

---

THE WRONG MAN  
FOR HER

---

CAROLYN FAULKNER



Published by Blushing Books  
An Imprint of  
ABCD Graphics and Design, Inc.  
A Virginia Corporation  
977 Seminole Trail #233  
Charlottesville, VA 22901

©2021

All rights reserved.

No part of the book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. The trademark Blushing Books is pending in the US Patent and Trademark Office.

Carolyn Faulkner  
The Wrong Man for Her

eBook ISBN: 978-1-64563-732-5

Print ISBN: 978-1-64563-741-7

v1

Cover Art by ABCD Graphics & Design

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

---

*c. 1885*

**I**t had finally come down to it. She was surprised it had taken her aunt that long to just come out with what she saw as the truth of the situation. She'd been not so subtly hinting about it ever since she'd arrived.

Finally, she came out with it.

"Well, I frankly don't know how much longer I can have you here, Rachel, really. We've barely enough for the two of us, much less another mouth to feed."

*Yet you own one of the largest houses in New Haven,* Rachel thought but wisely didn't say. And, from the looks of both her aunt and her cousin, Georgina, neither of them had ever passed up a chance to eat.

Rachel Newcomb, however, was rail thin. She knew that her auntie was looking for any excuse to get rid of her, so she tried to make herself as inconspicuous as she could, taking as little as she could from the older woman's grudging charity and trying to make herself useful around the house as best she could. Since her

very presence seemed to annoy Auntie Henrietta, Rachel kept to her sweltering room most of the time, spending her time re-re-re-reading her small collection of books, missing her parents terribly, and wishing she was anywhere but where she'd ended up.

So when her aunt had suggested—months ago, granted—that she might want to be a mail-order-bride, although the very idea turned her stomach, Rachel agreed to look at some of the advertisements for such in the newspaper.

Most of them left her feeling even sicker than she'd been from the start about the idea, but her aunt was rapidly losing patience with how choosey she was being.

It was a Sunday morning, after they'd all attended church—where Rachel was known as "the freeloader" to her aunt's friends, she was quite sure—they were having their usual enormous Sunday dinner, with more food than the three of them could consume in a week, silently belying Henrietta's loud and vociferous claims of utter poverty.

Rachel, of course, took only very small amounts of everything, and she would clean up the dining room and help with the dishes, too, trying to be as useful as possible, even though they had a cook, Mrs. Whipple, and her helper, Tessie, as well as a maid, Mary, to do all of that.

She felt more comfortable downstairs with the servants, frankly, than she ever would with the two remaining members of her family, both of whom considered that her parents dying was an extremely inconvenient thing for them to do.

But that didn't help her plight any.

Until her aunt shoved an envelope—one she'd obviously already opened—under her nose. Rachel had long since taken to speaking only when spoken to at the dinner table, which had been a very hard thing for her to learn to do, since her parents had always encouraged conversation at the dinner table. But it saved hearing the inevitable lecture about what a drain she was on her aunt's finances.

## The Wrong Man for Her

"What is this?"

"Probably your last chance to make something decent of yourself, since you seem to like to nitpick about every perfectly good man who has an ad in the matrimonial columns of the Register—that's what this is. It's a letter from a man one of my friends knows—he's related to her cousin's uncle..." Well, it was nice to know that she had taken the time to get to know the man on her niece's behalf, Rachel thought wryly. "...and supposedly, according to her, he's a man of some means. He's a little old for you—"

"How old is old?" she asked as she took the letter out of the envelope.

"I believe she said that he was thirty-two."

"Oh."

Auntie Etta's face pinched even more than it did normally. "Beggars can't be choosers, as I've told you so often, Rachel Louise Newcomb. Besides, you're almost twenty-one—you're already an old maid!"

Ignoring her aunt's cruel name calling, her eyes skimmed over the letter. It was one page, with tight, concise writing, both the verbiage used and the cursive. Still, the words and writing were bold, reflecting the strength of the man who'd penned it, she imagined.

"Wanted: a wife. Must be willing to work the land, take care of livestock and a garden, and eventual children. Should be between the ages of eighteen to twenty-five, clean, sober, and of sound mind and body. Generous bride price. Transportation to California included, for the right woman."

She turned the paper over, but that was all there was, and also knowing that it was the "generous bride price" that had piqued her aunt's interest. Those were the only ads she ever steered her toward. "It's just a list of the things he expects from the woman—not a word about what he'll provide, if anything."

That just made her aunt look even more sour than she had

before. "That's not important. Althea Sinclair said that he was doing well. And he's not only paying your way across the country, but he's offered a dowry, too. That's all I needed to hear, and it's all you should need to hear, too. Frankly, at this point, the only important thing is that he wants a wife, and you fit his requirements. I want you to go upstairs after dinner and write him a response. I'll have Mary mail it in the morning. With any luck, you'll be off to California before the month is out, to become Mrs. Thaddeus Morgan." Then she added, in a voice that was just loud enough for Rachel to hear, of course, "And then you'll finally be out of my hair."

Rachel swallowed hard, eyes filling with tears that she resolutely blinked back. It wasn't easy to continue to live in a place where she knew—beyond a shadow of a doubt—that she wasn't wanted. But she literally had nowhere else to go. She had plenty of friends, but they were all as poor as she was, and she could hardly impose on them.

She wished her aunt had been more like her mother. They were sisters, after all. But her mama had been a smart, warm, funny woman who never hesitated to show her love to her family—including a sister who looked down on her—in a million different ways, big and small.

The older of the two, Henrietta, had been born with a permanent scowl affixed to her face from the time she was born, it seemed. She'd married early, and for money, whereas her sister, Clara, had waited a bit longer and had married for love.

The differences between the two women's choices could hardly be any starker. Despite the fact that she had everything she could possibly want—and was even a widow such that she had no husband to whom she needed to account for anything she did—nothing was ever good enough for Henrietta. She was never happy with anything or anyone, except perhaps her darling daughter, who, at least in public, could do no wrong.

But at home, in private, she never complimented or even said

## The Wrong Man for Her

much that was pleasant to the poor girl. All Etta ever did was criticize her daughter, sometimes to the point of tears.

She may have been poor, but Rachel knew that she was rich in other ways. Her parents adored each other, and despite the fact that they didn't have much money, their household was filled with lots of laughter and hugs and unabashed love for each other, along with a joy in learning that they were glad to pass on to their daughter.

Clara had been a trained teacher before she was married, so she began educating her precocious daughter long before she went to school. Her father was a bit more of a dreamer, but he taught their daughter about the things he loved, too, music and art, history and sciences.

And Rachel absorbed every bit of it as if she was a thirsty sponge, so much so that she was able to skip several grades because of how advanced she was when she was first enrolled, which of course, stuck in Aunt Etta's craw something fierce.

Soon, she outstripped her teachers, one of whom favored her and even let her teach some of the classes for the lower grades. She had been filling in for teachers who were out for some time, as she worked toward her teaching certificate, and if her parents hadn't perished in an outbreak of typhoid fever that struck the city last year, she would likely be a teacher by now and able to take care of them financially.

Unfortunately, her aunt didn't favor women working, and she refused to allow Rachel to continue her pursuit of becoming a teacher.

She was alone in the world. She certainly didn't think of Auntie or her cousin as family, although she tried to see them in a kindly light, considering that they had taken her in, however reluctantly. The fact that they had been trying to get rid of her ever since didn't mitigate the fact that they had extended themselves—or Auntie had, at least—to take care of her.

Georgina wasn't actively mean to her, like her mother was,

although she could be when she thought she was watching. But she wasn't allowed to learn much, or, Rachel thought more accurately, had no interest in learning much of anything beyond what her mother considered to be advantageous for a proper young lady to know—needlework, singing, piano, just enough ciphering not to get taken, and just enough reading to get through the Bible.

Rachel didn't have to be encouraged to go upstairs after she'd finished eating what little was on her plate. Perhaps she was being too fussy, but since she was going to be stuck with the man for the rest of her life, she felt she had a right to be—to a point.

She'd never thought of living that far west. Up to that point, the other men she'd been forced to consider were no further away than Texas. But she supposed one western state was much like the others—wild and untamed, with primitive living conditions at best, if the stories she'd read in the occasional Western she'd snuck from her father were true. Granted, they were quite old, and things might have changed a bit, although she wasn't counting on it.

Still, she tried to make her letter sound friendly and enticing, especially since it looked like he was her last hope. As the reality of her situation bore heavily down on her, lawlessness, desolate desert landscapes, and living in a soddy were beginning to sound pretty good to her, and she knew she'd best decide on someone quickly, before she ended up on the streets.

Since she hadn't been able to settle on any other man, she'd never written a letter like that before, and at first she wasn't sure what she should say.

But writing had always come relatively easy to her, so she created a first draft, then edited it and rewrote it again so that it would be perfect, always keeping in the back of her mind that her aunt would read it in front of her, which was another reason to make sure there were no errors. She read all of Rachel's letters



## The Wrong Man for Her

—coming and going—having only provided her niece with stationery, and not envelopes, for expressly that purpose. Her defense of that invasive action was that what Rachel did—good or bad—reflected on her, and she would know what was going on under her own roof.

Of course, there had never been anything untoward in any of her mail, nor would there be in this letter.

But, when she responded to Mr. Morgan, she made certain that it was in her best handwriting, and that there were no ink blots or words crossed out. That wouldn't do for her own standards—not to mention her aunt's, who, if she spied either of those things, was sure to send her back to her tiny attic room to do it again.

*Dear Mr. Morgan,*

*My name is Rachel Newcomb, and I will be twenty-one years old at the end of December. I hope that you do not consider my age to be a hindrance to our potential union.*

*I have no known ailments—except an allergy to strawberries—and although I'm small, I'm quite strong, and I do not shirk from hard work.*

*In addition, as you can see, I read and write and can do arithmetic. I am familiar with the classics—both literary and musical, although I play no instrument myself. I have learnt history, geography, and a little bit of French, and was working toward becoming a teacher when my parents passed over within a few days of each other.*

She had to lift her head up once she'd written that line, so the tears that were running down her cheeks didn't splash down onto the paper.

. . .

*Since then, I have been imposing on the good graces of my Aunt Henrietta, my mother's sister, who has kindly taken me in and given me a place to live.*

Such as it was. At that point, she looked around at the cramped attic room, with its one small window, where even she couldn't stand up straight, and she was short.

But, as she'd heard more often than not in the past nine months, beggars best not be choosers.

*I am shortish—about five foot, one inch or so, and slim. My hair is blonde, and my eyes are green. I don't have a photograph for you, unfortunately. They are too dear.*

*If you don't consider it too forward, could you describe yourself to me in your next letter? Have you been to school? Do you like to read or play music yourself? How long have you lived in California?*

*My parents married for love, and I had hoped to do the same myself, but circumstances dictate that I follow a different path.*

*I would be very interested in becoming your wife, if you find the information I am providing you about myself to be acceptable.*

*Please respond as soon as possible, even if just to inform me that you have chosen someone else.*

*Yours very truly,*

*Miss Rachel Louise Newcomb*

When she was satisfied with the letter, she folded it neatly, leaving it on the table she used as a makeshift desk to take down to her aunt the next morning.

As Rachel crawled into bed—with no intention of sleeping, but instead, reading until she couldn't any longer, as was her habit—her mind wandered back to how happy she had been

## The Wrong Man for Her

with her parents, although she did her best to squelch reminiscing too much.

Besides the fact that it just made her more miserable than she already was, if she appeared at the breakfast table with puffy eyes, her aunt would berate her for being ungrateful and crying when she was putting herself out so in allowing her to live there.