

# Rescuing Serenity

By

Dort Wesley

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# Table of Contents:

CHAPTER ONE .....	5
CHAPTER TWO .....	13
CHAPTER THREE.....	20
CHAPTER FOUR.....	27
CHAPTER FIVE.....	34
CHAPTER SIX .....	42
CHAPTER SEVEN.....	50
CHAPTER EIGHT .....	57
CHAPTER NINE .....	65
CHAPTER TEN.....	73
BLUSHING BOOKS NEWSLETTER.....	81
EBOOK OFFER .....	81
BLUSHING BOOKS.....	82

# Chapter One

Sid rode into Beaumont and dismounted in front of the saloon. He tied Hardhead to the hitching post and his dark eyes focused on what was unmistakably a female bottom encased in a pair of tight pants as she walked down the sidewalk and then disappeared inside the bank. He was close enough to two cowboys to overhear their crude comments about what they would like to do to the woman wearing the britches; and Sid thought that if the female belonged to him in any way, he would take her over his knee and set the seat of those pants on fire! He wondered where in hell her father, brother, husband, or cousin were, and why they weren't taking her in hand. She was surely old enough that she should know better than draw attention of that sort to herself.

Sid put the woman out of his mind and went inside the saloon. He would have a beer and keep his ears open and hope that he learned something about Serenity Compton's whereabouts. Harrison Compton was worried about his daughter and he wanted her to come home. His daughter was upset over a broken engagement, and had decided to leave town on her own. Harrison was certain she was unprepared to take care of herself. Even though Sid didn't usually take on cases of this sort, Harrison Compton was a wealthy man, and the fee he offered was more than Sid could make in five years of hard work hunting bounties. All he had to do was locate the female and take her home to her worried parent.

"I hear tell that female bounty hunter is in town again. Who's she lookin' for now?"

"I know it ain't me!" one old-timer said with a toothless grin, and the others around the table laughed heartily. "But, it sure does make me think about robbin' a bank if she'd promise to come a'lookin' for me!"

"She's some looker, alright. Them pants she wears are like a second skin. It's enough to give a man ideas!"

"Hell, Jake, you always got idees where women're concerned!" the old timer remarked.

"Yeah, but that is one special gal."

"She's purty, that's for sure and certain," the old-timer agreed with an emphatic nod of his head. "Hey mister?" he called out to Sid. "You ain't the one that gal is lookin' for, are ya?"

“No, sir.”

“Then why are you in town, iffen ya don’t mind me askin’?” The old man looked at him curiously.

“I’m looking for someone,” Sid admitted. “A young lady. Her father sent me to bring her home because he’s worried sick about her being all alone out here. I promised to bring her to him.”

“Son, with as few females as there are in this here town, your little lady is probably married by now! Single ladies don’t stay single long out here.”

“I’m aware of that,” Sid said with an easy-going smile. “But, I still need to find her and let her father know where she is.”

“Wonder why she ain’t wrote to him herself?” the old man muttered out loud.

“Perhaps the letter got lost along the way somewhere?” Sid suggested. He didn’t want to appear threatening to the men hanging on every word. If one of them did know where Serenity was hiding, he didn’t want to appear unwilling to listen to her side of things. Sid wasn’t stupid, and he knew that sometimes people had their own private agenda for hiring him. One man wanted his sister to come home so that he could force her to marry a man in return for all the IOUs of his that the man held. Needless to say, Sid helped the young woman escape her brother’s clutches. Sid had a moral code, and he wouldn’t cross it for any amount of money.

“Yeah, I’ve heard tell of that happenin’,” the old-timer agreed. “What’s this here gal’s name?”

“Her name is Serenity Compton,” Sid replied, hoping someone would know something. The entire saloon went perfectly quiet for all of ten seconds, and then the men burst into raucous laughter.

“That is the best joke I ever done heard!” The old-timer slapped his leg. “Son, you’re a corker for sure and certain!” He cackled some more, and suddenly seemed to realize that Sid wasn’t in on the joke. “You ain’t joshin’, are ya, boy?”

“I don’t have a clue what the rest of you are finding so amusing,” Sid admitted, frowning.

The old man got up and walked over to the bar. He only came to Sid’s shoulder, but Sid was used to that. Most men stood less than six feet, and he topped six feet by seven inches! He was used to looking down at people, women in particular.

“Your lady is that there female bounty hunter we was talkin’ ‘bout, son. That girl

wearin' them britches is Miss Serenity Compton, and she'd just as soon shoot you between the eyes as to give you the time of day. I don't know where you got the idea she's helpless, because if she was facin' down a wildcat or a passel of Injuns, I'd put my money on Miss Serenity any ole time!"

"Thanks for your help." Sid felt like a damn fool, but he was going to go and have words with the young woman. Her father had every right to be worried about her! "Miss Serenity is about to get the seat of those britches dusted but good!" As he headed for the door, he heard the old man sharing what he'd said with the others and the laughter his words were responsible for. It was time someone gave the little brat her comeuppance.

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Serenity Compton was not in a good mood. The man she was hunting for the last three weeks had gone into the sheriff's office in Dunbar and turned himself in; so she wasn't going to get paid for her time. She had to pay a visit to the bank and withdraw funds from her savings to have money to pay for her hotel room for a few nights and meals. She was going to take a break here, in Beaumont, until she heard of another bounty that interested her. What she really wanted was a beer. It was a hot day, and she knew that the regulars would steer clear of her. The gun she was wearing wasn't for show. She made her way down the sidewalk and went inside, making her usual appraisal of the room before she walked over to the bar. "Keith, I'll have a beer, if you please."

"Sure thing, Miss Serenity." Keith hurried to get the beer, and Serenity waited patiently. Once she had the mug in her hand, she took the bowl of peanuts off the bar and carried it over to an unoccupied table, aware that all eyes were on her. The only one brave enough to approach her was old Gus.

"Hey, Miss Serenity. I see you're *sittin'* there just fine!" Gus made a point of leaning over to look toward her backside. "What'd you do... kill that fella what was lookin' for ya?" he asked, grinning his toothless grin.

"What are you jawin' about, Gus?" She took a big sip of her beer and sighed. It was good!

"That there man who promised to give you a lickin', that's who."

"What?" Serenity felt her temper wearing thin, and she quickly reminded herself that Gus was really old. She needed to be patient. "Gus, you aren't making any sense. Start at the

beginning, please. What man are you talking about?"

"He didn't give us a name, but he said your Daddy hired him to find you and bring you home."

Serenity cursed under her breath. "The hell you say!"

"Oh yeah. When I told him you was a bounty hunter, he wasn't none too happy. He said he was gonna dust the seat of your britches!"

Serenity felt her cheeks turn red in embarrassment. "I'd like to see him try it!" she huffed indignantly.

"Nope, you sure wouldn't! He's a big'n. He'd easy make three of you, girly."

"Oh hell!" She jumped to her feet.

"You goin' huntin', Miss Serenity?" Gus asked with an innocent look on his lined face.

"You bet I am!"

She stomped out of the saloon and Gus chortled. "We're gonna have us an explosion for sure!" Gus followed after the feisty redhead. He wanted to be there when the explosion started!

As if sensing he was behind her, Serenity asked, "How will I know this man who has a death wish?"

"You'll know, girly. He's tall as a tree!" He was at least a good foot and a half taller than her, Gus realized, and he was suddenly afraid for the little redhead. She was tough, but size won out in the end... unless she shot the big man.

Serenity was furious that this stranger was in the saloon making threats to spank her when he didn't have the first clue who she was, or what she did for a living. If he worked for her father then that was all the reason she needed to hate him! She would send him on his way with his tail between his legs, and with a message for her father. That man could go straight to hell; she *never* wanted to see him again!

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Sid wondered how it was possible for one female to disappear so thoroughly, but Serenity had done so. He'd looked in most of the stores up and down the main street, but after seeing her enter the bank, it was as though she'd disappeared. His temper was still simmering, and he was going to see to it her butt paid for his humiliation in the saloon! How did she go from being a sweet, jilted girl to a female bounty hunter, wearing tight jeans and a gun? Didn't she realize that it wasn't a job for a pretty woman? He looked a couple more places and went into the

General Store once more, just in case she came in to buy something. Sid was ready to ask the clerk if she'd seen Serenity when he felt the barrel of a gun at his back.

"Keep your hands away from your guns if you want to live," a female voice ordered in a gruff tone. "Who are you and what are you doing here?"

"The name is Sid Prentiss, and I am looking for Miss Serenity Compton." Sid was aware that the store clerk was inching out of the way, just in case Miss Serenity decided to shoot him!

"Why?"

"That is none of your business... unless you are Miss Compton?" He knew damn well and good that it was the redhead he saw earlier, but he was going to make her introduce herself.

"Look here, Sid Prentiss, you need to get on your horse and ride out of town. If you stay, there is going to be more trouble than you can handle." It was not an idle threat. Serenity was not going to lay eyes on her hateful father *ever* again. She wouldn't be dragged back there, no matter how many men her raging parent hired to drag her home!

"How is that? I am only trying to do what your father hired me to do. He wants you to come home because he is worried about you."

"What a laugh!" Serenity scoffed. "That man doesn't worry about anyone but himself. Go on back and tell him to leave me the hell alone!"

"I am going to take you back, Miss Compton. You and your father can take it from there."

"Are you forgetting that I am holding a gun on you?" she asked, fury making her voice low.

"You are holding a gun on me only because I have allowed you to do so, Miss Compton. I suggest you put it away before I take it away from you and tan those britches you are wearing. I only have so much patience," he warned, and while she was sputtering in indignation, he whirled quickly and disarmed her in a flash. "See? Just like that."

"You low-down mangy, flea-ridden, Indian-scalping, dog-farting, jackass!" Serenity exploded. "Give me back my gun and do it now... before I get real mad." she threatened, and when he said nothing, but stared at her in shock, she lashed out, and in the next second he was on the floor of the General Store. "Now, give me my gun, or I'll buy another one and I guarantee that you will be the first son of a bitch I use it on!" Serenity gasped when she suddenly found herself flipping through the air! She landed on her stomach and the air whooshed out of her, and



in the next instant the big man had her gun belt off of her and then his hand was peppering her backside in hard spanks that were stinging like crazy. She opened her mouth to protest, but nothing but a squeak came out. She kept trying to catch her breath while he gave her the promised britches warming. Serenity was furious, and helpless, as she continued to try and breathe!

Sid wondered at how quiet the redhead was. He knew the licking had to be hurting her. He was a strong man and he was putting some real effort into making her regret pulling a gun on him... and sweeping his feet out from under him and dumping him on his ass like he was some green kid! She deserved a good spanking, and he was going to give her one to remember him by for the rest of her natural born days.

“Somethin’s wrong, Mister,” Gus suddenly said from behind him. “Miss Serenity cain’t breathe right. You need to let ‘er up!” Gus caught Sid’s hand mid-air and then repeated, “Let ‘her up; she cain’t breathe!”

Sid immediately flipped the redhead over and realized the old-timer was right. “Take it easy, Serenity.” He rubbed her back. “Just breathe in slowly. Did I knock the wind out of you flipping you like that?” She nodded, tears on her cheeks. The spanking *had* affected her; she just wasn’t able to holler because she couldn’t catch her breath. He felt bad. He’d had that happen to him a couple of times over the years and it wasn’t a pleasant feeling. “You’ll be okay in a few moments, Serenity. Just stay calm.”

How could he sound so caring after giving her such a painful spanking? His hand on her back was so gentle and comforting, and his voice so full of concern. And her poor bottom was on fire, attesting to the fact that his hand was not gentle all the time! She finally started breathing easier, and she was able to speak. “Let go of me, you rotten—” She twisted until she got free and stood up to face him, “—bastard!”

“Do you want another dose of spanking, little girl? I wasn’t ready to stop just yet, when this old-timer said you couldn’t catch your breath. I reckon putting you back over my knee wouldn’t hurt one darn thing... except your sassy butt!” he added meaningfully.

“Don’t you dare think you can put your hands on me, Prentiss! I won’t have it, and right now I’d just as soon shoot you as look at you!” Her temper was in full force once again.

“I’ll put my hands on you until you can’t sit for a month of Sundays if you don’t calm down, Miss Compton. I’ve heard enough cursing from you, too. Your father thinks you are a

helpless lady, aching from a broken heart; and you need to change out of those clothes and into something suitable for a lady. I'm taking you home, and we'll be catching the stage coach in the morning."

She looked at him like he was a raving lunatic. "Mr. Prentiss, you must be the most gullible man ever created! Harrison Compton doesn't care about anything except making more money to go with what he already has. He's a good actor, until you get to know him, and then you will see a shallow man who hasn't had a real emotion in fifty-three years. He ran off my two older brothers, and I managed to escape his notice until I was sixteen years old. The only reason he wants me to return to him is so he can marry me off to some eastern dude who has more money than good sense. I am not going back there, Mr. Prentiss, and you might as well accept that and move on." She saw her gun lying on the floor, and she grabbed it up and headed on out the door, leaving him kneeling there and looking after her.

"Is she always so sassy?" Sid asked the old-timer and the store clerk as he rose to his feet to tower over them.

"Sassy? That was downright civil for Miss Serenity," the old-timer declared.

"Aw, Gus, Miss Serenity is *always* nice to me," Bill, the store clerk, said defensively.

"Cause you're sweet on her, Bill," Gus chortled.

"Gus, that there ain't funny! I got me a wife and four kids!" Bill said angrily.

"An' you forgit all about 'em when Miss Serenity is near."

"Where does she live?" Sid inserted the question before Bill could argue any more with Gus.

"She has a room over to the Widow Oswald's boarding house."

Sid nodded his thanks and then walked on out of the store, before it occurred to him that he didn't have the first clue where the boarding house was located! He stopped by the sheriff's office to make sure the man knew that he was operating under instructions from Serenity's father, and showed the man the documents to prove it.

"I thought Miss Serenity was of age," the sheriff stated, shaking his graying head. "I guess you need to do what her Pa said and take her on home. She shouldn't be out here hunting bounties when she has a Pa ready and willing to take care of her!"

"Her father is very worried about her, and I can see why." He asked for directions to the Widow Oswald's boarding house, and the sheriff told him. Sid walked the short distance,

knocked on the door, and when the widow came to the door, he said, "I'm here to see Miss Compton, ma'am."

"I'm sorry, sir, but she left town about half an hour ago."

"Did she tell you where she was going?" he asked politely, sensing the woman was frightened of him.

"Why, yes. She's headed over to Jubilee, and doesn't know when she'll be back. She just asks me to hold her room, and since she pays me well in advance, I am happy to do that for her. She is a good, quiet boarder, and she's not picky about what I cook to eat, unlike some people I could mention."

"Thank you, ma'am," he replied, hurrying down the steps to the porch and heading for where he'd left Hardhead.