

# SUGAR AND SPICE



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## CHAPTER 1



“Good, just in time.” Harold Willowdale greeted Charles Napier and his daughter. “I am ready to swear in our new sheriff and it will be nice to have a couple of witnesses,” he enthusiastically declared, nodding his head in satisfaction.

“It will be our pleasure, Mayor,” Charles said with a smile, and within a couple minutes Serenade Falls, Arizona boasted its very first sheriff.

“Congratulations, Sheriff. And welcome to our little town.”

“Thanks, Mayor.” Grady shook the offered hand.

“Sheriff Grady Alexander, this is Charles Napier and his daughter, Miss Shay Napier. Mr. Napier owns the bank.” Harold made the introduction with a smile. But his smile faded when he faced Charles and said, “My Hattie told me what happened earlier, Mr. Napier, and I want you to know that I will do whatever I can to help the new sheriff here find the person responsible.” He looked at Grady and explained. “Someone, probably those Johnson twins, rigged a bucket of slop above the door to the bank, and when Mr. Napier opened up this morning, he got a bath in the disgusting stuff.” He turned to Charles again. “I think this is just terrible, Mr. Napier. We will learn who did this.”

“Thank you, Mayor,” Charles acknowledged. “I must confess I am perplexed as to why I was targeted for the attack.”

“Did you refuse a loan to anyone recently, Mr. Napier?” Grady asked, his tone indicating the question was official and not just idle curiosity.

“No,” the man promptly replied, his blue eyes quite serious. “I haven’t had to. This town is full of respectable, hardworking people.”

“What about you, Miss Napier?” Grady turned his dark eyes on the petite young girl standing demurely beside her father. She didn’t seem the least bit upset that her father was the victim of a prank.

“Sir?” she asked innocently. “I am afraid I don’t know what you are asking.”

“Is there a possibility that someone is angry at you, but taking it out on your father?” he asked kindly, but he noticed that her green eyes were full of mischief, and she seemed to be mocking him.

“Hardly so, Sheriff,” Charles spoke decisively. “My daughter is a sweet young woman, sugar and spice, and everything nice.” He smiled fondly at the young woman as he quoted the nursery rhyme.

Grady wondered if the man was actually that blind. Why, underneath that prim and proper facade was a little hellcat, or Grady would turn in his badge then leave town. He’d never yet met a redhead that didn’t have hell’s own temper. However, he prudently decided, this was not the time to upset the influential banker and the town’s mayor. He wanted this new job, and he intended to keep it – at least until he was finished with this damn town.

“You remind me of someone, Sheriff,” Charles Napier commented with a smile. “I just can’t place who it is.”

Grady shrugged, looking the other man in the eye and giving nothing away. “I have never been here before today, Mr. Napier.”

“Well, I’m sure I’ll remember eventually,” the man replied, then

turned to his daughter. "Shay, we should be going along now. I need to open the bank."

"Yes, Father." She smiled so sweetly that Grady wanted to grab her and shake her. He hated deceitful little witches, and the girl was playacting for all she was worth. Why would she do that? He determined he would find out, sooner or later. He tipped his hat, because it was the polite and expected thing to do, while the little brat mocked him with those green eyes of hers. Yep, she was going to be a priority, he decided. Second only to his main reason for coming to this town.

The mayor left too, after telling Grady to come to him with any questions or problems. Once everyone was gone, Grady sat down in the chair behind his new desk and chuckled. Who in hell would believe that *he* was wearing a badge and sworn to uphold the law? He was here for one reason, and one reason only. There was no time like the present to start his quest.



SHAY WATCHED from the window in the mercantile as the new sheriff left his office and went next door to the newspaper office. A couple of minutes later he walked out the door, and made his way to the adjacent building. He was probably making his rounds and introducing himself to all the townspeople. He didn't fool her for a moment though. He was up to something, and she was going to find out just what it was. He was no more a lawman than she was. When Mr. Gaynor spoke to her, she plastered her 'sweet' smile on her face and turned around. "I'm sorry, Mr. Gaynor, I was looking out the window and didn't hear you."

"Of course you were, child. What a terrible thing to happen to your poor father. He is such a good man; you must be worried sick." The elderly man tried to comfort her, and Shay had to force herself not to grin.

"Yes, it is frightening," she said aloud, but her private thoughts

were not nearly so kind. *Poor father*, right! *Good man*, right! He deserved to have slop dumped on him every day for the rest of his life. And, the next time she'd use ink, *if* she could get enough of the stuff without raising suspicion. He wouldn't be able to wash that off so easily as he had the slop.

"Please wait on Mrs. Sims," she murmured politely. "I just want to browse a bit and look at the yard goods." She might as well let *poor father* buy her another dress or two. Mr. Gaynor had to go into the back room sometime, and she would manage to get what she came in for. As luck would have it, one of the ranchers came in and left a list for things kept only in the back. Shay pretended to be taking her time in choosing lace to adorn her new dress, and Mr. Gaynor decided he would go to the back to work on the order while she was browsing. She promised she would call him if another customer came in.

As soon as he was out of sight, Shay slipped behind the counter and put a box of bullets into her handbag. And just that quickly, her arm was grasped by the new sheriff, who pulled her around to face him. "Let me go," she hissed angrily, forgetting she was supposed to be sweet and demure.

"Stealing, Miss Napier?" Grady gave her a little shake; positive he was seeing the real young woman at last. "Doesn't daddy make enough money at that bank of his?"

"Don't be ridiculous." She forced herself to be calm. "I wasn't stealing. I almost forgot them, and decided to put them in my bag so that I wouldn't walk out without them."

"That innocent act of yours might work on half this town, but I am not that gullible."

Mr. Gaynor chose that moment to return from the back room of the store. "I thought I heard voices. You should have called me, Miss Shay. What can I do for you, Sheriff?"

"I came in to introduce myself, sir, but caught this young woman taking a box of bullets from the shelf."

“Oh, no. You are mistaken, Sheriff.” Mr. Gaynor shook his head emphatically.

“They are in her bag,” Grady stated flatly, taking it from her hands and handing it to the elderly man.

“This is so ridiculous, Sheriff. Mr. Gaynor, I remembered that Father asked me to buy some bullets for him last week, and I keep forgetting to get them for him. I remembered while you were in the back, and decided to put them in my bag so I wouldn’t forget. Surely you know my father can pay for them? I didn’t realize how it would look to anyone else,” she said sadly. “I am sorry if I shouldn’t have done that; I guess I should have placed them on the counter.” Her eyes filled with tears.

“Oh, it’s just fine, child. I know you wouldn’t take anything. I trust you completely. Sheriff, there is no need for such vigilance, I assure you. Why, the most trouble we have here in town is on Saturday nights when the cowboys come in to drink and celebrate.”

“Be sure to put these on Father’s account, Mr. Gaynor,” Shay virtuously reminded the man. “I decided on the lace,” she said, pointing to the small bolt lying on the counter. “Six yards.” Her heart was pounding as she walked over to the rack of thread to look at the spools. She listened as the new sheriff made small talk with Mr. Gaynor, and she wondered why the man didn’t just leave. He was making her very nervous. She knew he didn’t believe her story for a second, but at least he wasn’t trying to force Mr. Gaynor into filing charges against her.

“Is there anything else I can get for you today, Miss Shay?”

“Just this spool of thread, Mr. Gaynor.” She watched as he wrapped the items in brown paper, and was relieved when it was time to leave the mercantile. But her relief didn’t last long.

The sheriff followed her outside, and calmly took her arm when she tried to head in the opposite direction. “You are coming with me, young lady,” Grady announced, turning her around and heading for his office.

“I don’t want to come with you.” She tried to pull her arm free

of his grasp, but he merely tightened his grip. She couldn't get free without making a scene, and that wouldn't suit her purposes at all. "Please release me." She kept her voice low, and added a hint of tears. It usually worked, but not this time, and not with this man.

"You come along, little girl, or I will pick you up and carry you. I reckon that will set folks to talking, and you sure wouldn't like that, would you?" He found out rather quickly that he was right. Miss Shay Napier pasted a sweet smile on her pretty face and walked with him like it was her very own idea. She even smiled and said 'good morning' to a couple of ladies as they passed by.

Once inside the sheriff's office, however, the act was over. "Just what do you think you are doing, Sheriff Grady Alexander? If that is your real name?" Shay went on the attack. She had her hands on her hips, and her green eyes were shooting sparks at him.

Grady chuckled. "I have never seen a redhead yet that didn't have a wild temper. And, yes, ma'am, my name is Grady Alexander." Alexander was his middle name, but she didn't need to know that. "We have a matter to settle, little girl. You can stand there and deny it all you want, but you intended to steal those bullets today."

All the arguing in the world wasn't going to make a difference, and Shay knew it. Still, she had to give it a shot. "I did not."

"You did too, and if you want me to wash your mouth out with soap for lying, just tell me that again." Grady meant it. He had no use for lies. He didn't care for deceit either, but sometimes it was just plain necessary to deceive people to get to the truth. He was going to find out what happened to his kid brother if it killed him. The last place his family had heard from Chad was here in this damn town. "I can't handle lies, Shay. You are better off to tell me the truth and take your chances with that."

Shay stomped her foot, wishing with all her might that she was dressed in her normal clothing. How much longer could she stand playing this part? There wasn't one thing 'sugar and spice and everything nice' about her. "All right, I took the bullets. No one in



this town will believe you though." The triumphant look she leveled on him said it all.

"I know they won't," he agreed. "They think you are the sweetest little gal in the world. Doesn't all that pretending get old?" he demanded.

"That's my concern, not yours, Sheriff. Now, if you will excuse me, I do have better things to do with my time." She started for the door, only to have him move to block it. In fact, he put the bar over the door to keep anyone on the outside from coming in. "Sheriff, I am warning you, I will make you regret it if you try to kiss me or think you can paw me. I am not free and easy, besides, I won't be mauled."

"I have no intention of kissing you, or mauling you, as you put it, little girl. I keep as far away from redheads as I can when it comes to making love. Never met one yet that was worth the risk of the fire inside."

"Then what do you want?" Her green eyes narrowed in anger.

"I am the sheriff. It is my job to deal with criminals, and since this town wouldn't believe you did anything wrong even if you admitted it, I am going to deal with your punishment myself."

Shay gave an unladylike snort. "What are you going to do, lock me in your jail? Like that won't bring Father on the run, and the mayor. You will be the first sheriff in history to be hired and fired within the first two hours on the job." Her beautiful green eyes were daring him to try locking her behind bars.

"I am not going to put you behind bars, little girl. There's another, more effective way to deal with a little brat like you." He took a step closer, and grinned when she backed up two steps.

"What is that?" Shay demanded, not daring to believe what her senses were trying to tell her. Surely, he wouldn't dare turn her over his knee and spank her? Surely not? She was not a child. Men didn't spank grown women, did they? Well, yes, they did, but not unless they were married, and she wasn't stupid enough to marry any man. "You just stop stalking me, Grady Alexander. I'm not

scared of you," she insisted, even though her heart was pounding, and her legs suddenly felt like limp noodles.

"I'm going to turn you over my knee, toss up your skirts, and set your fanny on fire until it matches your hair," Grady promised.

"Oh. No. You. Are. Not. You wouldn't dare."

"There is only one way you can stop it, little girl."

"What is that?" she demanded, fearing that she already knew. And since she was a virgin, there was no way in hell she would let him diddle her. She would shoot him first.

"You tell me the truth about yourself," he shocked her by saying. "I don't believe anyone in this town knows the real you, and I want to know why that is."

"You are being ridiculous. You just don't like me for some reason. If you spank me, I will tell my father and the mayor," she threatened.

"I will deny it, honey. Then you will have to show proof. Do you feel like exposing your bottom so that everyone can see my hand-prints all over your white skin?" he asked with a broad grin. He saw her eyes widen in disbelief and pressed on. "What is it going to be? A well-deserved spanking or the whole truth about this charade of yours?"

"I don't know what you are talking about," she quickly denied.

Her face was beet red and Grady couldn't tell if it was due to the threat of a spanking or due to the embarrassment of being caught in a lie. Whichever it was, it didn't matter. He was going to give her a tanning she would remember for the rest of her life. Without another word, he grabbed her, took a seat on the corner of his desk, upended her over his lap, and then tossed up her skirts until he found her drawers. A second later the flat of his hand cracked on her nicely rounded bottom.

"Ow! That hurt, you beast." Shay kicked her feet and tried to free herself, but all the fabric from her skirts made it impossible to kick him properly; he had her hanging so far down that her hands

couldn't reach him anywhere. She was trapped, and he was going to give her a spanking, in spite of her age.

"Stealing is wrong, little girl." Grady made his point, and spanked her repeatedly, making the swats as hard as he could. She needed a good lesson.

Shay hated the fact that he was hurting her to the point that she had tears in her eyes. She wasn't used to crying; she'd always felt that it was a sign of weakness. She continued to fight the need to bawl like a baby, summoning all of her will power to do so. One thing was for sure and certain, she would have to find another way to buy ammunition. She couldn't risk taking anything from the mercantile ever again. "Stop it," she hissed.

"Not until I know you are sorry," he replied. She was holding onto her pride and dignity, but he wasn't about to let her do that. He spanked harder, aiming for the tender spots just below her bottom cheeks. Her howls of pain grew in intensity, and he realized he was getting to the heart of the matter. "I want to hear an apology, and a promise you won't steal again," Grady told her after a good ten minutes of solid spanking.

"I won't steal again, I promise," Shay announced. Her poor butt hurt too much not to make the concession.

"The apology?" he reminded her with another set of firm spanks all over her scalded bottom.

"All right." She gave in. "I'm sorry."

"Good, now we can finish up this spanking," he announced.

"Finish it?" she protested. "I said I was sorry; I did what you said!"

"Yes, you did, and now I want to make sure you remember your promise not to steal again."

Shay couldn't believe he was going to continue the spanking. Her butt was already on fire, and she didn't think she could handle any more punishment. "No," she protested. "Don't spank me. I won't do it again," she promised repeatedly.

"I don't suspect you will," Grady agreed, spanking her rounded

bottom again with hard smacks designed to sting like crazy. He wanted to be sure that she recalled the consequences of stealing when she tried to sit for the next few days. A sore butt right now was better than time in a jail cell in the future.

“Ow! No more,” Shay pleaded.

Grady ignored her, gave her another swat, and another, covering every inch of her backside. “There were twenty bullets in that box, and one spank on your sit spot for each one ought to remind you of your promise for a long while. Count them, Shay. And if you skip, I’ll start over and double the amount you need.”

It was awful and clearly the worst experience of her life to this point. Grady made her count each one; if she waited too long, he gave her another and it didn’t count toward the total. She miscounted once, and true to his word, he started all over, increasing the number to forty. She was a blubbering mess by the time the spanking was all over, and Shay promised herself that she was going to make Grady Alexander pay for treating her so abominably – just as soon as she could figure out a way to get even without getting herself into trouble.