

*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**

Sharon Kayne

### **Chapter 1 • Falling**

*Colorado, October 5, 1899*

Peter 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 Peter 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. Their ranch spread was in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, affording them a clear view of the peaks, which sliced heavenward and were covered with a dusting of new snow. Peter had always loved this land, but nothing made it more magical than sharing it with his Lily-bud. The early autumn nip in the air gave her cheeks a rosy glow that nearly matched the red calico of her shirtwaist – a blouse that always reminded him of what a firebrand she was. Below that she was wearing the dungarees she'd bought at the mercantile so she could ride a horse astride. Seeing her in trousers always made him hard because of the way they hugged her backside and left less to the imagination than her skirts.

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 and an appreciative glance at his lower body.

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 salacious smile 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 all invitation.

Peter only sighed in response. If she wasn't already mounted on her horse, he'd have swept her into his arms, carried her into the barn, and made love to her. And, given her current smile,

which was as flirtatious as it was playful, she'd not only have let him, she'd also have enjoyed it herself. Lily had taken to lovemaking like a duck to water, and he was beyond grateful. Before they'd married, he'd been under the impression that proper women could run hot or cold in the marital bed – and most ran cold. Before their marriage she'd responded with passion to his kisses, so he'd been hopeful she would give herself over to passion in the bedroom as well. And she had – far beyond his wildest anticipation. It had been the best aspect of married life so far and he hoped even the arrival of children would not douse it.

“Are you saying you don't want to continue your riding lessons, Mrs. Cavanaugh?” he asked innocently. “Because we could switch to lessons of another variety,” he continued with another wink. He'd actually not been all that experienced in bed when they'd met, but she often referred to his lovemaking as lessons, since she'd had no experience at all.

“As appealing as that sounds, I know full well that Moe is roaming about the place at this very moment. Wouldn't want him to interrupt us. Imagine how embarrassed he'd be,” she said with a laugh.

Lily's laughter was one of the things Peter loved best about his wife. It was sweet and pure, so pure it was almost angelic. Peter 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.

“Wouldn't want to give Moe a fright,” he said of their hired hand, as he turned Trojan away from the barn toward a path that led to the pastures. Lily, seated on a silky bay named Dusky, followed. He 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 Peter told him to stay put.

“Go to your bed, Goliath,” he said, referring to the small lean-to near the back door of the ranch house. Goliath paused and gave Peter a sad look before sitting. He would go to his dog house, Peter knew, but not before he'd watched them ride off. Goliath went just about everywhere with his human, but the last thing Peter 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 Peter 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'd known she was madly in love with Peter 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.

Marrying Peter had meant giving up her dream of becoming a concert pianist – not only because wives did not pursue such careers, but also because living out on the ranch meant she had fewer opportunities to play for appreciative audiences as she had living in town. Particularly since they lacked a piano. When she had accepted his proposal she'd worried some that she would regret what she'd given up, but she hadn't. She had gained so much more than she'd forgone. And, once they began to have children, she believed she would gain even more.

Peter 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 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, Peter 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. She had Dusky trot in a circle around Peter 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 Peter – a playful smile on her mouth as if to challenge him to follow her. He instantly urged Trojan to take off after her.

Peter 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. Being astride a galloping horse felt as much like flying as she imagined anything could. She'd thought coaxing music from a piano had been liberating, but this movement added a tangible element that excited her. She was sure Peter could see a look of complete and utter joy on her face. Before long, her hair pins began to come loose, and locks of her wavy chestnut hair slipped free to ride the

airstream behind her. She'd have to remember to wear a hat or pull her hair into one long braid before they had their next riding lesson.

Peter began to slow Trojan, hollering to Lily to do the same with Dusky. Then they turned their horses back toward the east. 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 Peter and smiled. "Did I do well?"

"You did perfectly. 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," Peter 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 she knew he'd catch her easily. Lily was enjoying the thrill of the chase until Dusky darted quickly to the side. With Dusky's head turned, Lily could see the kind of fear in the horse's eyes that no rider ever wants to see. Then, Dusky stopped and raised her front legs, her hooves pawing at the air in front of them. Lily grabbed the pommel and held on for dear life. But when Dusky bucked again Lily lost her balance and slid off the horse's back to the ground. She watched in terror as the sky flew out over her and then everything went dark.

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Peter 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. Peter 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 Peter 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. Peter left them in the pasture. They'd have to make their own way home.

As Peter carried Lily over the yard toward the house, Goliath came running toward them, his bark sounding an alarm. This brought Moe running from the barn.

“What the hell happened? Is she all right?” Moe asked.

“Dusky was spooked by something and threw her.”

“She have any injuries?”

“Not that I can see.”

Moe hurried to the back door of the ranch and held it open for Peter who 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.” Peter began to take an inventory of her arms and legs, feeling each one for broken bones. He took off Lily’s boots.

“I’ll go round up the horses,” Moe said, as he left the room.

“Thank you,” Peter said and then began undressing Lily, being careful to move her as little as possible. He looked for lacerations and contusions but found nothing, save a bump on the back of her head, which he found as he removed the hairpins that had survived the ride. There was no blood so, fortunately, the skin hadn’t broken. Once he’d stripped her down to her chemise, which she’d managed to tuck into her breeches, he pulled the covers 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, resting his chin on Peter’s knee. Peter 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 was still sitting next to the bed, his face twisted with grief, when Moe came back from taking care of the horses. “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.”

Peter 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?” Peter shook his head, so Moe left him to his vigil.

After Moe had eaten, Peter could hear him rustle about in the kitchen, feeding Goliath, and 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.”

Peter 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. Peter 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 earlier than they usually went to bed. He lit the kerosine lantern on the dresser. “Holler for me if you need anything, all right?”

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