

A Strict Husband

By

Sue Lyndon

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Sue Lyndon

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Praise for A Firm Husband



One of the best ever. Great story. Hot and realistic. Danger to the hero. Great heroine. A really great story.



If you love sexy dominant cowboys you'll love this book. Clara decides to run away from home and Dad sends the new foreman after her. They come back married and with the foreman definitely in charge. Great Read!!!



This is a very good historical story with a young lady who just can't seem to make good decisions. When she runs away from home things go from bad to worse. She ends up meeting William who just so happens to be her father's new foereman who she has been offered to in marriage. She learns quickly that he wont put up with misbehavior of any kind and spansks heard whenever she does something wrong.

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Chapter 1

Slam!

The clatter of the front door closing hard followed by heavy footsteps increased the dread already coursing through Mattie. Why couldn't she obey the rules? Worse yet, why couldn't she stop dragging Caroline into mischief? Mattie glanced at her sister-in-law pacing across the drawing room floor.

"It's okay, Carol. I'll tell Elliot it was all my idea. You won't get in trouble too."

The slender brunette stilled and glared worriedly at Mattie. "He said the next time I listened to one of your foolish plans, he would use that new paddle he made on me, no matter what the circumstances." Carol's lip trembled, and Mattie felt sick for being responsible for yet another dispute between her brother and his new wife.

Both girls turned to face Elliot. He loomed in the doorway with the feared paddle clasped in one hand. Mattie gulped when she noticed several holes drilled through the implement. When it connected with her bare bottom, and she had no doubt her bottom would be bared for punishment, it would pack an awful, awful sting.

Caroline's shoulders dropped and she shuddered. Mattie felt another pang of sickness. The idea of sweet Carol receiving a spanking for something Mattie talked her into caused regret and shame to sweep over her. "It was my idea to sneak away to town. I know we aren't supposed to go without you, but I convinced Carol it wasn't a big deal."

"I assure you it is a big deal." Elliot's voice was calm. He never yelled and rarely raised his voice, but the authority that oozed out of him, particularly when Mattie found herself in hot water, made her second guess whatever genius plan she'd concocted to land in said hot water.

"We've had no disagreements with any of the big ranches you're worried about. Even if we ran into someone on the road to town, which we didn't, it's unlikely they would've bothered us."

"Unlikely but not impossible. You know my rule. You both do." He shot a pointed look at his wife.

Mattie resisted the urge to roll her eyes. Elliot's requirement that she and Carol have an escort into the town of Cheyenne was an annoyance. Just because one of their cousins who lived farther north near Buffalo was having serious problems with cattle rustlers didn't mean the same problem would occur here. And even if it did, it didn't mean trouble would find Mattie and Carol on the road. Elliot had intercepted their wagon right as they reached town and ordered them to turn back around, spoiling Mattie's plans to visit a friend with a new baby.

"Carol tried to talk me out of going, Elliot, I swear." Being brave in the face of an imminent paddling wasn't easy, but Mattie couldn't help but feel sorry for the timid Carol. The poor thing was married to a man who spanked her. How awful. Mattie vowed to never fall into similar circumstances.

"I don't care whose idea it was to leave the ranch without a chaperone. I don't care who tried to talk whom out of leaving. The fact is, I caught both of you sitting on the wagon about to

drive into town. Both of you disobeyed me and both of you are about to feel this paddle applied to your bare bottoms.”

The wood cracked across the palm of his hand. Both girls jumped.

Caroline stepped forward and took a shaky breath. “Elliot, I’m so sorry. I promise it won’t happen again. You don’t have to spank us.”

He strode to his wife and tilted her chin up with one finger, his movements strangely gentle. Warmth lit his eyes, chasing away some of the hardness of his expression. “Yes, I do. I won’t stand for a disobedient wife. We’ve had this discussion before.” He dropped her chin and crooked a finger at Mattie. “You. I’ve nearly worn my arm out correcting you over the years, but perhaps I haven’t been strict enough with you. Rest assured I intend to find you a husband with an iron hand – and soon. Very soon.”

Mattie’s heart sank to her feet. The disappointment in Elliot’s eyes unnerved her as much as his threat to find her a strict husband – the very thing she wished to avoid. She should’ve seen it coming though. At nineteen she was ripe for marriage, and Mattie expected to be matched with one of the neighboring ranchers’ sons. Tears gathered hot and blinding in her eyes, but she blinked them back and vowed not to cry. Caroline would do enough crying for them both.

By the time Elliot moved two high-backed chairs to the center of the room, Carol was weeping a river. Mattie felt for her but hoped the young woman would find peace in her new marriage. Carol always acted like she was walking on eggshells in Elliot’s presence. That was no way to live.

“You know the routine, ladies. Bend over and place your hands on a chair, bottoms up.”

Side by side, Mattie and Carol bent over with their palms flat on the seats. When they got in trouble together, Elliot punished them together. The added humiliation of being spanked in another person’s presence, even if it was Carol, was terrible. Mattie felt she was too old to be spanked anyway.

Elliot made quick work of baring their bottoms, an act he was all too familiar with. He lifted their skirts over their backs and moved their drawers to rest at their knees. Instead of beginning the paddling at once, he left them exposed and untouched for several long minutes as he paced the floor, delivering a stern scolding by describing the dangers of leaving the ranch without a chaperone.

“Disobedient girls get punished,” he said. “I see two disobedient girls right now, bottoms bared and awaiting punishment. I intend to teach you both a lesson, Caroline and Matilda, and by the time I’m finished you’ll both have sore backsides. I assure you that you’ll be two very, very sorry girls.”

The paddle cracked across Carol’s bottom first. She howled and tensed up. Mattie’s heart raced knowing she would receive the next blow, and sure enough, the wood smacked over her backside, the length of the implement covering both cheeks with a horrible sting.

Smack! Smack! Smack! Elliot showed no mercy as he wielded the paddle against their bottoms. Even though he alternated spanks between them, she found it difficult to catch her breath before the next blow caught her.

“Elliot, please. I’m so sorry,” Carol sobbed.

If he heard her muffled plea, he chose to ignore it. The room filled with the sound of Elliot's deft smacks and Mattie and Carol's whimpers. It was a long, drawn out punishment. One neither girl was likely to forget.

Mattie bit her lip to keep from screaming out as the fire on her bottom flesh built up and up until it flamed like a raging inferno. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she became awash in misery, emotionally and physically drained of life. Elliot's growing frustration with her had been evident of late, and she hated herself for always being so impulsive and disobeying his commands. He wasn't an unreasonable man. Even though she didn't agree with all of his rules, she knew those rules were in place to keep her and Carol safe.

A sob erupted from Mattie's throat and her shoulders heaved. She wept because she'd gotten Carol in trouble. She wept because her backside burned horribly, each stroke of the paddle like a flame licking her flesh. She wept because Elliot had promised to find her a husband soon, a husband with an iron hand. She wept for a thousand different reasons, until she realized the spanking had ended and she had embarrassed herself by crying like a fool.

"I never, ever want to hear talk of either of you ladies riding into town without an escort." Elliot's voice sounded strained.

Though it hurt to breathe, let alone move, Mattie straightened and fixed her drawers underneath her dress and smoothed the skirt down. As she wiped her tear-streaked face on her sleeve, she noticed Caroline standing wrapped in Elliot's arms. Their foreheads rested together, and Mattie heard Elliot whisper, "I love you, wife. Don't ever scare me like that again."

Jealousy ripped through Mattie, taking her by surprise. How in the heavens could she be envious of Carol's relationship with Elliot? It didn't make sense and Mattie brimmed with frustration. She vowed to be on her best behavior and work twice as hard around the ranch. Maybe then Elliot wouldn't send her away. Filled with enough sorrow to last a lifetime, she fled to the safety of her room and cried, alone, for a reason she didn't understand.

* * *

2 years later...

Dust flew up in Henry's face as he swiped a cloth over the shelves behind the counter, inside the general store that served Cheyenne. He coughed but didn't move away. The shelves were dirty and no one else was going to come along and clean them. Only when he heard the entrance bell ringing did he throw the cloth down and turn around. "Dammit to hell," he muttered under his breath.

"Good mornin', Henry."

"Mornin', Elliot. How can I help you today?" Henry felt his face fall and didn't have the energy to force a smile. Seeing Elliot Donahue always dredged up painful memories. Not two years ago Elliot had been the first one on the scene of a horrible accident involving Henry's wife. The wound in his heart reopened each time he ran into Elliot, and it festered for days afterward.

"Are you busy?" Elliot glanced around the store uneasily, as if to make sure no one else was nearby. At the moment the store was empty, but Henry expected business to pick up before lunchtime.

"Not too busy for an old friend," Henry finally replied, though the words tasted bitter. It wasn't Elliot's fault he associated him with the worst thing to happen in his life – his wife's untimely death.

“Good to hear.” The rancher’s eyes danced around and he fidgeted with his leather vest, straightening it five separate times in a row. Worry lines marred his face. He looked like he’d aged ten years since the last time Henry saw him a few months ago.

“How are Carol and Mattie?” Henry placed his hands on the counter and leaned forward, curious about this visit. He had the distinct feeling Elliot wasn’t here to spend money or order supplies.

“Carol’s doing fine,” Elliot replied with a nod. “Mattie is . . . growing up.”

Not one for small talk, Henry couldn’t think of a reply. The two men stared at each other in awkward silence. Henry cleared his throat and his gaze traveled to the entrance. Where were the customers when he needed them? Hell, he’d welcome a sudden brawl in his store, just for a merciful distraction.

“I’ve known you for a long time, Henry. I think you’re a good, God-fearing man. We grew apart after Beth’s death, and I feel awful about that.”

Henry shook his head. “Don’t feel awful about nothin’. It’s my fault we grew apart. I changed after Beth died. Ain’t nothin’ anyone can do to fix that. Please tell me you didn’t come all the way into town to talk about our friendship.”

Elliot’s fingers skated up the opening of his vest and he tugged at the garment a few times. He sighed and stepped closer to the counter. “You’ve been alone for almost three years. Don’t you think it’s time you took a new wife? Beth would want you to be happy.”

“I’m too old to get married again.”

“You’ve only got a decade on me. You’re still young enough.”

“Does Mattie know you’re here trying to give her hand away?”

Elliot had the grace to blush. “No.”

Henry placed his elbows on the counter. The conversation was already exhausting him. He wanted Elliot out of his store so he could try to clear the bad memories from his thoughts. “Doesn’t she have her eye set on some other fella? Have you asked her?”

“Even if she does have her eye on a man, that girl doesn’t know what’s good for her. I do. She can be a little wayward at times. A man who won’t tolerate nonsense would do her a world of good.”

“Haven’t you raised her right?”

The rancher’s face reddened and he crossed his arms. “You know I have, Henry, but she’s got a strong will. A wild streak.” His hands fell to his sides. “The wrong man might hurt her, squash her spirit and abuse her. I know you’d be firm with her but loving.”

Taking another wife had never crossed Henry’s thoughts before, but now that Elliot had planted the idea in his mind, he couldn’t stop imagining Mattie as his woman. Running the store by himself wasn’t easy and damn if he didn’t get lonely at night. Would she think of him as an old man? Trailing his hands down the front of his work apron, he closed his eyes and recalled her lovely ivory skin and smooth blonde locks. He groaned inwardly and met his friend’s pleading eyes.

“I’m too old. Find someone else.”

Elliot let loose with an exacerbated sigh and held his hands up in petition as he inched toward the exit. “Promise me you’ll at least think about it, old friend?”

“Fine. I’ll think about it.” Henry was already thinking about it hard, but Elliot couldn’t see his wheels turning and passions igniting at the image of Mattie squirming underneath him in bed. Good, God fearing man his ass. All he could think about was trailing his fingers over every surface of her young smooth body and claiming her innocence.

The rest of the day passed in a blur. Sure enough, business picked up before lunchtime and Henry had plenty of things to do. Orders to place. Telegrams to send. Supplies to package. Shelves to clean. A back room to organize. No amount of work could erase the temptation that was Mattie from his mind. Would Beth approve? Yes, of course she would. He didn’t have to consider it for more than a second. Beth would’ve wanted him to move on and find happiness with another. And why not Mattie?

Even though he longed to accept Elliot’s offer, Henry dragged his feet for over a week. He put his energy into the general store and also the little house he owned in town. He’d shared the home with Beth for years before she died and her woman’s touch still remained to taunt him. A quilt on the bed. Doilies in the kitchen. Her clothes stacked neatly in a trunk in the bedroom. A half completed blanket she’d been knitting for her sister’s baby sat untouched on a chair. The house spoke her name like a cry being swallowed by the howling wind. He tried to listen, he tried to keep her memory close, but the pain was a bullet through his chest.

A bullet. He laughed at the crazed thought. A bullet had killed Beth, a goddamn stray bullet from a quarrel neither of them had been a part of. Henry had stayed away from church since then, and he’d refused to utter a simple prayer. If Elliot knew the depth of his bitterness with God, would the offer to marry Mattie have still been made?

Heavy rains pelted Cheyenne from Thursday until Saturday, and the town became a mud hole of scampering bodies and only a few travelers by wagon. The stagecoach that arrived each Saturday morning didn’t show up, but the townspeople still visited his store in hopes that a letter had magically arrived from a loved one farther north. It took Henry an hour to scrub the mud from the floor inside the store each day, alone and with his thoughts still centered on Mattie.

On the next clear morning, he handed the store over to his friend Richard for a day. The older man walked with a limp and couldn’t handle most physical labor, but he could run the general store as well as Henry. Well, except for sending telegrams.

Henry borrowed a horse from his former brother-in-law and rode hard for the Donahue ranch. Fortunately the homestead rested to the west, in the direction of the Laramie Mountains. The rising sun blanketed his back in warmth. It was liberating to ride in the wide open, under a sky that stretched forever. Breathtaking didn’t begin to describe the landscape, the way the rolling green and golden hills kissed the brilliant blue sky. Henry didn’t miss Virginia one bit, though it had been two decades since he’d traveled west with his family. His heart belonged to Wyoming Territory – or Wyoming. The mayor of Cheyenne had held a celebration not long ago to celebrate its new statehood. Henry refused to attend without Beth by his side, so he’d holed up in his little house for the evening with a bottle of whiskey and memories he couldn’t chase away.

As the clouds broke up over the snow-capped mountains, Henry stopped to water his horse at a stream. It wouldn’t be long now. Cattle grazed in the distance, spread out over the endless expanse of green and gold. The cool morning had turned hot, and Henry wiped sweat from his brow with a handkerchief before he saddled up again.

Thoughts of Mattie plagued him as he neared the outbuildings of the Donahue spread. He didn't know her well, but Elliot claimed she had a wild streak. Henry understood Elliot feared his sister would wind up beaten cruelly with the wrong husband. Of course, Henry wouldn't let her run wild and free. If she needed correction, he wouldn't hesitate to give her a good thrashing. Her bottom would turn red under his hand when she disobeyed, and the image of spanking Mattie heated his blood. There was something about disciplining a wife that he enjoyed, and Beth had been no stranger to spankings during their marriage. Henry believed in ruling his home with an iron palm and a loving heart, and not once had he treated Beth cruelly.

Earning Mattie's trust wouldn't be easy, but Henry was up for the job. When the time was right after their wedding, he would introduce her to marital spankings, and punishments more intimate than she could ever imagine. He would temper her wild streak all right, but he would try his best to show her love and never squash the beautiful spirit he imagined such a girl possessed.

Elliot walked out of the barn when Henry arrived. The younger man whistled and a ranch hand appeared to take care of the horse, leaving the two men alone between the barn and main house, out in the hot sun. Henry straightened his hat and wiped at his brow again as Elliot looked him up and down.

"You here for the reason I think you are?"

Henry sighed. "I suppose I am. You haven't married your sister off yet, have you?" A horse whinnied in the distance and a door slammed nearby, but the Henry kept his concentration on his friend's suspicious expression. Clearly, the rancher had doubted Henry would take him up on his offer.

"I prayed for you to come to your senses." He stepped closer to Henry and grasped his hand to shake it. "Of course Mattie is still available."

"Oh, oh, oh," called a feminine voice. "Mattie is not available. Elliot, I hardly know this man."

The two men turned to see Matilda strolling up with her hands on her hips. Her eyes flared defiantly and her cheeks burned dark pink. Henry tipped his hat as he took in the curves of her body, from the swell of her breasts beneath her calico dress to the cute little waist that dipped in before her hips took command. Heart racing at the sight of her, he welcomed a quick wedding. An hour from now wouldn't be soon enough.

"Mattie, get back in the house," Elliot growled.

"I will not!"

Her brother drew her closer and leaned down to whisper, but spoke loud enough that Henry heard every word. "Unless you want your husband-to-be to witness you getting a spanking, you'll get your fanny back inside the house now."

The defiance left her eyes and she bowed her head. "Please don't do this to me." She spared a sorrowful glance at Henry before turning to run back to the house, her skirts rustling in time with her quick movements.

"It's not you, Henry," Elliot reassured. "She doesn't want to marry anyone. She's afraid of change, always has been. Well, ever since our parents died."

"I didn't take offense."

“Good. Now, do you think Preacher Harrison will be able to come out on Saturday? I don’t see why we should wait, do you? We can have the wedding right here on the ranch.”

Saturday. Four days from now. Anticipation rushed through Henry like a raging river. “I’m sure he’s not busy. We’ll ride out early and plan for a noon wedding.”

Elliot gestured at the house. “I apologize ahead of time for Mattie’s behavior. I can’t promise she’s going to be pleasant to you on your wedding day or in the following days. But she’s a good girl deep down. She’ll come around.”

Henry hated the thought of a young, sweet thing like Mattie being forced into marriage. But it was for her own good. At least that’s what he told himself. “I’ll take good care of her, Elliot. You have my word.”