

South Pass Brides
A Frontier Romance

By

Sterling Scott

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Prologue – March 1, 1848

Fort Union, Northwest Wilderness

The heavy wooden door swung open allowing the north wind to wreak its cold vengeance upon the log cabin's interior. Thomas Meyer had found the long January nights along the Canadian border to be bone-chilling, but the strong spring wind blowing down from the ice capped Rocky Mountains was a special brand of cold.

The intruder stood, holding the door open. Thomas squinted as the bright sunlight silhouetted the figure of a big man. Thomas opened his mouth to tell the man to close the darn door, when the stranger spoke first.

“Bart's dead.”

Thomas sucked in a breath. While the cold air stung his nostrils, his sinuses were grateful for the brief reprieve from the stench of the drying buffalo hides.

“What? Dead?”

“Aye, he drowned his self.” Thomas recognized the monotone voice of Alistair McKinsey, one of the few old-time mountain men still fur trapping.

“Bart drowned? How?”

“He tried to walk across the Yellowstone. The ice gave way.”

Located at the junction of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers, Fort Union was the northernmost inhabited town in the territories now owned by the United States. With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the land drained by the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers became part of the young North American nation. In the winter, both the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers froze over allowing men to walk over them. However, this was early spring and the ice covering was too thin to support a man's weight.

“Why did he do that?” Thomas was not quick to believe that Bart, an experienced mountain man, would be so foolish.

“Because he's a dern fool.” McKinsey stepped across the threshold and closed the door. “He shot an elk on the other side, and thought he could walk on water.” The usually expressionless man chuckled, but Thomas did not find the inference to Bart's high self-esteem to be funny. “He ain't been all together since Wyalla died,” McKinsey's voice now turned serious.

Wyalla, Bart's Indian wife, had caught the fever and died in February. Thomas had to admit that Bart had not been attentive to the business of the trading post since then, but his lack of sensibility had begun before Wyalla had died. Twenty years earlier, the fur trade had been a thriving business while beaver pelt hats were the height of fashion. Fort Union had grown from the original 300 square-foot stockade to a town of more than a hundred citizens. However, fashions had changed and John Jacob Astor sold the trading post to Bart Adams. While they made a good living trading food and supplies for deer and buffalo hides, Bart had seen that the end of their business was near.

Thomas spotted the rifle slung across McKinsey's back.

“Is that Bart's Hawken?” Thomas extended his hand and waited. The Hawken rifle was valuable. Most mountain men carried the foot and a half longer barreled Kentucky style rifle.

While known for their accuracy, these were heavy and difficult to reload. Adams had no next of kin. Thus, Thomas reasoned that what Bart had owned was now his to inherit.

McKinsey licked his lips and adjusted the strap weighing on his shoulder. "Aye, it is." He made no move to hand it over.

"I'm much obliged to you for bringing it to me." Thomas stared into the man's dark eyes. "We were partners, Bart and me. Signed the papers and all." Thomas was lying. However, he imagined that if Bart had ever given the matter a moment's thought, he would have willed all of his property to Thomas.

"Aye," McKinsey swallowed, "that's what I done. I brung it to ye." He passed the rifle to Thomas. "So, what will ye be doing now, with all this?" McKinsey swept his arm across the cabin, gesturing to the piles of hides and the stacks of trade goods.

Thomas did not answer. Examining the weapon, he wondered how it was that Bart Adams had fallen through the ice while his rifle had remained high and dry. He reasoned that McKinsey had murdered Bart, or at least hastened his death, with the intention of taking possession of the trading post. The Northwest Wilderness was completely lawless. There were few lawmen, courts, and judges west of St. Louis and none west of Independence, Missouri. Without evidence proving McKinsey's guilt, Thomas would not be able to rally the community into seeking vengeance for Bart's murder. With no recourse, he decided to let the matter go.

Chapter One – March 15, 1848

Cincinnati, Ohio

“I do,” Olga Strobel proclaimed, as her father had commanded her to say.

At nineteen years of age, her father had insisted that she marry. She had nothing against being married. She had dreamt of having a loving husband and children. However, Cupid’s arrow had never found her heart. Not only was her father unwilling to continue her support, Olga was blocking the marriage of her younger sister. It was socially unacceptable for the younger sibling to marry first, and Ida had already accepted a marriage proposal. Therefore, Olga’s mother had located Mr. Graus for her to marry.

As her mind wandered, Olga became aware of a sudden silence. The preacher was staring at her. Then he nodded toward Peter. Olga had missed the preacher’s proclamation that they were now man and wife. She had missed him saying, “And now you may kiss the bride.”

Olga turned to her new husband. He was an inch shorter than her five-and-a-half-foot frame. She bent her knees ever so slightly to bring their noses to the same height. Peter Graus lifted her veil. She looked upon his round face and bushy black beard. She locked eyes with his cold gray orbs for the first time ever. He held her shoulders. She stood stock-still as he leaned forward and brushed his lips with hers.

Olga did not move as he backed away smiling. It was her first ever kiss on the lips, and it was not entirely unpleasant. Her mother had promised that she would come to love her new husband eventually. “He’s a fine man from a solid German family,” Olga’s mother had said. She had gone on to explain that his first wife had died in childbirth six months earlier. Being the ripe age of nineteen, Olga would have to settle for an older, previously married man. Peter was twenty-three. The two had met; they had held hands. Her father had slaughtered a pig for their engagement party. She had danced with Peter. And now, they were married, all within the short span of a week.

Tugging on her arm, Peter pivoted his bride to face the small gathering of family and friends. She forced herself to smile. He took a half step forward, and pulled on her arm. Finally, Olga moved. Arm in arm, the newlyweds slowly walked between the pews and out to the church garden.

They greeted their well-wishers as husband and wife. The men kissed her cheek, and then slipped coins and banknotes into the purse dangling from her wrist. Someone began playing a violin. Their previous dance had been a square-dance in her father’s barnyard. This time, they danced a waltz. Olga enjoyed having Peter’s strong hands hold her. He held her very close and the tips of her breasts brushed his chest. Her pulse raced. Olga had never before been permitted to hold a man so close.

Maybe Mother is right.

Olga was beginning to enjoy being married.

They ate, drank wine, and partied as the sun drifted into the west. Twilight settled and the men gathered around Peter to smoke cigars and drink whiskey. Olga’s mother pulled her aside.

“Dear, I need to tell you about tonight—your wedding night,” she whispered into Olga’s ear. “Mr. Graus has been married before, and he will know what to do. You must simply lie still and let him have his way.”

“What?” Olga asked, though she knew exactly what her mother was referencing.

“Yes, tonight wear only your nightdress, nothing underneath. In the bed, lie on your back and do not shirk away when he touches you. Do not resist as he reaches under your nightdress. This is now the proper thing for him to do, Mrs. Graus.” Olga’s mother winked, saying her new name for the first time. “Let me tell you what will happen. He will open your knees and kneel between them. He will press his manhood into your womanly secret. Don’t be afraid. It will hurt only this first time.” She smiled again. “Thereafter, you will come to enjoy his attentions.”

The preacher interrupted, with Peter in tow. “It’s time for me to give the newlyweds their private blessing,” he said.

Peter took her arm and they followed the preacher into the church. He closed the door. Olga and Peter sat while he stood over them. The three held hands in a circle.

"My dear," he looked down upon the new bride, "as you know from your Bible study, Ephesians Chapter 5: Verses 22 through 24 outline a wife's designated position of submission in marriage." He cleared his throat. "Yes, this New Testament verse prescribes to us: *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church, and He is the savior of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*

The man wiped beads of perspiration from his glistening forehead, although it was a cool spring evening.

“Olga,” he continued, “do you understand what this means?”

“I think so.”

“It means,” he ignored her response, “that you may discuss any conflicts that you have with Peter, but in the end, you must do as he decides. Should a wife fail her husband, the Lord instructs that he correct her as appropriate. This is to include physical reprimands in the form of spanking and other punishments. Now, do you understand?”

Olga had understood him the first time. She was no stranger to punishment swats on her bottom. She was also aware that her father disciplined her mother in exactly this fashion. Thus, she nodded her comprehension of the preacher’s instructions.

“Excellent. And you Peter, do you understand your obligation to Olga?”

“I do, sir.”

Again, the preacher ignored the response. “It is written that the husband’s duty is to ensure that his wife is obedient to himself and thus to God. In doing so, he presents his love for his wife. For there can be no greater love than God’s love for his chosen people. The chosen people pledged love and obedience to God and God rebuked them when they failed in their commitment. Therefore, as a wife has pledged love and obedience to her husband, he is merely expressing his obedience to God when he disciplines her.”

Peter nodded.

Undaunted, the preacher continued, “Peter, it is also written that you must love your wife as you love your God. This means that you must put her wellbeing before all others, even before your own. If after toiling all day, you can only put one meal on the table, that meal shall be hers. In this way, you two,” he paused to radiate a smile down upon them, “are united. Caring for each other, as the Lord cares for you. You two are now joined as one. Bow your heads.” Placing his hands on their heads, he completed the blessing.

“Amen,” the three said in unison.

During the lecture, the wedding party had prepared their buggy for departure. When the couple exited the church, the rows of cheering family and friends showered them with rice. Peter

escorted Olga to the waiting buggy. Waving goodbye and grinning from ear to ear, Olga watched her mother and father fade away.

She was alone with her new husband. She had never been alone with a man before. Silence and darkness surrounded them. Olga pulled her shawl tightly around her shoulders and pressed her body towards Peter's warmth.

"As you know," he swallowed before saying her Christian name for the first time, "Olga, I have already sold my house. We will stay in the boarding house where I have been living until the end of the week."

"Yes... Peter."

Olga watched the street lanterns of Cincinnati spread to the horizon as the buggy descended the hill on the northwest side of town. Ohio had been her home since she turned eleven years old. She could remember no trepidation when her family had emigrated from Germany to America in 1840. They had been poor, starving tenant farmers in economically depressed Germany. The past eight years had been the happiest of her life as the farm that her father owned had thrived. Now, she was not only having to adjust to married life, she was going to have to adjust to living in the Oregon Territory. The German immigrants followed the Old World customs and Mr. Graus was a second son and not eligible to inherit the family farm. He was employed at a dry goods store, but had sold his own property in preparation to take the Oregon Trail west before his wife had died. They had intended to seek out land for themselves. In marrying him, Olga was accepting this fate. And this, as much as the looming wedding night, was giving her chills.

Peter guided the buggy along the waterfront road. The clattering iron wheels on the cobblestones of the wharf-front road alerted Olga to the end of their trip. She examined the steamboats docked along the Ohio River, wondering which one would take her away from everything that she knew and loved. Peter pulled back on the reins and halted the horse in front of the Queen Anne boarding house. A porter collected her valise and followed as Peter led his bride to her matrimonial chamber. Olga was actually glad that he was not taking her to the house where he had lived with his first wife—the house where she and their baby had died.

At the threshold of their room, he scooped her up in his powerful arms and carried her inside. Olga giggled as he gently returned her feet to the floor. With a finger, he tilted her face upward and kissed her. This time, he took his time. This time, he held her close and savored her tender lips.

Yes, marriage is going to be very nice.

Olga closed her eyes and pressed her body into his and her spine tingled.

The porter cleared his throat. "Will there be anything else, sir?" He put her valise on the bed and lit several candles

"No," Peter said. After waiting for the porter to depart, he continued, "I'll be in the washroom down the hall." He needlessly pointed. "There is a chamber pot there," he nodded toward the wooden box in the corner. "And everything else you might need." He turned away. "I'll be back in a few minutes."

When he closed the door, Olga examined the ten by ten foot room. She unbuttoned the gown she had borrowed from her mother, and hung it in the wardrobe. She stripped off her blouse and bodice. She rolled down her stockings and used the chamber pot. Finally, she unbuttoned her chemise and examined her lanky, nude body in the mirror. She wondered what Peter would think of her.

What had his first wife looked like? Was she pretty?

Her fingers twisted the brown curls covering her mons. She had been thrilled when this symbol of female maturity had appeared. Her breasts had never swollen to full size, but seventeen-year-old Ida's bosom was ample.

Tonight I become a real woman.

She wondered how long it would be before she achieved the final step in a woman's maturity and became a mother.

Olga unpacked her bag and poured water from the pitcher into the basin. She added lavender scent, a gift from her sister, to the water. After rinsing her body, she pulled on her nightdress. Instead of donning her sleeping bonnet, she brushed out the braids in her straw-colored hair. Blowing out all but one of the candles, she slid under the bed cover. She lay on her back and waited.

When Peter returned, he quietly crept into the room as though he was avoiding disturbing her. He was wearing his nightshirt and was carrying his clothing in a bundle. She silently watched as he placed his clothes atop hers. Embarrassingly, she had forgotten to conceal her chemise and underskirt. Now, his gray woolen trousers and white cotton shirt were intermingled with the lace of her undergarments. However, he took no notice.

Peter extinguished the last candle. Illuminated by the slivers of light around the curtain, Olga watched her husband pull off his nightshirt. In the dim light, she could not discern the features of his manhood. He tip-toed to the bed and crawled in next to her. The newlyweds lay side by side under the bed cover, panting with anticipation and excitement.

I'm glad he knows what to do.

Olga was actually pleased that her husband was experienced in these matters. She did not want this to be a clumsy game of the blind leading the blind. As instructed by her mother, she lay still.

"Are you asleep?" he whispered.

"No," she whispered back.

He rolled to his side and placed his hand on her abdomen. Touching her in the manner only a husband could touch his wife. His warm palm massaged small circles over her cotton nightdress. Tingles flowed along her spine and her womanhood began to itch.

Yes, this is it!

He nuzzled against her shoulder. His beard both tickled and scratched her neck. She wondered what she should be doing with her hands. He kissed her and she placed a hand on the back of his neck. She did not want him to stop. She relaxed, and his lips opened her mouth. His tongue touched hers.

Oh, my God!

Her Venus swelled and Olga opened her thighs a couple of inches. Peter broke their kiss and nuzzled his forehead against the side of her head. His hand inched up her torso and cupped her small breast.

Should I apologize for them?

He exhibited no disappointment with her diminutive bosom, and shifted his body closer to hers. She felt a hardness pressing against her thigh. She felt her nipple stiffen under his touch. She gasped.

"Are you all right?" he whispered.

"Yes, I'm sorry."

"No need to be. I don't mean to rush you."

She swallowed the lump in her throat and pulled his lips back to hers. The stiffness of his manhood twitched against her leg.

Peter's hand abandoned her breast and slid down her torso. His fingers did not pause as they passed over her belly button. They did not pause until he felt the thatch covering her mons. Two fingers pressed the cotton fabric between her thighs.

An electric shock flared as he gently touched the soft folds below her bush. She broke the kiss and clutched his neck. She gasped again and opened her legs to allow his fingers to advance further into her unexplored territory. She moaned and felt a pleasant wetness ooze from her puffy pussy lips. He rolled over on top of her. She lifted her knees as he knelt between them. His hardness now pressed into the inside of her thigh.

Peter pulled up the hem of her nightdress. They touched skin to skin.

Using his hips, he pushed her thighs wide apart. His cock was cool and hard as he pressed it against her hot, soft core.

Olga clenched her jaw tightly shut to suppress any scream she might make. Her mother and married friends had all warned her of the pain Peter would cause as he penetrated her for the first time. He pressed his hips forward.

"Oh ah," she groaned between clenched teeth.

She had been expecting the pain of having a tooth pulled, but this was much less. Peter withdrew and pressed again. The pressure of being stretched was uncomfortable, but not painful.

Lifting her knees, she planted her feet flat on the mattress. She gripped his shoulders and pressed her face into his bare chest. The tickling hairs distracted her for a moment as he thrust once again, deeper.

She groaned again, aloud. This time the pain was sharper, but it quickly passed. He withdrew and thrust one more time. She felt the hairs below his belly entangle with hers. In response to the fullness in her core, she dug her heels into the bed and rolled her hips upward.

It is done!

"Are you all right?" he whispered again.

"Yes," she sighed.

But it wasn't over. He wasn't finished. Instead of withdrawing and climbing off of her, he resumed thrusting into her. Faster, rhythmic—he pumped in and out of her womanhood. While no longer painful, it was uncomfortable. She pressed her face against his neck and wondered how long this would last.

Peter groaned and his motions acquired a new urgency. His thrusts were deeper, harder. A tingling bloomed from her Venus. Olga groaned and lifted her hips higher. Pressing into his motion, she matched her movements to his thrusts. Surprisingly, the deeper into her channel that he invaded, the better she liked it.

Then, he released a long sighing groan and at the same time she was surprised to feel a hot, wet stream of liquid shooting up inside her. It was an interesting sensation and not at all unpleasant. She wondered what this liquid was. Mother had not explained.

He collapsed atop her. While he lay still, the hardness within her continued to twitch. Minutes later, he rolled away from her and fell asleep.

Olga reached down and touched the sticky ooze along her womanly slit.

This is what will make me pregnant—his seed.

She pushed her nightdress down, and wondered how she would know when she was with child. She turned to sleep.

Sometime during the night, he awoke her and completed the entire process again. As promised, there was no pain. Olga actually enjoyed it. Then, as the first rays of sunlight found their way around the curtain, he did it a third time.

Her mother had said she would enjoy his attentions, and she found the sensation of his hard manhood deep inside her to be a pleasant feeling, but she wondered just how many times he was going to do this. The space between her legs had become very sticky and she felt the need to bathe.