

# WYLD WOMAN

TEXAS TIME TRAVEL BOOK THREE



VICTORIA PHELPS

BLUSHING BOOKS

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## CHAPTER 1



ELLEN

“Oh, for heaven’s sake! Don’t be such a scaredy-cat.” Ellen narrowed her eyes, propped both fists on slim hips and glared at her best friend. Melinda returned her glare and raised her a well-heaved sigh.

“Ellen, you know what they say about the river.” Melinda spoke slowly as if to a small, slightly backward child.

Ellen’s curtain of long blond hair swung as she nodded her head. “Who are *they* exactly, and since when do we every care what *they* say?” She pulled a kitchen chair from the table and lowered her long body to the seat. At five feet, ten inches, Ellen was accustomed to being the tallest girl in the room, and she was fine with it. But she wanted to look her five feet, two-inch friend in the eye.

“They, well, *they* are everyone. That place on the river is haunted. *Everyone* knows to stay away. Especially on nights with meteor showers. Goodness, Ellen, you should be more worried than anyone. It was your cousins who disappeared.” Melinda closed her mouth with a self-satisfied click.

“How ridiculous. People don’t disappear. It’s a coincidence that it was a starry night when they were last seen. A folktale. A legend. A story to scare little kids around a campfire. Amanda and Marcie are somewhere—enjoying themselves on a beach or living off the land in the Alaskan wilderness. They are somewhere. *Everyone* has to be *somewhere*. Someday, they’re going to roll into town and have a good laugh at a bunch of country bumpkins who were afraid of a river and a bright sky.” Ellen rolled her ice-blue eyes.

“Ok, but why tonight? Why can’t we camp by the river another night when there won’t be a meteor storm, and it isn’t so cold?” Melinda looked up through dark lashes at the determined set of her friend’s jaw.

Ellen rolled her eyes a second time and added a shoulder shrug. She hoped she wouldn’t need to resort to loud, pained sighs. “You know why. It’s New Year’s Eve, 1989. It’s the start of a new decade, and my eighteenth birthday – three good reasons why tonight. And next year we will be away at school. Come on, Melinda. I want to do something different—something daring and crazy. Besides, the river is not haunted. What a bunch of malarkey.”

“Wyld woman. The name certainly fits. You want to be daring and crazy, but the result is always the same.” Melinda wiped her damp palms on the legs of her jeans. “We sneak out after curfew to meet some boys. I get spanked. We skip school to swim in the river. I get spanked. We set your kitchen on fire when we forget the cookies in the oven. I get spanked. My dad says if I don’t stop letting you lead me into trouble, he’s going to take his belt to my backside. And I know he would think *this* is a bad idea. If I asked him for permission, he would say no.” She gulped. “And what happens to you? Your brother sighs. He looks disappointed. He might even glare.”

A flash of guilt crossed Ellen’s eyes. “Okay. It’s true my brother isn’t big on discipline. But we won’t get caught. Tell your parents we plan to order a pizza and watch a movie. That’s the absolute truth. Then we’ll take our sleeping bags down to the river. Instead

of fireworks, party horns, and popping champagne corks, we'll watch the heavens explode."

Melinda's shoulders sagged in resignation. "All right. But if we get caught, and I get spanked, I will never forgive you, Ellen Wyld. Never."

Ellen threw her arms around her friend and hugged her. "Thank you. Thank you, Melinda. It will be such fun. We'll take pictures to prove we slept out by the scary old river on a starry night and lived to tell the tale. Ha. We'll be the talk of the school."

"As long as my dad doesn't hear about it, Ellen. Don't be a big showoff." Melinda frowned.

"Okay. I'll just show Jeff Johnson. I told him I planned to spend New Year's Eve out here, and he wouldn't come. Too chicken." Ellen gave a dismissive snort. "Disappear, my foot."