

SERVICING SERENITY
GROVER TOWN DISCIPLINE - BOOK THREE



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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



"So, when no one else helped this man who was attacked by robbers, the Samaritan did, in Luke. So, when was the last time you helped your neighbor, shared a meal, aided someone who was sick?" The preacher glanced around the room, connecting with the gaze of the congregants occupying the pews. "Always remember that the Lord wants us to think of our fellow man, to love our neighbors as ourselves."

From the back corner of the last row, Dustin noticed how men, women, and young'uns were all riveted to everything the tall, gray-templed, lean man was sayin', nodding at his words and smiling in agreement. Dustin had to admit, he could see why the United Midwest Methodist Clergy Seminary Board of the Midwest Territories had sent him to finish his course studies under Pastor Morgan. He'd been in Denver for the last couple years, and after his stint here in Grover Town, he'd get his own parish in New Mexico territory.

The bishop had told him that they'd been looking for someone able to handle the wildness of the area. The leader knew of his past and had pegged him as the one. Dustin agreed with them. He didn't need nice, quiet towns; excitement was in his blood... cloth and all.

"Let's bow our heads and pray." Pastor Morgan's voice drew his gaze back to the front for a moment.

Dustin lowered his chin through the prayer. A baby began to whine and was accompanied by female shushing. When it was over, everyone rose then began to file out. Some stopped by the pastor to shake his hand and praise the message, while others pulled him aside for a private conversation.

He wasn't unaware of the many people, men, and women, who gave him a long stare as they passed him on their way out of the church. It was a small town, and it was just folks' nature to take notice of someone new. Dustin never was one to just blend into a crowd. His height and size alone drew attention. He offered the courteous smile but didn't make eye contact long or engage. Using a smile to help reduce the intensity in his gaze, was part of the new man he'd become. Most of his life, smilin' was the last thing he did unless he was sweet talkin' a woman out of her bloomers.

Waiting, Dustin noticed a side door, one he hadn't much paid any attention to during service, open, and a line of young'uns from around age three to ten streamed out. About eleven in all scattered up the center aisle and called out to parents and siblings. The little ones held his gaze for only but a moment; it was the woman who followed them out of the anteroom that held him riveted. There was a light beaming around her through the door that made her hair appear as spun gold and her skin porcelain and unblemished—an angel. She smiled as she looked after her wards and his heart stopped for long seconds. Her light blue gingham dress could have been a robe of white and he could believe she was something celestial.

The only thing that kept his mind from heavenly places as he continued to boldly stare at her, was the abundant swell of her bosom on such a slim frame. They weren't grotesquely large, making the young woman appear imbalanced or as if she defied gravity by not pitching forward, but they made a red-blooded man, even one fresh out of seminary training, take notice.

A man's loud voice thanking Pastor Morgan drew Dustin's gaze away and his mind back to the purpose of his arrival in Grover Town. A lot of things about him and how he chose to live his life had changed, but the love of women and their unique beauty was ingrained too deep in his makeup to go away, even though he wasn't planning to take up whorin' again. His bishop had not only sent him to complete the final phase of his new calling, but to find a wife to take out to New Mexico with him. That wife would be the only, but frequent, recipient of his lust.

As lovely as this woman was, he would look more toward a widow with children—someone who understood not only what went on in the bedroom between a man and a woman and wouldn't shy away, but one who had a little strength and grit, having had to protect and survive with children. New Mexican Territory wasn't for the meek and mild. This beauty had those virtues practically glowing from her skin.

He started forward down the side aisle toward the pastor, leaving his satchel. The young woman, whom Dustin assumed was no more than seventeen by the look of her youth and innocence, got to the man first.

"Papa, I could hear some of your sermon through the children's Sunday school door and it sounded marvelous. Just like you rehearsed Saturday."

She was Pastor Morgan's daughter? Definitely off limits.

Dustin needed to make a good impression on this paragon of the cloth, and he was fairly sure that ogling the man's daughter would not go over favorably.

"Serenity, my angel. How did things go with the children today?" Pastor Morgan placed an arm around the slim shoulders of his daughter as his lips turned up into a prideful smile.

This girl was clearly the pastor's pride and joy.

Completely off limits.

"Well... until we got closer to the end. At first, it took them a while to settle down in the new room, all of them a little more rest-

less and busier than I would have liked. I think I had to pull Larry Biles around from the door too many times to count as he tried to lead an escape into the sanctuary." She sighed.

"Don't be discouraged; it's only the first week since the extension has been complete and they will soon learn that you're in charge and that you don't stand for foolishness." He chuckled and squeezed her closer to his side.

"I know, Pap-a," she stumbled over her words at the end as her gaze swung down to the end of the pews.

Dustin realized that the young beauty hadn't even noticed him as she was fully focused on reporting her experience to her pa. As she looked upon him, her gaze traveled from his face, pausing at his white collar, and a quick glance along the rest of his body until she arrived at the black book in his hand before returning to his face.

Her expressive features were showcased in her furrowed brow and wide eyes, proof the sight of him was confusing—a dichotomy. Dustin got that a lot.

Pastor Morgan was the first to speak. "Hello, sir. Welcome to Grover Methodist Church." He released his daughter before he stepped forward. "I'm Pastor Morgan; you must be new around here. And a cleric."

It was a statement of fact. Unlike the glances and stares of the parish folk as they passed him, to include the man's daughter, Pastor Morgan's face revealed open-eyed confidence. Dustin stepped forward and took hold of the man's outstretched hand. It wasn't until the last two years that men even began offering him their hand.

"Yes, sir. Bishop Warren sent me."

"Well, now." It was the pastor's turn to take stock of his appearance. "Not what I had in mind for the provisional clergyman they were sending, but never judge a book." Pastor Morgan's smile was broad, and he let out a short chuckle.

Dustin didn't miss the young woman's small gasp or the wider stretch of her lids.

"I get that a lot, sir." Most people saw his build and girth and assumed he was someone who would rob them instead of preachin' them the Word. And a time ago, they wouldn't have been wrong. "I'm Dustin Jonas."

"Jonas, this is my daughter Serenity." The older man gestured toward the woman who was eying their interaction like a hawk. "She helps me out a lot."

Turning to her, Dustin offered her a nod and a polite smile. Normally, it was in his nature to showcase a wider smile for ladies, but this one's bold stare and the no-nonsense cleft of her chin shouted her distrust of him. Matter of fact, the ridged set in her shoulders would have warded off any special male attention, which only seemed to be a shame in one so lovely. If she ever gave a man besides her papa a real smile, Dustin believed it would drop even the strongest man to his knees. He was never wrong about women.

"A pleasure, ma'am." Dustin dropped his register just a notch. Just to see her reaction.

Her shoulder pressed back, and her chin went higher. "It's Serenity or Miss Morgan, thank you."

Well, her little proclamation answered a question in the back of his mind; she wasn't married. Didn't mean she was even old enough to marry and it didn't tell him that she was unattached to a man, either. However, why he wondered that when she was not anywhere near his type, he refused to analyze. "No offense intended, Miss Morgan."

"Serenity," Pastor Morgan interceded. "I need to speak with this gentleman."

"I'll wait for you outside, Papa, so we can walk home together." Not appearing to be as trusting as her father, she gave Dustin a pointed look before moving with sure, confident steps up the aisle.

Well, the angel had a little grit. He would never have made it all his youth and early adult years without knowing a threat when he heard it. Coming from such a lithe figure, it almost made him smile. However, he kept his features schooled and pulled them

away from her retreating form and the enticing swing of such a curvy backside on such a slim frame. He brought his attention back to the man who would be his mentor over the next few months.

"Your protector, I see," Dustin commented once the door closed behind her.

Pastor Morgan chuckled. "I'm afraid so." He let out a deep breath. "The bishop wrote that you've been in the program now for somewhere 'bout close to two years."

"Yup, 'bout. Took me a little longer than most." Dustin dragged a hand over his hair before scratching the base of his scalp. "I'm not ashamed to admit I was a complete novice about the Good Book."

"Most of us are." The older man patted him on the shoulder as he moved past him and began to collect the Bibles scattered on the pews. "Even when we think we know it, we're either quoting it wrong or just haven't really studied it, and that's where a pastor's foundation really starts."

Dustin started on the other side of the room, collecting the very text they were discussing. "I've learned the truth of your words." He grabbed one black hardback after another as the stack in his hand grew, matching Morgan's.

"I understand that you'll be here a few months to finish out your provisional status."

"Yes. Bishop and the board had a lot of things to say about you. They're proud of the work you've done in Grover Town over the years. They say yours is an example I should model after." At the back of the church, he stared at the man who was now his mentor.

Pastor Morgan's chest swelled with pride. "Well, I've tried my best to uphold the Good Book standards for myself, my family, and the congregation." He stepped out of the last pew with the weight he carried, before taking them to the table to the left of the double doors of the church. After setting them down, the pastor held his hands out at his side. "Admonishment," he waved one hand, "and love," then the other before clasping them together before him.

"They go together and are the two rules I live by, and you'd be wise to do the same."

Dustin placed his books on the opposite table. "I'll heed your advice."

"It's a balancing act but brings the best results I've learned." Morgan stepped forward. "I'm going to get out of this robe and then I'll take you to the house you'll be using while you're here."

"A house? I already got a room and paid for a week at Mrs. Livingston's boarding place." He'd seen the sign when he arrived in town earlier that day and stopped in to secure a place and drop his few things.

"No, no. There'd be no peace in town. I've already arranged everything with Mr. Dellson. He owns a house not too far from the church, and when I heard the Board was sending someone, he agreed to let that person use his vacant place. It was his parents' stead before they passed, and he hadn't decided in the last month or so what he was going to do with it. It ain't much."

"I don't rightly need much."

Pastor Morgan gave a sharp nod.

"I'll wait outside." Dustin grabbed his satchel and black hat from the back pew before heading out the door. He still appreciated being out in the fresh air more than indoors. Pushing through the double doors, he paused for a moment and took in the sight of the two women standing at the bottom of the stairs.

One, with straight chestnut brown hair, she was thicker in frame than the other and he wasn't sure how much of that had to do with the fact she was swollen with child. He had no clue how far along she was, since in his life, he'd spent most of his time around whores rather than decent women.

The other was slim with soft blonde waves that appeared golden in the sunlight. He wondered about the relationship between the two, seeing how close they appeared.

"Well, hello." The soon to be mother spotted him first. "You must be the preacher in training."

He chuckled. So, the angel had been talkin' about him.

"Most call me Dustin, ma'am." He took the three steps that brought him before them and smiled.

"Welcome to Grover Town, Dustin. I'm Holly Samuels, the pastor's oldest." She rubbed her stomach with one hand as she gestured with the other. "That's my husband Clive showin' my brother Jacob how to swing a lasso." She pointed several yards away where a tall man stood by a lanky young man swinging a wobbling rope over his head, getting ready to launch it at the horses that were tied to the only wagon left in the yard. "I believe you already met Serenity. She's right under me, at twenty."

He'd kept his focus away from the blonde beauty on purpose. She drew him. When she was around, even in the house of God, he couldn't help but stare. Right from the start, he knew being around this young woman was trouble for him. Discovering that she was older than he'd first thought made him warn himself away again.

"Yes. Serenity, nice to meet you again."

She had been gazing off in the distance since Holly had ended their conversation to speak with him. Now, Serenity turned just her head to look at him.

The glance took his breath and he could only hope the gasp he heard coming from his lips wasn't audible to anyone else. Now seeing her in the bright light of day and standing closer, he noticed just how beautiful she really was. Her round eyes were cornflower blue, surrounded by thick, long lashes. The sunlight didn't only magnify her hair, but her features as well. Her skin was creamy and porcelain like a little girl's new doll. To him, it didn't make much sense with so much Kansas sun. Even her sister's skin held a tan.

Serenity's nose was narrow and small, the perfect size for her slim face. Her lips were a completely different matter; they were red and plump. The thought of their pillow softness under his, heated a desire in his core that rocked him back on his heels.

"You too." She looked beyond his shoulder, a feat since that's where her height ended on him. "Where's Papa?"

"Changin'. He mentioned taking me round to the Dellson's old place."

"That's not too far. Old man Dellson and his wife were our closest neighbors, growing up." Holly was the one who spoke up, as Serenity pretended she was interested in anything but him.

Like a burr in his craw, Serenity's posturing toward him continued to annoy him. It made his palm itch and knees flex; there was a certain way he preferred to deal with defiance that would set a woman's attitude right.

She isn't mine.

Those three words had him continuing his conversation with Holly. The sister who was a lot more polite and welcoming. "Everyone seems to talk as if they both died at the same time."

"Practically. Mrs. Dellson caught a case of pneumonia last winter and never recovered from it, and days later, her husband was in the yard feeding the animals and tripped, scared a few of the wild chickens he allowed to roam his property, and it spooked his old mule, who kicked Mr. Dellson in the head. Jacob was over helping him and witnessed the whole thing."

Dustin shook his head at the series of events. "Why doesn't the younger Dellson live on the property now?"

Holly continued. "He's the blacksmith and lives with his wife and children, closer to town. He's cleaned out the place of old and wild animals; he just hasn't decided what he wants to do with the land."

"Understandable."

"Holly! Serenity! I finally got a perfect lasso." The tall teen came running over to his sisters, his hair a dusty blonde and with a smile that went clean across his face. The boy favored his father so much, Dustin was sure when the young man was finished growing, he'd be a replica of the preacher.

"I knew you could do it," Holly praised the boy and patted him on the shoulder.

"Good job, Jacob." That came from Serenity who stepped closer to her brother, which placed her a little further from him.

Dustin tried not to give the pious woman any thought, but every move she made, he noticed.

"I'm Clive Samuels." The man who stepped up to the other side of Holly, whom she'd pointed out as her husband, held his hand out to Dustin.

He reached out and shook it. "Dustin Jonas."

"New in town, Dustin, or just passin' through?" Clive pulled his wife closer into his side.

He didn't miss how Holly leaned into the man and set her adoring gaze on Clive. A devotion like that was a wife every man wanted to have, especially him.

Equally, Dustin appreciated seeing the affection the man showed toward his wife. In his own life, Dustin didn't see much of it. His life before there wasn't any place for it and now that his life had changed, he could only hope for it.

"A little of both," Dustin commented.

Pastor Morgan finished, "Dustin here is going to be my new apprentice; he's a provisional clergy." The older, wise man's voice was deep and clear. Even when he spoke, the rhythm of his voice resounded in a way like he was giving a sermon. "The United Midwest Methodist Clergy Seminary Board of the Midwest Territories sent him to finish here."

"Wow. You came all the way from Denver, Colorado? Papa's been there once. They call it the Centennial State since 1876. Maybe I'll see it one day." Jacob's face lit up and became even more animated as he talked.

Apparently, the boy had moving sand under his feet. Dustin could hear in the young man's voice how much he thirsted for travel. The boy had to be about fifteen or so. Dustin figured that by the time he was of age, the pastor would be hard pressed to keep him in Grover. Dustin could only hope the boy didn't get caught up in the same life that had taken him around the mid-west.

"Well, it's a great state and beautiful to travel through. The view of the Rockies there will take your breath away," Dustin assured Jacob.

Just as Jacob's lips parted, sure to ask more questions, Pastor Morgan rested a hand on his son's bony shoulder. "Slow it down a tad, son. The man just arrived. You've got plenty of time to brain pick. I need to get him to the old Dellson place so he can rest up."

"You didn't bring out your sermon notes, Papa." Serenity's brows pinched in the center.

"No worries, sweetheart. Tomorrow's just as well."

"But, Papa—"

"We have a guest tonight, Serenity," Pastor cut her off. "Run along home and tell your mama to set another plate for supper."

The tightness at the corner of Serenity's full lips, was evidence to Dustin that she wasn't too happy not to get what she wanted. He wasn't sure what the importance of the pastor having his sermon notes, but Serenity sure thought it was.

Pastor Morgan looked to his son in-law, not appearing to give his second oldest daughter's needs another thought. "Matter of fact, Clive, is it too much for you and Holly to join us, give Dustin a full family welcome."

"You all don't have to bother." Dustin patted his bag. "I've got some provisions in my satchel for the night or I could make my way back to town and find some eats. I need to look into buying a horse anyway."

"Nonsense." Pastor waved a sharp hand through the air. "This is how we do in Grover Town. At least charity and kindness are what I preached to the town folks." The older man let out a dry chuckle. "Tomorrow, you'll have fresh eyes to go horse buying."

"I'll let Holly stay so's not to jostle her and the baby too much. I have to go back to the ranch, but I'll be back before mealtime," Clive declared, before escorting his wife to the wagon with a hand at the small her back.

"That's settled. Dustin, come with me. I've got a buckboard out

back of the church. I bring it on Sundays just in case I need to go out right after service to visit, pray, or perform vigils." With a firm pat to Dustin's shoulder, Pastor steered their direction.

Dustin complied and fell in step.

As everyone dispersed, Dustin caught sight of Serenity from his peripheral as she had some words with her brother before Jacob sprinted off down the path the other wagon had taken before she turned back to the church, disobeying her father's words.

His hands got the prickly sensation again, but he shook it off and listened to the pastor as he spoke about those in town who were sick or shut in.