

REMEMBER ME is a 65,000-word, dual-POV, upmarket historical romance, set in Colorado in the late 1890s. It has elements of Beverly Jenkins' TEMPEST, Raine Cantrell's GIFTS OF LOVE, and Rachel Fordham's YOURS TRULY, THOMAS.

Remember Me

by Sharon Kayne

Chapter 1 • Falling

Colorado, October 5, 1899

Patrick leaned over and laced his fingers together to give Lily a boost into the saddle. Once seated, she gave him that special smile she had when she was excited and happy. Her soft plump lips opened to show a row of perfect white teeth and the skin around her big brown eyes crinkled ever so slightly. She was a beautiful woman no matter her expression, but happiness gave her an extra glow that made Patrick want to sweep her up into his arms and make passionate love to her. Just now, however, they were continuing her riding lessons, which they had started once the cattle had been rounded up and taken to market earlier that summer. Today he was going to teach her how to ride a gallop. Lovemaking would have to wait. Now that she was his wife, waiting was no longer all that difficult. In fact, the anticipation made their eventual consummation all the sweeter. God, he loved this woman.

As he looked up at her, the golden aspen leaves behind her formed a halo of sorts around her chestnut hair against the dark blue Colorado sky. The early autumn nip in the air gave her cheeks a rosy glow that nearly matched the red calico of her skirt – a skirt that always reminded him of what a firebrand she was. Their ranch spread was in the foothills, affording them a clear view of the mountain peaks, which sliced heavenward and were covered with a dusting of new snow. Patrick had always loved this land, but nothing made it more magical than sharing it with his Lily-bud.

He mounted his own horse, a huge black stallion named Trojan, and turned so he could see her. “Riding a gallop takes a lot of thigh muscle.”

“I’ve noticed. You must gallop quite a bit,” she said with a teasing smile.

He grinned. She could certainly make it more difficult to wait on lovemaking. “If you’re going to talk about such things I might have to take you back into the barn and show you just how well developed my thigh muscles are,” he said with a grin and a wink.

“Why, Mr. Cavanaugh, that was a most shocking speech,” she said, using his surname playfully and giving him a smile that was more invitation than sweetness.

“Now you’ve done it,” he said, pulling Trojan up next to her horse. Grabbing Lily around the waist, he pulled her over onto his lap and kissed her. Not bothering with soft preliminaries, he thrust his tongue into her mouth and kissed her in a decidedly non-chaste way. She entwined her tongue with his as she’d learned from copying his movements. That made his breath catch and his heart race. Still holding her mouth captive with his, he turned Trojan back toward the barn. Once there, he made sure Lily’s thigh was hooked over the pommel so he could dismount, sliding out from under her. Then he grabbed her by the waist and pulled her down from the horse. Her feet had barely touched the ground when he stooped to sweep her up in his arms. He carried her to an empty stall and laid her in the straw. “God, I

always want you,” he whispered as he knelt before her, kissed her neck, and began to unbutton her cream-colored shirtwaist.

“And I’m always yours,” Lily whispered back, her arms sliding around his shoulders as he unhooked the top of her corset to free her breasts. While he suckled one breast, he pulled up her skirts until he could reach the opening in her drawers. As soon as he discovered she was ready for him, he entered her, making love to her quickly and soundly. She accepted him and reciprocated his pressured persistence as well as she could while lying on her back in the straw. He paused for her when she reached her pleasure apex, as he had learned to do to allow her to concentrate more fully on it. Feeling her shiver and tighten around him pushed him that much closer to his own explosive end, which he reached after a few more decisive strokes.

Patrick held her for a moment as his breathing and heart beat calmed before rising to his knees and fastening his trousers. “We’ll never finish your riding lessons this way,” he said with a self-deprecating grin.

“I hope you’re not sorry. I’m not!”

“Sorry that I got to make love to my beautiful wife? Never.”

“Mmm. I bet you’d have been at least a little sorry if Moe had walked in.”

“No chance of that. Moe’s at the upper pasture,” he said as he helped Lily to her feet and pulled straw from her hair while she laughed.

Lily’s laughter was one of the things Patrick loved best about his wife. It was sweet and pure, so pure it was almost angelic. Patrick didn’t know if angels actually laughed, but if they did, he was certain it would sound like Lily’s laugh. The pair had an easy way of speaking and could make each other laugh, which always made being together a pleasure. Lily was, herself, quite sweet, but not in the way that many women were, which was downright saccharine. He’d known far too many women who effected a sweetness that hid the fact that they were somewhat dizzy, lacked common sense, and had nothing of interest to say. Lily had depth – of character, intellect, and compassion – that made him wonder why she was settling for a simple man like himself. Whatever she saw in him had been enough to make her accept his proposal even though he was sure she could have had the pick of any available man in town. He was glad she picked him.

When the two were back in their saddles, Patrick turned Trojan away from the barn toward a path that led to the pastures. Lily, seated on a silky bay named Dusky, followed. Patrick was taking her to the lower pasture since the remaining cattle were in the upper. It would give them plenty of space with no obstacles. Goliath, his brown-and-white border collie, began to follow them but Patrick told him to stay put.

“Go to your bed, Goliath,” he said, which referred to the small lean-to near the back door of the ranch house. Goliath paused and gave Patrick a sad look before sitting. He would go to his dog house, Patrick knew, but not before he’d watched them ride off. Goliath went just about everywhere with his human, but the last thing Patrick and Lily needed was a dog along, running and barking beside them. A cattle dog, Goliath knew how to stay out from under the hooves of both horses and steer, but Patrick didn’t want anything to distract Lily as she rode.

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Lily was enjoying learning to ride even more than she had expected to. She knew a great deal of the pleasure came from her feelings for the instructor. She knew she was madly in love with Patrick when they had wed but she had no idea that being his wife would deepen her feelings for him. If anyone had told her before she wed that she would want to make love to her husband as much as he wanted her she'd have thought them crazy. Sex, she'd been led to believe, was something most women merely tolerated. Her mother had only partly disabused her of that notion during their one pre-wedding night talk and, while her mother had given her the impression that sexual intercourse was pleasant for the woman, Lily had been quite surprised to find out just how pleasant it was. She felt badly for those women who managed only tolerance rather than experiencing the extraordinary release and connection that she found lovemaking to be.

Patrick had been something of an enigma when they first met. He was so quiet and reserved, she wasn't even sure he was attracted to her. So – even though he'd asked if he could call on her – she'd been surprised when he actually did call at the house and asked permission to court her. He was tall and broad in all the right places, and wonderfully muscular from the work he did running his ranch. His brown, wavy hair could be unruly, but his green eyes gave him a sense of distinction. His smile made him so handsome she could hardly stand it, but what she loved best about him was his laughter. It would start in his belly as a rumble, rising up through his chest before hitting his throat. He had a deep voice, and his laughter had a low timbre as well. He was older than her but still considered fairly young to own a ranch. And he knew so much about things she'd never given any thought to. Like many quiet people, when he did speak, it was to say something meaningful and intelligent. She wasn't exactly sure what he'd seen in her, but she was glad he loved her, and she wanted to be the kind of wife who made him both happy and proud.

Once they made it to the pasture, Patrick stopped his horse to reiterate some riding basics. "Remember what I told you about sitting up straight, so your body is over your feet. Riding a gallop might make you feel like leaning forward over your horse, but don't do that. Keep your knees bent and don't press your legs into your horse."

Lily nodded, ready to urge Dusky into a full run. Patrick kept Trojan still so he could watch her technique from a distance. Lily had Dusky trot in a circle around Patrick and Trojan before she had the bay head off away from them. As she turned Dusky toward the west, and urged the horse into a gallop, she looked back at Patrick – a playful smile on her mouth as if to challenge him to follow her. He urged Trojan to take off after her.

Patrick had no trouble catching up to Lily – she still wasn't giving Dusky that much lead – and soon the two were running side by side toward the western end of the meadow. He glanced over to Lily from time to time and saw a look of complete and utter joy on her face. She was turning into a competent and appreciative rider.

Lily could see Patrick beside her even though she kept her face into the wind. Being astride a galloping horse felt as much like flying as she imagined anything could. She was so caught up in the sensations that she didn't notice when her hair pins began to come loose, and locks of her wavy chestnut hair slipped free to ride the airstream behind her.

Patrick watched her hair come loose, which made him long to run his fingers through it. He'd have to remind her to wear a hat or pull her hair into one long braid before they had their next riding lesson.

Wanting her to take it easy this first time, Patrick began to slow Trojan, hollering to Lily to do the same with Dusky. Then they turned their horses back toward the house. Although she was nearly out of breath from the experience, she was laughing as the two horses fell in together to walk side by side. "That was so exhilarating!" Lily squealed. "Like flying." She looked at Patrick and smiled. "Did I do well?"

"You did perfectly," he told her. "You'll be a seasoned horsewoman in no time."

"And leave all my city-girl ways behind me?"

"Well, you don't have to lose all of your city-girl ways. I sure do like the way you sashay when you walk down the street," Patrick said with a wink.

"Oh, who wants to sashay when you can fly?" she laughed.

"You sure know how to humble a man, Lily-bud," he replied with an exaggeratedly false pout.

"Oh, I intend to humble you much further before I'm done," she said with mischief in her eyes. "Race you back!" she teased as she set Dusky off on another gallop.

"No fair! You got a head start," he hollered to her even though he'd catch her easily. He set Trojan on a run and then Dusky darted quickly to the side. Then, with the kind of fear in her eyes no rider ever wants to see, Dusky raised her front legs. Lily grabbed onto the pommel but still lost her balance and slid off the horse's back to the ground; everything went dark.

Patrick got to her in a second and, frantically sliding off of Trojan's back, was soon crouching over her.

"Lily! Lily! Look at me." Lily, who laid like a porcelain doll that had been thoughtlessly dropped on the ground, did not move. Patrick felt for her pulse. He found it and then watched until he could see her chest rise and fall. She was alive, thank God, but she was clearly badly hurt. He tried once more to wake her before gently working one arm under her shoulders and the other under her knees and pulling himself to his feet. The horses were still near and riding one of them would be the fastest way to get her home, but he couldn't mount Trojan while he held Lily, so he started back to the ranch house on foot. Trojan nickered as Patrick walked past him, but the horse did not follow. Dusky had run off a ways and was still shaking her head as if to dislodge the sight of whatever had spooked her. Patrick left them in the pasture. They'd have to make their own way home.

As Patrick carried Lily over the yard toward the house, Goliath came running toward them, his bark sounding an alarm. Patrick managed to get the back door open then carried Lily into their bedroom and laid her gently on their bed.

"Lily-bud," he crooned to her. "Can you hear me? Look at me, love." Patrick began to take an inventory of her arms and legs, feeling each one for broken bones. He took off Lily's boots and then began to undress her, being careful to move her as little as possible. He watched for lacerations and contusions but found nothing, save a bump on the back of her head. There was no blood so, fortunately, the skin hadn't broken. Once he had stripped her down to her chemise, he pulled the covers out from under her and up over her. He wanted to sit on the bed next to her, but he didn't want to disturb her, so he brought a chair in from the kitchen table and set it at her side. Goliath, who had been pacing and

whining, came and sat beside him, his chin resting on Patrick's knee. Patrick took Lily's hand in his and bent over until his forehead was resting lightly on top of their entwined fingers. "Please don't leave me, Lily-bud," he pleaded, his voice low and strained.

He considered going out to get the horses, but he didn't want to leave Lily alone. He knew Moe would come back soon for the midday meal.

"Boss?"

"I'm in here," Patrick called from the bedroom.

"Why'd you leave the horses saddled in the yard?" Moe asked as he made his way into the bedroom. Then he saw Lily on the bed. "What the hell happened? Is Lily all right?"

"Dusky was spooked by something and threw her. She hasn't come to yet."

"She have any injuries?"

"Not that I can see."

"So that's why you left the horses in the yard."

"I left them in the lower pasture. They must have come back on their own."

"I'll take care of 'em," Moe said as he turned to leave.

Having Moe back and the horses taken care of gave Patrick the courage to leave Lily's side for a small amount of time. He stepped into the kitchen and began to heat up some stew for lunch, but he found he had no appetite. He resumed his bedside vigil before Moe got back from taking care of Trojan and Dusky.

Moe returned to the ranch house to find Patrick sitting next to the bed, his face twisted with grief. "I can go for the doctor now if you want, but it might make more sense to wait until tomorrow. See how she's doing then."

Patrick could not find the breath to answer him, so he simply nodded his head. Moe stood looking at him as though he did not know what else to say or do. "I'm going to have some lunch. Can I bring you anything?" Patrick shook his head, so Moe left him to his vigil.

After Moe had eaten, Patrick could hear him rustle about in the kitchen, feeding Goliath, then cleaning up. Then he brought a bowl of stew and a glass of apple cider into the bedroom. "I brought you some stew. You should eat something if you're going to sit up with her all day."

Patrick turned his head toward Moe, although his expression indicated that he barely registered what Moe had said. He blinked and then nodded his thanks. Moe set the bowl and glass on the dresser.

A similar scene played out after Moe had completed the evening chores and heated up some dinner. Patrick still could not bring himself to eat, and Moe could not bring himself to leave the man without some food, although it remained as untouched as his lunch had. "I'm going to turn in," Moe said, although it was far too early for him to fall asleep. He lit a lantern on the dresser. "Holler for me if you need anything, all right?"

“Thank you,” Patrick said softly, his eyes still focused on his unconscious wife.

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