
THE CAMPING COWBOY

Western Camping - Book Two

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

Chapter 1

Wyatt Masters once again glanced over at Marci Andrews, sitting in the passenger's seat next to him in his pickup. The cute little filly with the cowgirl hat perched on her head and the cowgirl boots on her feet was adorable, but awfully quiet, which he understood. She had a lot to think about and adjust to.

So much had changed in both their lives since they met just four months ago. In the last three days, though, she learned that her sister, Penny, and Penny's husband, Mark, whom she was very close to, were moving to Georgia. That meant the sisters would be selling the house they grew up in and now owned together since their parents' deaths. Then two days later she'd been laid off from her job. That was a lot to absorb in three days.

But then they'd had a long talk, wherein he'd told her he hoped to make her his wife some day, when she was ready. She'd agreed, and now here they were, in his pickup following Mark and Penny to Hopewell, Georgia. He took a moment to think back to how they'd gotten to this point.

The two of them had met when Mark and Penny convinced Marci to go camping with them one weekend. She had never

been camping and had never wanted to go camping, but Penny had been persistent. Marci and Wyatt had hit it off instantly, thanks in part to the cowboy hats and boots they both normally wore. It hadn't take long for a serious relationship to develop. She'd started going camping with Mark and Penny every weekend, and Wyatt had begun making the hour trip to her house once or twice during the week to see her and take her to dinner.

Wyatt had encouraged her to try fishing with him, and over time she'd become an avid fan of camping, like him. The two of them had become very close. He knew Marci was the lady he'd been waiting to meet his whole life, and planned on making her his wife, but she wasn't ready yet.

She'd lived in Texas for a time, and had been hurt by a man named Cord. He'd convinced her he loved her and talked her into buying a car for him to drive. He claimed his credit was bad because he'd gotten divorced and had to file bankruptcy. He now had a better job, though, and assured her he would make all the payments and pay for the insurance. It would be in her name until he paid it off, then she would switch it to his name. However, he never paid a thing on it. When he stole her credit card and ran up a large bill, she knew she'd been had and kicked him to the curb.

Unfortunately, he refused to return the car. She found out if she stopped making the payments they would repossess the car and sell it, but she would still be liable for the difference, plus it would ruin her credit. But more importantly, if he was stopped for a traffic violation or had an accident and didn't have insurance on the car, she would lose her driver's license for a year because as the owner it was considered her responsibility to keep the car insured. Therefore, she paid the payments and kept insurance on it, even though she didn't even know where it was, until he was in an accident and it was totaled. Fortunately, the insurance company paid her for the car, since it was in her name, and she was able to pay it off and put the ordeal behind her.

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Or so she thought. Just a few weeks ago she and Wyatt had been out on his boat and his fish finder found what they thought was a car in the lake. The men that had stolen it used it to rob a jewelry store, then rolled it into the lake, were in the area and watched as Wyatt, Marci and Mark went back to the spot with snorkeling gear to investigate. When they realized it was indeed a car, and a fairly new one, they told the officials. The car was pulled out of the lake and an investigation was begun.

The men had just rolled the car off the bank and into the lake the evening before, and when Mark and Penny found it that quickly they assumed they'd seen them do it. They followed them and sent Wyatt a threatening note to keep his mouth shut. When Marci got a threatening note they assumed it was from these same people. They took extra precautions and made sure Marci was never alone. She stayed with Penny and Mark.

The police caught the two responsible for the car in the lake, and Marci and Wyatt relaxed and she moved back home. However, the next day the police found out that although they had sent the note to Wyatt, they'd sent nothing to Marci. Wyatt called her right away to tell her she needed to move back in with Penny and Mark until they found out who sent her notes, but she didn't answer her phone, and hadn't shown up at work.

An all-out search was begun instantly involving the sheriff's department that handled the sunken car case, and the local police department where she worked. With the help of Wyatt, Penny and Mark they found her in the trunk of a car, scared but unharmed. It turned out to be a cousin of Cord's that had kidnapped her. Cord had told the family she stole the car, and his cousin, Jason, thought he was getting even.

The whole incident was terrifically scary, but served to bring the two of them closer together. They realized then how much love they had for each other. Wyatt had been tossing around the idea of buying or starting a campground, and was now thinking he wanted to own one with Marci, and thought a cowboy theme

would be perfect for them. Although he knew Marci was the lady he wanted to marry, he knew she wasn't ready yet. She was still having a hard time trusting people, and after her ordeal with Cord he certainly could understand that.

When Mark and Penny announced Mark had an opportunity for a promotion, but it would involve them moving to Georgia, they were torn. Marci had just been through the kidnapping, and they hated to leave her. Marci didn't want them to turn down the opportunity because of her. Two days later she was told the company where she'd worked for the last nine years since graduating from college, had been sold and they were eliminating her entire department. She was being laid off.

She was devastated. Wyatt, of course, was there for her and vowed to help her through it. After thinking about it, he saw it as a possible opportunity. He opened his heart to her, telling her he loved her and felt she was the woman he wanted to marry some day, but knew she needed time to get past Cord. He assured her he was willing to give her as much time as she needed and wouldn't rush her, but he needed to know if she had any similar feelings toward him. When she told him she loved him, as well, and was very much open to marrying him someday, he told her about his idea of them owning a cowboy-themed campground together.

She loved the idea, and when he suggested since he worked from home as a computer consultant, they could move to Georgia with Mark and Penny and look for a campground down there, she was elated. She had been given fifteen weeks severance pay, so she didn't need to be in too big of a hurry to look for another job, so they decided to go down to Georgia and look into the possibility. That was how they'd gotten to this point, with her sitting next to him in his pickup, following Mark and Penny to Hopewell, Georgia.

That was a lot for anyone to digest in such a short time, but Marci was handling it all better than he would have expected

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anyone to. It reminded him yet again how special his little cowgirl was and how lucky he was to have her in his life. Although she seemed to be doing pretty well taking all this in, he was still concerned and keeping a close eye on her.

Several times during the trip he noticed Marci staring aimlessly ahead, and it worried him. She had to be a little overwhelmed by what all was happening and how quickly things were changing, and he was trying to give her the time she needed to come to grips with it all. He stayed close to her, wanting to be sure she knew he was the one constant in her life that wasn't going to change. Well, their relationship was changing, he had to admit, but they were becoming closer and had now begun to talk about marriage in their future. She seemed to be happy with the idea, which was a relief to him and had him ecstatic.

He reached over and patted her hand. "Are you ready to look at some campgrounds? Hopefully we can find one for sale that's what we're looking for," he said, trying to get her to open up a bit.

"Honestly, I'm thinking I need to get a job soon. I love the idea of owning a campground, but until I have a full-time job, I won't have money to make any payments, and until we sell the house I won't have any money for a down payment. A bank won't lend me any money without a job, either."

"A campground is something I want for us, the two of us together. I think it's very appropriate for us, especially with a cowboy theme. Don't worry about the money. When we're married everything will become ours together anyway."

She looked over at him and he could tell she had something on her mind. "Honey, I don't want to keep any secrets from you. Ask whatever it is you want to ask."

"I'm not sure it's any of my business."

"Marci, I hope to make you my wife soon, so of course it's your business. Go ahead and ask."

"Once again, you don't seem concerned about the money.

Are you independently wealthy and haven't mentioned that to me, or what makes you seem so sure we, or I should say you can get a loan to buy a campground and totally redo it or add onto it?"

He smiled over at her before sighing and patting her knee again. "I'm sorry, Marci, I should have talked to you about money before this. No, I'm not independently wealthy, or at least I'm not according to my definition of that phrase. I'm not doing bad, though, with my consulting company. It's been more than sufficient for me to live how I want to live. The money I've gotten from trying the new products has all gone into a savings account, so I have a little savings there. I have a trust account from my grandparents, though, and that's what I had planned on using to buy the campground."

"A trust account?"

"Yes. My grandparents lived in the city, but wanted to move out in the country. They bought some land just outside of town for a good price, and planned on building a house on some of it and selling the rest. Then he inherited a ranch from an uncle. He moved onto it and ran the ranch."

"Is that the ranch you worked on?"

"Yep. I worked there every summer during high school and college. I loved it and wanted to work there full time after high school, but he insisted I go on to college. He was right, because as much as I loved the ranch, and part of me always will," he said as he tipped his cowboy hat, "I discovered I'm pretty darn good with computers, and as sad as it is, there's more of a future in that."

"Well, I'm glad you got to spend the time on his ranch. It made you into the cowboy I've met and fallen in love with. Now, I'm sorry I distracted you. So what happened with the land he bought?"

"He forgot about the land until a man showed up at his door one day and offered him a huge amount of money for it."

“Why did he want it so bad?”

“He had a factory that was doing well and he wanted to expand. However, the town itself had expanded so much that this was the only land around town that was large enough for what they needed. They paid way more than Grandpa had paid. That money is what is now my trust account.”

“Are you sure you want to use that for the down payment for a campground?”

“It's a good sized trust account. Grandpa always believed in investing money and making it work for you, but he wasn't big on the stock market. He felt real estate was a safer investment, and a profitable business was even better. So to honor him, I've been thinking about what kind of real estate or business I could invest the money in. I don't see how investing in something you know nothing about can be a good investment, but the things I know something about are computers and programming, which is why I have a business in that field, and camping and other outdoor activities.”

“So this is a good fit,” she finished.

“I'm hoping so. But since I've met you, this is something I want for us. We met through camping, and it's how we've gotten to know each other. Once I first thought of the idea of buying one I've been looking into them and what they've been selling for. I found themed campgrounds are becoming popular. Since this is something I want for us together, the theme was a no brainer. This would be investing in something we both know and love.”

“But all the money we would be risking would be yours.”

“But it's something I want to do, if you're at my side and we're doing it together. I've said several times that you're a very intelligent lady, and I mean that. I value your opinion a great deal, and you think of things I don't. I think we're not only a good match, but we make a good team in many ways, and I think this is one of them. I think my grandfather would agree, and he'd be happy to see me investing it in something I know

about, and bringing in the beautiful, intelligent lady I love to help me.”

“So, are you saying you have enough money for more than the down payment?”

“I have enough to pay for an average campground that's up and running. We'll look for one we like and go from there, but yes, I have enough to pay for the majority, if not all. If we have to borrow a little bit, it shouldn't be a problem. So, please tell me you're in with me on this?”

“I feel bad about not having any money to donate to it, but if you're sure you want to do this, I love the idea, and I promise I'll do everything I can to help with it.”

“That's all I ask. Thank you. I'm glad we talked about this now, so I know you're on board with me when we start looking at them.” He switched the conversation over to what they felt they should look for in a campground.

ONCE THEY GOT to Hopewell and checked into their three rooms they had reserved at a hotel, they went for a walk around town. The company Mark worked for was a manufacturing facility, with the main office and factory in Pennsylvania. They had two other smaller facilities, though, one of which was in Hopewell. He would be managing that facility. Hopewell was a small to medium-sized town, but this manufacturing facility was the largest employer in the area. He had been the assistant manager at the larger facility, but moving up to manager here he was sure would be a challenge. He looked forward to it, however.

Wyatt and Marci had done some searching on the Internet and found four campgrounds within a couple hours of Hopewell. In talking to a realtor, however, they were told of two additional ones, both smaller and privately owned, that didn't seem to appear anywhere on the Internet, which seemed

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odd to them. One they were told was owned by an older couple that didn't believe in newfangled computers. The other one was for sale and in need of some restoration. The couple who bought it years ago moved out of state and hired a man to run it. This man did only what was necessary, and nothing more.

This campground held some interest to Wyatt and Marci, and they asked more questions about it. The more they heard about it, the more interested they were becoming. At one time it had been a thriving, prosperous place. The owners had big plans and dreams, and bought surrounding land so they could expand sometime in the future if it did well.

The wife's parents had been in a terrible accident, however, and they moved back to be able to help them, both physically and with the small store they owned and operated. Although her parents were improving, it became evident they would never be able to run the store again themselves. At the same time, their monthly checks from the campground had diminished to nothing, so they made the trip back to check on it. They were shocked and saddened when they saw how much the man they'd hired to run it had let it decline. It would take time to rebuild it, and they would have to move back there to do it. They didn't want to leave her parents alone, plus their kids had started school now and didn't want to leave their friends, so they decided instead to list the campground for sale.

Wyatt and Marci made arrangements to visit it their first full day in Hopewell. They were eager to see it and the potential they both felt sure it had. The realtor warned them it was pretty run down, and she certainly hadn't lied about that. It needed a lot of work. However, there were good bones. For a small, private campground it had two nice lakes. One was large, much larger than they anticipated. It had been used for fishing and small boats like canoes and kayaks. The smaller one was for swimming. There was also a small grocery store, which also needed some

work, and a house where the owners had lived. Like everything else, it needed work.

But what Wyatt liked most about the campground was the unused land with it. Only about a third of the land was currently being utilized. They took some pictures and went back to the hotel to talk about it. When Mark and Penny got back later that afternoon they were excited, as well. They'd looked at several houses, but one stood out to them. They also had pictures, and Wyatt and Marci agreed it looked great.

The next day the four of them went as a group to look at the house Mark and Penny liked. Then they went as a group to look at the campground. They went back to the hotel with a lot to talk about. A good discussion over dinner helped them reach some important decisions. They all agreed the house was perfect for them, and was a good price. It had just come on the market and they didn't think it would last long at that price, so they decided to make an offer the next day on it.

There was more to talk about the campground. After seeing the condition of it, Mark was concerned. "There is a ton of work to be done to that. Would you keep it open while doing it, or close it?"

"I would close it, totally revamp it, and have a grand opening," Wyatt said with no hesitation. "If people saw it the way it is now they probably wouldn't come back."

"I agree, but it's hard to make payments on something when there's no money coming in," Mark said. "Will banks lend money on something that won't have any income for an extended time? How long would it take to get it ready to open?"

"That would depend on what all we did before reopening, and I'd have to talk to Marci about that. There are a lot of things I'd like to do above and beyond repairing what's already there, and my preference would be to do it all at once, and advertise the whole new package for the grand opening." He turned to Marci. "If you'd rather we simply repair things and open, then continue

adding on and improving, I'm certainly open to hearing why you feel that way."

"I think it depends a little bit on the numbers, how much they'll sell it for and how much the repairs cost," Marci said. "I think we should do at least some of the additions you want to make, if the money is available. What all things would you want to add?"

"Some of these things I'm sure won't surprise you because we've talked about them a little already, but some might not be what you were expecting. I'd like to make some changes to the lakes."

"Wait," Marci said, staring at Wyatt. "How do you change a lake?"

"And why?" Mark added.

"Hear me out and then see what you think. The big lake is pretty good size, but I'd like to make it bigger." He ignored Mark's wide eyes and continued. "It's big enough for canoes, kayaks, and would even be big enough for a few small pontoon boats or smaller boats for fishing, but I'm not sure if it's big enough to do any skiing or tubing. Maybe on a very limited scale."

"But it would —"

"Hear me out. There's enough room for a few boats, but it would be hard to limit it to five or six. If we doubled the size of it, though, and we have plenty of land to do it, we could easily put four or five pontoons and four or five boats for tubing, and still have plenty of room to safely have kayaks and canoes, maybe in a sheltered area."

Mark looked skeptical. "But then you'd have to limit it, maybe first come, first serve, and you'd have to put in a ramp and parking lot for the trailers."

"Not the way I'm thinking of doing it. I thought we could have the boats there for rent, with no outside boats allowed. Now you don't need a ramp to put boats in and out of the water, you

don't need a parking lot for the trailers, you can control the number of boats on the lake and you have a source of income."

Mark and Penny smiled, while Marci leaned over to give Wyatt a kiss. "Brilliant idea," she said.

"If we want to make the lake bigger yet we could rent out a few docks to people who rent a camp site for the whole season. We'd need a boat ramp, but tell them up front they have to put their boat in the water, and store the trailer at their house until it's time to take the boat out in the fall. Then we wouldn't need parking for the trailers, and could still limit the number of boats on the lake. That way if people have their own boat and want to camp someplace where they can dock their boat so they have it when they're camping, they could."

"That is good thinking," Mark agreed. "If someone's operating a boat in an unsafe manner you'll know who it is. If they don't straighten up after you talk to them you can kick them out if they're docked here, or not rent to them again."

"Good point," Marci said.

"That could also be another thing to draw people to that campground as opposed to another one," Mark said. "Most smaller camping facilities don't allow boats with a motor because the lake's not big enough. People who like to ski, but don't have a boat of their own will love it. Also people who camp for the season and have a boat so they can ski, but don't like the crowds you can get at larger public lakes, will also love it."

"And by doing that you're not ever going to have too many boats you're trying to watch out for, like we've seen," Marci said. "My favorite times out in the boat have been later on Sunday evening before we leave, or when I stay over Monday, because the lake's not so crowded."

"Another good point," Penny said. "I like that idea real well, but how do you add on to a lake, and how expensive is it to do? I mean, will it be worth it?"

"The easiest way is to dig another lake beside it, leaving a

narrow strip between them. Once it's ready to go, then you take out that strip between them. It takes a while to let the new larger lake fill up then, so we should do that first, so it can be filling while we do the rest of the changes.”

“Okay, I like that idea,” Marci said. “What else you got?”

Wyatt laughed at his feisty little partner before answering. “I'd like to add to the number of camp sites, which could bring in more money, and to go along with more campers, I think we should make the store bigger. I want to make it quite a bit bigger, though, and in addition to more groceries I'd like to offer some of the products we've tested once they're on the market, but I also want to offer some western wear and cowboy hats.”

“I like that idea,” Penny said. “If people don't know it's a cowboy theme when they get there, if they want to get into the spirit of the place, they can.”

“And you can make a little money when they do,” Mark added. “You've thought this through, I can tell, Wyatt.”

“I like that idea, too,” Marci said. “Anything else you have planned?”

“Horses. You can't have cowboys and cowgirls without horses. We would have plenty of land to put in a barn for them and a pasture. We can put in a corral for beginning riders and make some trails through the woods and around the lakes. We'll have to hire a couple people to take care of them and help people put saddles on, maybe even lead kids on a couple real tame horses.”

“That will draw people in for sure,” Mark said. “People that like horses will want to go there just for them, and if kids know they can get a ride on a pony they'll want to go there all the time.”

“That's what I'm hoping,” Wyatt said.

“Maybe later on we could think about getting a couple wagons or buggies,” Marci suggested.

Wyatt's head snapped around to look at her, smiling. “What

kind of wagons?”

“Well, maybe a buggy for a romantic ride for a couple, and I thought maybe something that looks like an old Conestoga wagon would be fun for families, and it would be keeping with the cowboys. Old time cowboys, but still cowboys.”

“I like both of those ideas,” he said, giving her a hug. “You’ve obviously been giving this some thought, too, so I guess I should ask, do you have any more ideas?”

“Maybe one or two,” she said with a grin. “One’s fairly straightforward. I think we should enhance the swimming area a little bit. Put a little slide for little kids in shallow water, and a bigger slide out a little deeper. Then maybe a dive dock to swim out to and jump off of, or maybe a different kind of thing, like something that sucks water in and sprays it out, or the buckets that fill up and dump out. You know, something to give the kids something to do. I also think the beach part at most lakes needs more sand for the kids to play in.”

“I agree with the sand, a bigger sandy area for kids to play in, and I like the idea of adding entertainment in the swimming area,” Wyatt said. “People who like to swim and play in water will love it. Any other ideas?”

“Well, now that you asked,” she said with a grin, “I did have one other idea, but I don’t know if it’s possible or how expensive it would be. Can you put up some kind of outdoor screen, like to show movies? I thought maybe people might like to watch old westerns while wearing their cowboy attire. We could also see about other cowboy themed shows, more modern ones, or maybe skip the cowboy theme and show some cartoons for the kids?”

Wyatt and Mark looked at each other, both of them obviously thinking. “I think we could do that without too much expense,” Wyatt said eventually, “and I like the idea. All we’ll really need for a screen is something big and white. We should be able to get some wood and build something sturdy enough to

withstand the weather. Then we can paint it white and it should be good. I'm sure we can get some kind of projector to use with CD's."

"Oh, I'm sure," Mark agreed. "And once you get it, it wouldn't take that much to start a movie, but would provide people with another form of entertainment to choose from, and another thing to draw people to your campground. It would be like the old drive-in movies, but it would be a walk in. I like it."

"Parents might like the idea of a movie in the evening to help calm their kids down after a busy day," Penny suggested. "If you let people bring their own blanket and sit on the ground to watch it, the kids could fall asleep if they're sleepy. What parent wouldn't like that? They'd gladly carry their sleeping little child back to their camper or tent."

"And we can sell candy, popcorn and sodas for the parents and older kids," Marci pointed out with a proud grin.

"I'll tell you what," Mark said, shaking his head, "this campground is going to have a lot to offer."

"And a lot of things that will be a draw to different people," Penny added. "This could be a real money maker."

"I hope so," Wyatt said, "because it's not going to be cheap to operate. We'll be there to make sure things go as we want them to, keep an eye on things, but we're going to hire people to run it, and it will take a fair number of them to keep it running smoothly."

"You two have to be there on a daily basis because you're the original cowboy and cowgirl. You both do it so naturally, you need to lead the way with that," Penny said.

"I hope others pick up on the theme and follow suit," Marci said. "It would be fun to see a bunch of cowboy hats and boots on a regular basis."

"If you get that campground and do all those things you talked about, we'll definitely reserve a seasonal lot, and we'll get some Stetsons," Mark said. "We'll help get the trend going."