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# OPAL FROM OMAHA

Operation Big Rock Brides Book Two

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Opal from Omaha

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.  
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## Chapter 1

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### *Big Rock, Wyoming Territory, 1885*

**T**he Ladies' Aid Society of Big Rock came to order at the sound of Harriet Smithers' whistle. She'd discovered it was the best way to get their attention.

"Ladies, ladies, we have a new prospective groom, Henry Tucker, and we've narrowed down the list of appropriate matches for him to two different young women. As you all know, our first couple match was a rousing success—" Her sentence was cut off by whoops and applause from the group. She smiled but held up her hands to get them to quiet down. "—a rousing success for Angus Kelly and his wife Nessa. His partner, Henry, wants us to find a wife for him. I guess he doesn't want Angus to be the only lucky man at the sawmill."

"You mean the only man at the sawmill getting lucky," said Bethie Hickam.

Harriet allowed them all to giggle and snicker at that. "We've narrowed down the selections to Opal McAllister, a friend of Amy Larkin's, from Omaha, and Lacy Holt, a woman from Lincoln, Nebraska who is a friend of Molly McBride. Henry is a

fairly quiet man and prefers a woman who isn't given to childish silliness. He appreciates intelligence, a sense of humor, and honesty as the qualities he most desires in a spouse." Harriet smiled wryly at the group. "He made the comment that he'd never have agreed to a mail order bride if it hadn't been for seeing what we did for his friend Angus. You have it there, ladies, success begets success. Let's have another success!"

That stirred up another round of applause and yells that in any other setting would have seemed inappropriate for ladies.

"You've all read the information about these two prospective brides. I'm going to present them both to Henry, but I'm going to suggest that he write to Opal first. Does everyone agree with that? She seems right for him somehow. I'm just afraid Lacy, being a bit younger, might not yet have the maturity Henry is interested in."

All in the group nodded their agreement. "I'm sure we have a younger single man in town who might be interested in Lacy," Bethie said.

"We do indeed," Harriet said as she smiled. "I'm meeting with him after I speak with Henry. Now for the next order of business. Mrs. Worthy has taken sick and we need to organize and plan for food to be taken to them for the next few days. She's got those four sweet children and you know her husband's useless in the kitchen."

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Henry Tucker headed for Mary's Restaurant to meet with Harriet Smithers. He had lingering doubts about the whole mail order bride plan, but he'd given his word and would never back out of at least giving it a try. He knew he wasn't obligated to marry; he could always provide fare for her to return home if it didn't work out when they met in person. Or they might be able to find a suitable match for the young woman from among other

bachelors in town. That thought, that fail-safe, stayed in the back of his mind and comforted him.

"Hello, Henry," Harriet said as he sat down at her table. She had already ordered coffees for them both.

"Good evenin', Miz Smithers."

"Call me Harriet; everyone else does."

He smiled. "All right then, Harriet."

"I have two possible candidates who I believe match your wish list. And I'm very confident about one of them. She's a young lady from Omaha, a friend of Amy Larkin; you know, the sheriff's wife."

"How young is she?" Henry didn't want what he considered a child bride.

"I believe she's almost thirty. Is that too old for you?"

He laughed. "I'm on the middlin' to high end of the thirties myself, Miz Harriet. Her age is fine. I'd just rather not have a wife I could have theoretically fathered. At the risk of sounding too selective, most women I've met don't get interesting until they've lived a while."

She gave a low laugh. "Well, that's refreshing. Many men want them young."

"Thirty is still young. Hell, I'm still young." He grinned. "So, tell me about this lady you like for me."

"Her name is Opal McAllister. She currently works as a secretary to an attorney, has for nearly ten years now. Her parents are deceased; she lives with her brother and his wife. She's never been married but was engaged once. Her fiancé was taken by yellow fever six years ago."

"I'm sorry to hear that. It must have been painful for her."

Harriet looked up at him. "Yes, I'm sure it was. But there comes a time when mourning has to be set aside so we can move on and enjoy life. I believe that's where Opal is now, and where she's been for a time. Here's what we have in mind for Miss Opal. Amy would like to see her old friend, so she and the sheriff

would like for Miss Opal to stay with them in their home until such a time as she gets married."

She flashed Henry a big grin. "Of course, that's where you come in. Amy wanted her to come right away and simply live as their guest until she found a husband, but Miss Opal wasn't comfortable with that. She said she'd feel as though she were being marketed to the highest bidder. So, we'd like for you to go ahead and write to her, exchange a few letters, and see what you think of each other. I think you'll know very quickly if she's someone you might be interested in. You might also consider going to visit with Amy and finding out all you can about Miss Opal before you write that first letter. It could give you a better foundation for your comments."

"I like that idea. I'll head over to the sheriff's office when I leave here and see about dropping in to visit Amy this evening."

"Wonderful!" Harriet handed Henry a printed list of things to discuss in his introductory letter. "This will help, too. These are things a woman wants to know. So talk about these things and add as many other comments as you'd like about yourself, and be sure to ask her questions. You want her response to have as much information and insight into her character and personality as does your letter. Have fun with composing it."

Henry took the list. "I'll do that, Miz Harriet."

He said his good bye and headed for the sheriff's office.

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"Amy, I can't tell you how much I appreciate a good home-cooked meal. I guess technically mine are home-cooked, but they aren't nearly as good as yours," Henry said as he wiped his mouth.

"Then you'll be pleased to know that Opal is a good cook, too. Her pies win prizes. And she and her mother taught me how to make fudge, so that should tell you something."

"I understand her parents are gone now."

"Yes, several years ago. A buggy accident took them both. It affected Opal and her brother deeply at the time. But that was a long time ago. Wounds heal."

"I was hoping you could tell me things about Miss Opal, things about her personality and her character. I'd like to get to know her in a sense before I write to her. It may help me—I'm not big on writing about myself."

"Why the hell not?" the sheriff asked. "You sure aren't shy." He chuckled as he poured Henry some whiskey.

Henry laughed. "No, not shy, but I don't usually talk about myself so much." He shifted in his chair and leaned his hulking body over, placing his elbows on his knees as he turned his attention to focus solely on Amy. "What kind of man was her fiancé?"

Amy blew out a deep breath, remembering. "He was nice as I recall. Attractive looking, brown hair, average height, pleasant smile. Seems like his family had a small dairy farm. I remember he made deliveries sometimes when his younger brother wasn't able to. I think that's how they met. He struck me as a quiet fellow by nature, but friendly enough."

"What about Opal's personality?"

Amy smiled. "Opal was always the good girl. There were a few times I coerced her into sneaking out at night and going for walks with me. Nothing wild, but it probably wasn't the safest thing to do, in retrospect. Her mother and father would have had her hide! They were pretty protective of her. She didn't like it, but she really wasn't one to rebel much. Just our moonlight walks. She's reserved until she gets to know someone well. Then she loves to talk."

"She's a talker?" Henry asked, hiding his concern. He was definitely not attracted to silly babblers.

"We used to talk about everything. She liked philosophy. She loved reading all the philosophers. And mythology! I don't know how many hours we spent discussing Greek and Roman mythol-

ogy, and some other lesser known myths from around the world. New ideas, too. She read every newspaper or periodical she could get her hands on and she liked to discuss current affairs."

"That sounds interesting to me," Henry said with a little awe in his voice. "Sounds like I'm going to have to start reading a bit more. I've gotten out of the habit since I moved out here."

Amy laughed. "You can ask her to read them to you. She has all the books. Oh, and once she knows you well, she'll unleash her sense of humor. Wicked." She shook her head. "Wicked funny."

Henry nodded his head and smiled tentatively. "A good girl who can be enticed into mischief. This woman sounds like someone I'd like to know. *Need* to know. I think I'll enjoy her company."

"I'm sure you will. She was my best friend for years. I consider that she still is, though I haven't seen her since I moved here. That's why I want her to stay with us until she's married. I can't wait to see her again."

"You know Harriet suggested that we write to each other before she comes out here. I'll post a letter tomorrow. Maybe I'll get a response in two or three weeks, if all goes well between here and Omaha, and she writes as soon as she gets my letter."

"Yes, I'm sure she will. She's probably as eager as you are. Now go home this minute and write tonight!" Amy said, laughing.

He did.

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*Dear Miss Opal,*

*Please allow me to introduce myself: I'm Henry Tucker from Big Rock. I'm thirty seven years old. My business partner found his wife through a mail order bride process and their happy success has inspired me to try to find a wonderful woman to be my wife, too.*



Opal from Omaha

*Mrs. Harriet Smithers was excited to share your information with me; she thinks we would be a perfect match. When I talked with Amy Larkin, she described your personality and interests. Now I'm even more eager to get to know you.*

*I'm about six feet tall, with dark hair and brown eyes. At the moment, I'm clean-shaven, but sometimes in the fall and winter I like to grow a beard.*

*I was raised in a sparsely populated area west of here, in northern Nevada. My grandfather was one of the first settlers there. Years ago, he and my grandmother came in a wagon train, bound for the coast, but as they traveled through a particularly breathtaking area, several of the families decided to settle there. Life was hard for them, but they persevered and carved out a contented life. As is always the case with generations, my father's life was easier because of the efforts of my grandfather. By the time I came along, there were more settlements within traveling distance, and the railroad brought with it more civilized amenities as I grew older.*

*My business partner, Angus Kelly, and I own a sawmill and a furniture manufacturing concern. We make all sorts of wooden and upholstered furniture. Woodworking is something I learned from my father, and I still enjoy it. When I have spare time, I can often be found working on projects in my workshop.*

*I believe I'm fair-minded, and it's fair to say our employees would agree. I've made many friends here in Big Rock. I've been here for nearly three years. It's a fine little town; I think it would be a good place to raise a family. I have a home on the edge of town. If the town keeps growing as it has, it might not be the edge for very long.*

*My house is only meagerly furnished. I suppose I've subconsciously been waiting for a wife to put her touches on it. I have only the furniture I've found necessary. I have a table and six chairs in the kitchen, a couch, end table, and coffee table in the parlor, and a bed, nightstand, and wardrobe in the bedroom. I'm proud to say that all of it was made in our factory. I look forward to having a wife make a warm and inviting home of this place.*

*The kitchen is fully furnished with items that belonged to my late mother. If we pursue this union between us, you are welcome to cull any items you don't wish to keep and add items of your own, or purchase new ones. I would*

want it to be yours to do with as you please. I'll be happy to bow out of the food preparation arena to the extent that you wish. I have a feeling that once you witness my culinary abilities, you'll prefer it that way. Perhaps you could teach me. I'll warn you, my mother wasn't successful in doing so. Amy told me you make prizewinning pies. I look forward to those!

My businesses provide well for me, and my income is reliable. I understand you work now, but there is no financial reason that you should have to after we marry. My preference would be to have a wife to keep my home, but if you wish to continue working and there is a position in town that interests you, we can certainly discuss it. My goal is to have a happy wife.

Amy shared with me that you love discussing philosophy and mythology and subjects such as that. That enthralled me! These things interest me, too, along with religion, politics, and advances in science and medicine. I would dearly love to have a wife who enjoys such discussions.

Most Sundays, I attend our Methodist church here in town. It's the only church there is in our community. I grew up with the religious teaching of my parents; we didn't live near a church, so I never attended one until I was nearly grown. I would call their views similar to Methodist leanings. I suppose that's the benefit of being taught the Bible outside of an organized theology. As an adult, having observed other religions, I realize my parents did a sort of theological "pick and choose" when it came to my spiritual upbringing.

My parents had a wonderful marriage, and I believe, as a result, I had a mostly happy childhood. The only thing that might have improved it would have been having a sibling.

Mrs. Smithers asked me to think about what I want in a marriage and what I want my future to be like. Miss Opal, as I've gone through the exercise of writing this introduction letter, I've been forced to examine my life. I now realize how lonely it is.

I want a wife whom I love abundantly in all ways: intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. I want a relationship where we both feel loved, secure, supported, and cherished. I want a close, intimate bond with my partner in life. A man in love once told me he knew whenever his lover entered the room, whether he saw her or not. He felt her presence. Lord

Opal from Omaha

*willing, I want a connection that close. I hesitated even sharing that with you for fear of appearing to be a hopeless romantic. I don't normally think of such things, much less speak of them.*

*What kind of marriage and future do you imagine when you allow yourself to daydream of the perfect one?*

*I eagerly await your thoughts. Please tell me every little thing about you!*

*Sincerely yours,  
Henry Tucker*

Henry read the letter over and over before deciding he probably couldn't improve it much. He realized if there was something he left out, he could include it in the next letter.