cecelia's wedding as they ate their evening meal. Dawson wanted Cecelia to have her dream wedding, but Cecelia insisted the day she married Dawson would be special without a lot of planning and spending a lot of money.

As the two of them both desperately tried to sway the other to their way of thinking, Fred and Rose were struggling to keep from laughing. Finally, Dawson looked at his bride-to-be with a raised eyebrow. "Cecelia, you're arguing with me again without even listening to what I'm saying. We've talked about this before. Are you sure you want to continue down that path, knowing where it will more than likely end?"

That got her attention, and seeing the warning in his raised eyebrow, she sat back in her chair. Fred and Rose couldn't help but chuckle a bit. "I'm sorry," Fred said, still smiling. "We both are. We don't mean to laugh, but you two are both as stubborn as mules. It's easy for us to see how much you love each other, but it's going to be

fun watching you find a way to work together as man and wife. I'm sure you'll find a way because of the love that's so obvious between you, but it will be fun watching you get there."

All four of them shared a laugh, before Cecelia turned to Dawson. "I'm sorry," she said, and they knew it was sincere. "I didn't mean to argue, but I want you to know how I feel. You said you want me to have my dream wedding. I appreciate that thought, I think it's very sweet, but I don't have a dream wedding. I never dreamed of a wedding. Rose has been my best friend for a long time and I want her there with me for my special day. I know you feel the same about Fred, so I want him to be there next to you. Beyond that, though, there's nothing special that I want, other than to marry the man I love."

Cecelia, Rose and five other ladies had grown up in an orphanage outside of Philadelphia. When it burned down, the residents under eighteen were taken to an orphanage in Philadelphia. But when Cecelia and Rose had turned of legal age, they'd had no place else to go. They had remained at the orphanage, helping with small chores in exchange for room and board. So when it burned down, they were left homeless.

Dawson saw their ad in a paper, asking for any men looking for mail order brides, or towns that had employment they could obtain that would pay enough to cover expenses at a boarding house. His next-door neighbor had died, and left his entire estate to the town of Pine Falls. He left Dawson in charge of how it was to be spent, with the only instruction being that it was to benefit the entire town.

People in town had driven him crazy with suggestions, most of which would benefit their own businesses. When he saw the ad for these ladies, he decided the entire town would benefit from having seven single ladies in town. There was a severe shortage of single ladies in Pine Falls, as was common in most towns out west. There were also business owners looking for help, which the ladies would be able to fill. He used the money to buy their train and stagecoach

tickets to Pine Falls, and moved them into the now empty house next to his. They filled the open positions in town, and were getting to know the single men in the area. The ladies in town were thrilled to have more ladies to visit with.

His contact for the entire ordeal had been Miss Cecelia Adams. They exchanged several letters while introducing themselves, getting details, and making plans. They felt like they knew each other from the letters, and when they met there was an instant connection between them.

Dawson, Fred and two other men had taken a wagon to the train station to carry their belongings and accompany the stagecoach on the three-hour trip from the train station to Pine Falls, and Fred and Rose met that day. They also seemed to have chemistry between them, and he had been courting her. Since Fred and Dawson had been best friends for years, and Cecelia and Rose had also been best friends since the day Rose showed up at the orphanage as a girl and she met Cecelia, the four of them often did things together now.

"I really don't need a lot of fancy things," Cecelia said, trying once more to convince Dawson. "I'll be happy with a small ceremony. As long as you and our friends are there, what else do I need? It will be very special to me."

"Thank you for saying that, and I appreciate it," Dawson said with a bit of a sigh. "But I'd like you to think about our wedding. A wedding in Pine Falls is a big deal, they don't happen very often. Everyone will want to come and it will be a special day for the whole town."

Fred could see what both were saying, and tried to help his friend out. "Cecelia, maybe this is none of my business, but let me try to explain one thing to you, then I'll step back and let you two decide. What Dawson just said is true. There aren't a lot of exciting things that happen out here, and without many ladies, there aren't many weddings. Dawson has been our sheriff for enough years now that everyone here knows him and likes him. So for him to get

married will be a big event, whether you want it to be or not. I understand what you're saying about not needing anything big and fancy, but if you don't have the whole town involved, they'll be hurt."

"I don't want to hurt anyone," she quickly said. "I just don't need a lot of attention or fancy things."

"All I'm trying to say," Fred said, "is that the mere fact that our sheriff is getting married is a big thing and will get a lot of attention. For you to try to make it small, just a small group, will make them all feel like you don't want them there. People out here look for a reason to celebrate, and frankly, having been a part of this community for several years now, I can't think of anything that's happened that would be considered as big as our sheriff getting married. I think it's going to be a big event, with or without your planning for it."

Cecelia's eyes were wide as she looked to Rose for help. Rose put a caring hand on Cecelia's arm. "I think I understand what they're saying, Cecelia. I don't think it matters much if you have a lot of decorations or fancy things. Dawson is a big part of this town, and everyone also knows you now from working at the general store, and they consider both of you their friends. They're going to want to be there and celebrate your special day with you and wish you well."

"Thank you, both of you," Dawson said. "They said it better than I did, Cecelia, but they're right. You've won the hearts of the people around here already. Several of the ladies have told me how much they appreciate you helping them pick out fabric for themselves and their families. If we have a small wedding and don't invite everyone they'll be hurt. I know you don't want to do that."

"No, of course I don't. But I don't know anything about planning a big wedding."

Dawson patted her hand. "I think the ladies in town would love being asked to help. By that I mean, they may be able to give you some idea of things people have done in the past. Then you can

take their ideas and you ladies can change them to fit you and your tastes. The ladies will all volunteer to bring food for a meal afterwards, and it will be a whole day of celebrating with lots of fun, food, and visiting.”

“You don't think it will look like I'm showing off?”

Both men cocked their heads to one side as they looked at her, obviously confused, but Rose understood. “I don't think so, no. People out here seem to truly care for each other and will want to celebrate with you.” Seeing the confused expressions on Dawson and Fred, she tried to explain. “When we grew up we were taught it's best not to attract attention to ourselves.”

“Oh,” both men said in unison.

“Well, that explains your feelings,” Dawson said, “but people won't see this as you drawing attention to yourself. Trust me, they'll want to celebrate the day with us.”

“If you're sure. Let me talk to a couple of ladies in town, and then I'll get Rose and the other ladies to help, and maybe we can come up with a few decorations.”

“We'll have to make you a new dress, too, with lots of lace,” Rose said.

“I have a new dress. I've only worn it to church two or three times. It'll be fine.” She looked up to see three people frowning at her.

“That's one thing I may have to insist on,” Dawson said. “Honey, I want you to have a new dress for your wedding.”

“But I thought you said you like my new dress?”

“I do, but this is your wedding. I know some ladies back east have fancy wedding dresses that are all white with lots of lace.” She looked appalled, and he quickly continued. “I'm not asking you to make one like that. I know you want one you can wear again for church, and that's fine. But I want you to be able to wear a brand new dress, complete with lace and things to make it fancy.”

“But if I make it real fancy I won't have anywhere else to wear it,” she complained.

“Nonsense,” Dawson said in a matter-of-fact voice. “Every time you wear it to church it will remind the ladies of the fun day the whole town had celebrating with us. It will be fine for church or any other special thing that comes up.”

“You don’t think I’d be overdressed at church?”

“Not at all,” Dawson assured her. “The people of Pine Falls agree with you that you should wear your wedding dress again, but they also think a wedding dress should be special. Ask the other ladies here, but I think they’ll tell you the same thing.”

“Okay, I’ll ask, and if they say the same thing, I’ll make a new dress. We got some new lace in at the store that I thought was awfully fancy. Maybe I could pick out some fabric that would look good with that lace.”

“Ooh, that sounds nice. I’m anxious to see it,” Rose said.

“Will you go with me to pick out the fabric and see what you think of that lace?” Cecelia asked her best friend.

“I’d love to. It’ll be so fun.”

Dawson and Fred exchanged a smile, seeing the ladies getting excited about the upcoming wedding. Fred hoped they would be planning their wedding soon, as well, and was hoping the excitement would carry over for theirs as well.



CECELIA WENT HOME a few days later, on Tuesday, after working at the general store, anxious to talk with the other six ladies she lived with. She’d talked with several ladies that had come to the store, and was now ready to sit down and come up with a plan for her wedding. She didn’t have any good ideas of her own, but she knew when they all put their heads together they would come up with something that would work real well.

Unfortunately, she soon found out her discussion would have to wait until the next evening. She and Sally Graham were the only two

that would be eating dinner at home. Rose was having dinner with Fred, Ella Trumble was dining with Frank Hanley, Lizzie Graber was seeing Joe Pickens, Anna Cultrip was spending the evening with Henry Martin, and Goldie Compton was seeing Tom Wakefield. They all apologized when they learned she wanted their help, and after a quick discussion, they all agreed they were free in two nights, on Thursday, and would keep the night free for a ladies night in.

Cecelia was relieved after their talk. "Thank you for keeping the night free and agreeing to help me plan our wedding."

"Are you kidding?" Goldie asked. "You're the first one of us to get married, and we couldn't be happier. This whole thing was your idea, so we have you to thank for getting all of us out here. We're all glad to see you so happy. We're just as eager as you are to plan a wedding. Six months ago I would have never dreamed we'd be here, let alone planning a wedding."

The other ladies all agreed, and they were soon thinking back to their last six months. When the orphanage they were living in burned down, families in the area took the eight ladies in, but on a very temporary basis only. Most families didn't have the money to take on an extra mouth to feed, so the ladies were desperately looking for a place to live.

Cecelia had pooled their money and came up with enough to place one ad, and they hoped to hear from at least one or two men looking for a mail order bride. When Sheriff Dawson Nolan sent her a letter saying Pine Falls was willing to have all seven of them move there, they had a home for them to live in and employment for at least several of them, they were elated.

They never dreamed they would be able to stay together, but it made moving across the country to an unknown place full of people unknown to any of them much easier. They were extremely worried about what would be waiting for them, but were very pleasantly surprised. The entire town welcomed them. There were very few ladies in Pine Falls, and they welcomed the ladies with

open arms. They were happy to have more ladies to visit with, and help with community meals.

Tom Wakefield, who ran the general store, was happy to get a lady to help in his store, especially one that was able to help the ladies pick out fabrics and other things ladies wanted. Cyrus Becker, who ran the telegraph office and weekly newspaper, was happy to have someone to help him; Lenore, who was the town's only seamstress, was extremely happy to have a couple of more ladies to help her keep up with the needs of the town. The rest of the ladies set up a laundry service, which all the single men, many of whom were miners, were thrilled about. The ladies pooled their money and had plenty of money to live on. In fact, they'd never had so much or been happier. They all felt like they had a home, most of them for the first time in their lives.

On top of that, there were many more single men than there were new ladies, and they were getting to know some of them. Dawson and Cecelia felt as if they knew each other through the letters they'd written back and forth setting the whole move up, and were instantly attracted to each other when they finally met. Rose Kincaid and Fred Miller also found chemistry between them quickly. Ella Trumble and Frank Hanley dated initially, stopped for a while, but soon decided they were neither one interested in dating anyone else and had recently begun seeing each other again. The rest of the ladies had dated several men and were enjoying getting to know them.

Joe Pickens arrived as they were still talking about how fortunate they'd been. Lizzie left with him, and as they were leaving, Fred showed up to take Rose out. Fifteen minutes later Cecelia and Sally were the only ones left in the house. They went to the kitchen and heated some leftover stew.



DAWSON STOPPED in at the general store the next day to talk to Cecelia. "It's such a nice day out today and warmer than normal for the fall. I thought it might be our last chance this year to have a picnic."

"That sounds lovely. The leaves right now are such vibrant colors, they're beautiful. There were a few trees in Brightfield, but those were about the only ones we ever saw, other than some pine trees, and they have needles, no leaves that turn colors. It's beautiful out here right now, and it was warmer this morning when I walked to work than it has been. A picnic sounds wonderful."

"Good. I'll talk to Bertha and see if she can scrounge us up something for the meal. Why don't you bring your father's gun and you can do a little practice shooting this evening? It's been about a month since you've shot it."

"Okay, that's probably a good idea," she said a little reluctantly.

"Honey, I'm sorry. I know you're not particularly fond of shooting it, but I do think since you have it you need to not only know how to shoot it, but practice occasionally. With seven ladies living by themselves, it's not a bad thing having a gun and someone who can use it."

"I know," she assured him. "And it's not that I don't like keeping in practice so much as it reminds me of the time you took me out to actually shoot an animal to be sure I could bring myself to do it. When that mountain lion charged you when you fell and lost your gun, I was so scared."

"I know, but you showed both of us you had it in you to actually shoot an animal. I was so proud of you, and thankful."

"I was so scared. When I saw him take off in your direction I knew I had to shoot him before he got to you. I was so afraid I'd miss."

"But you didn't," he told her quickly, before she worked herself up too much. "You aimed and shot, just like you'd been practicing, and killed the lion before it even touched me. And I will always be thankful for that. But I think it's good to go every so often and

practice, in case anything like that comes up again. I know you and Rose went just outside of town to pick some berries last month and you took your gun with you, which was good, but I feel better knowing you've practiced now and then and will be able to protect yourself if an animal of some kind would approach you."

"To be honest with you, which I know is very important to you," she said with an impish grin, "I felt better knowing I'd recently practiced, too. And knowing I shot that mountain lion gave me confidence, too, that we'd be okay picking the berries. We both kept a careful watch all around us and came back to town as soon as we were done, but knowing I could do it if I had to made me feel better."

"Good," he said, reaching down to kiss her cheek, which caused her to turn that lovely shade of red he enjoyed seeing. "It makes me feel better, too. So if you bring it along this evening, we'll get a little practice in."

"I'll do that, and I'll be ready when you come over," she promised. He couldn't resist giving her another little kiss on her forehead before turning to leave, just as a customer came in the store. He turned back to see her, knowing her face would be red again, thinking a customer may have seen him kiss her. He smiled when it was just the shade of red he'd imagined, and tipped his hat to them as he left the store.

He went straight to Bertha's restaurant and asked about getting a picnic for their supper. Bertha assured him she'd come up with something, but didn't have long to talk. "You seem to be awfully busy lately, Bertha. What happened to the young lady that I've seen in here helping? I haven't seen her the last few days."

"She and her new husband moved into town and she was a big help. His father got hurt, though, and they moved back home to help him, so I'm back to doing all the cooking and serving myself. My daughter comes in after she gets home from school most days, but that's late in the afternoon, and she's only eleven."

"You should talk to the new ladies. Maybe one of them would be willing to help you."

"I thought of them, but I thought they were all busy. I know Rose works with Cyrus, Cecelia works with Tom at the store, and Goldie and Lizzie help Lenore. Don't the rest run the laundry service?"

"They do, but the three of them rotate, as I understand it. If you need help in here, one of them may be able to help you, at least part of the day, whenever you're busiest."

Bertha's eyes lifted to meet his. "Do you really think so? If I could get someone to come in and help me in the morning, so they could take care of serving people over breakfast and lunch while I cook their food it would be a big help. I come in early and get the bread on and biscuits done, and get started on the pies before anyone gets here, but it's hard to get all them done, along with whatever I'm going to be serving for lunch and supper if I have to keep running out and taking orders and getting people more coffee."

"Since you don't have time to talk to them, so why don't I talk to Cecelia this evening, and if one of them has the time and would be willing to come help, she can come over and talk to you. Would that be okay?"

"I would very much appreciate that, Dawson. Thank you."

"No problem. I'll bet one of them will be able to come over and help you, at least part of the day."

"I hope so. In the meantime, I'll have a picnic ready for you by five o'clock. Will that work?"

"That will be fine. Thank you."

He left the restaurant and started making his afternoon rounds about Pine Falls, thinking again about how glad he was he used the town's inheritance money to bring the seven ladies here. There had originally been eight ladies, but one of them had an aunt and uncle that sent money for a train ticket and took her into their home. At the time he'd thought it was probably for the best, as he was a little

concerned about keeping eight single ladies safe and making sure they had what they needed and were happy here. Now he smiled, thinking their little town could use another single lady.

He'd also had to break up a couple of fights between single men who both had their eye on courting one of the ladies. Now, just a few months after they arrived here, his Cecelia had agreed to become his wife and he assumed Fred would soon ask Rose to marry him. From what he understood, Ella had been seeing Frank for almost as long and were getting on well. That left four ladies, and he'd seen Lizzie keeping company with Joe on several occasions. That meant there were actually only three left, and it seemed the single men were all taking their turns, trying to impress them.

He smiled when he thought about how well this had worked out. For the most part, the men had all taken it well if a lady went to dinner with them once, but turned them down the next time and accepted another man's invitation. That man generally asked one of the other ladies out. Dawson hoped he didn't have problems with the men once the ladies had all chosen a man. Some would be left out, and he hoped that didn't cause hard feelings.