



With
EACH
TOMORROW

TRACIE PETERSON
KIMBERLEY WOODHOUSE



THE JEWELS OF KALISPELL + 2



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This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the authors' imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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This book is lovingly dedicated to the
Christian Mommy Writers Group.

For all the Woodhouse Easter eggs
and screaming peaches. Thank you
for all the smiles, laughter, and encouragement.

I just wanted you to know how much
I adore every one of you and absolutely
love being your honorary den mother.

Dear Reader,

This series features three beautiful historic landmarks in Kalispell. First, the Carnegie Library (*The Heart's Choice*), which is now the Hockaday Museum of Art. Then the Great Northern Railway Depot (*With Each Tomorrow*), which is now the Chamber of Commerce. And finally, book three will feature the grand McIntosh Opera House, which is located above what is now Western Outdoor on Main Street.

Though based on real locations and, at times, real people, this book is a work of fiction.

The railroad was the life and death of a town in the 1800s and early 1900s. It provided a way in and out of the town, and the promise of well-maintained telegram lines (as these inevitably followed the railroad tracks). Towns fought over who would get the railroad and petitioned the various railroad companies to come through their area. In other cases, towns were created as railroads built their lines. They often called these end-of-the-tracks towns. In some cases, they never grew larger than a so-called whistle-stop, where the train would blow its whistle as it passed through and snag the mailbag from a high pole alongside the tracks while throwing out the incoming mail onto the platform. Usually, these towns were also the water stops, since the early steam trains used thousands and thousands of pounds of water per hour of operation.

When a railroad designed their tracks to sidestep a town, it wasn't at all unusual for that town to pick up and move. Buildings were put on pallets and dragged by teams of draft horses. Wagons and skids were loaded with whatever could be transplanted and the entire town went to where the railroad was going to be.

That's how important the railroad was in the old West.

For a time, Kalispell was a regional headquarters for the Great Northern Railway. Farmers relied on the railroad to transport their crops, and ranchers to move their cattle. The town employed a great many men for the railroad. So imagine the distress when it was announced that, because the mountain grade was too dangerous, the railroad officials were moving their regional headquarters from Kalispell to Whitefish, Montana. The people of Kalispell were devastated and feared it would mean the end of their town. After all, they'd seen a nearby community reduced to a ghost town when the railroad bypassed them.

When we discovered this story in our research, it was too interesting to pass up. The citizens of Kalispell are today, as they were then, incredible people who know how to fight for their town and for the benefits they need to continue moving toward the future. Our story is a work of fiction, but we thought it would be interesting to put our characters into the middle of a real historical crisis and see what might happen. We worked to be accurate with the details regarding the railroad and its move, and hope you enjoy the ride.

Kim and Tracie

Prologue

OCTOBER 2, 1894—NEW YORK CITY

Watching the person she loved most in the world die was the absolute worst experience ever. Nothing could be as dreadful. Not even dying herself.

Ellie bit her lip and commanded the tears in her eyes to stop.

They didn't listen.

They puddled in the corners until they spilled down her cheeks in great streams of salty liquid. Licking her lips, she swiped at her cheeks. "Mama? Tell me what to do . . . how can I help you?"

Another wail escaped the woman on the bed.

A woman who no longer resembled the loving mother who'd given birth to her and raised her. Gone were the rosy cheeks and brilliant smile. The plump bosom and curvy figure had shriveled into the gaunt frame that couldn't weigh more than ninety pounds.

Ellie tightened her grip on Mama's hand, willing the pain away.

But another scream tore out of her fragile mother. Ellie clenched her eyes against the sound. She hated cancer! Hated the doctor for not being able to help. Hated God for allowing this.

Just an hour ago Mama had talked to her. With ragged breaths, she'd pleaded with Ellie to trust God and have faith that all would be well. That His will for her life was perfect.

Ellie had nodded and lied. Anything to make Mama feel better.

She might only be fourteen years old, but she'd witnessed too much suffering, too many horrors to believe that God's will was perfect. Or even good. No matter what Mama said. No matter what Ellie had believed as a child. No. Not anymore.

Maybe back when she was little, she'd been gullible enough to believe. Back when Mama was well and whole. She'd been so proud that her daughter had placed her faith in the Almighty.

Her mother had been the strongest woman of faith ever . . . and *this* was what God allowed to happen to her?

It wasn't right.

It would never be right again.

What would she do without Mama?

The hot tears started in earnest again.

Mama's wails dimmed to moans, but she continued to writhe as the stomach cancer ate at her body.

Doc had said it wouldn't be long now. Why couldn't he fix it?

It didn't make sense. Mama was fighting for life, for each breath. If she was still fighting, why couldn't the doctor?

Mama stilled.

The silence was worse than the wails.

"Mama?" Ellie scooted closer.

Waited for her mama's next breath.

She counted to ten before it came.

Mama's body lay limp beneath the thin blanket. Sweat dotted her forehead and Ellie wiped it away.

"Jesus!" Mama's voice sounded with sudden strength. "Take me home!" The cry crackled from her throat.

"No . . . Mama, please . . . I need you. You need to stay with me." Great sobs racked Ellie's frame and she gripped her mother's hand and squeezed.

Mama's face pinched into a grimace again. An agonizing, guttural sound filled the room.

And then . . .

Mama's face relaxed into a smile. Her body lay limp.

Ellie counted.

Mama didn't take a breath.

"*Breathe, Mama.*" The whisper choked its way out. In Ellie's mind, she started counting again.

When she reached five hundred, everything stopped. The counting. The pleas.

The hope.

Everything inside her shattered. Never to be put back together again.

Why would God do this? Why would He take such a beautiful soul? How could God's will be for those so faithful to Him to suffer so much?

She shook Mama's thin hand. Nothing happened.

All color was gone from Mama's face.
No writhing. No moaning. No wailing.
No grimace wrinkled her brow.
No life.
Nothing.
Ellie jerked her hand away. "No!"



AUGUST 10, 1895—KALISPELL, MONTANA

"Owner of the flour mill." Dad grinned and gripped Carter's shoulder tight. "I'm proud of you, son."

Carter Brunswick stood a little taller. He'd worked hard and saved his money for years to get to this day. It was perfect. And his twenty-first birthday to boot. "Thanks. I couldn't have done it without the Lord and, of course, you and Mom."

The smile that stretched across Dad's face was broader than any he'd ever seen. "Let's get on home. Your mother is preparing a celebration."

"A celebration? She shouldn't have gone to the trouble." Even still, he allowed the excitement to build. If he were still a kid, he'd be skipping down the street.

"She wanted it to be a surprise, but you know me . . . I have a hard time keeping secrets." His father's step had a definite bounce to it.

"I won't tell her that you gave it away, but I need to make a stop first. I've asked Pastor Woody to pray over this new venture so I can dedicate the business to the Lord. Mom won't mind, will she?" He stopped in the street. "I was hoping you would join me."

“Your mother won’t mind one bit.” Dad’s jaw quivered for a moment as he pinched his lips together. “And I would be honored.”

They walked in silence to the church, and Carter took the time to calm his nerves. All the nervous energy he’d carried around the last few days was a jumbled mess inside of him. But now that the papers were signed, the flour mill was his—and the depth of what lay ahead was sinking in.

He would be responsible for the mill and its workings. A huge undertaking. Then there were all the employees. Their families would depend on him to make good decisions and keep the business growing. The town needed the flour, as did surrounding areas. One day he’d even branch out and send their delicious wheat flour across the country.

His shoulders dipped a bit under the weight of it all. Had he bitten off more than he could chew?

Dad and his partner—Fred—had started their wheat farms ten years ago. They’d even helped another man who’d been through hard times get the mill started because neither one of them could manage their farms *and* a mill. But when the mill owner’s wife died, the mill went up for sale.

Carter fasted and prayed for three days and knew without a doubt that he was supposed to purchase the mill and run it.

But in the back of his mind, doubts niggled at him. Was he old enough? Was he wise enough? Would the workers respect him? What if he had issues? Financially. Or with equipment or distribution?

They reached the church steps and Dad stopped at the bottom and turned. “Carter, I know you. I can see the worry crisscrossing your face.” He placed his hand on Carter’s

shoulder again. “You’ve taken on a massive job, but God will see you through. Just like you said, God has provided and opened the door. Keep Him first, and He will guide you.”

“Yes, sir.” He inhaled deep. “That’s why I wanted to come here. It’s important to give my work over to the Lord.”

“Then, let’s go.” Dad headed up the steps and Carter followed.

Twenty-one. He couldn’t believe it. He was the owner of the flour mill at twenty-one! When he was younger, he’d had lots of dreams. Most of them centered around their wheat farm and the mill. But when several of his school chums courted and got married, envy began to seep into his heart and mind.

His *biggest* dream had been to get married, have a family, and carry on the legacy his parents and grandparents gave him. But finding the right gal proved harder than it was to dream it.

He’d done his best to set that part of his dreams aside, but inside, his heart yearned for it no matter how much he tried to quell it.

Taking two stairs at a time, he followed Dad. All in good time. God had given him this part of his dream, He would supply the rest. If it was His will.

Man, he hoped it was. Pastor Watkins opened the double doors as they reached the top step. “Welcome. So good to see the Brunswick men today.” He clapped his hands together. “And what a day it is. Am I looking at the new owner of the flour mill?” His eyebrows wiggled.

“That you are.” Dad patted Carter on the back.

“Wonderful!” He held out an arm toward the sanctuary.

“I asked the elders and deacons to pray with us—just as you asked, Carter.”

“Thank you, Pastor.” As they walked into the space, the smell of lemon oil filled his senses. Someone must have polished the pews recently.

“Let’s head to the front. If you’ll kneel, Carter, the rest of us would like to surround you and lay our hands on your head and shoulders as we approach the throne of Grace.”

Carter nodded and walked forward.

Now that the time was here, everything else fell away. Silence filled the room and he stepped to the altar and knelt.

Surrounded by godly men whom he’d known half of his life, Carter dipped his head and closed his eyes.

Lord, into Your hands I give my life and my business. May I bring glory to Your name . . .

One of the elders began to pray, and a rush of warmth filled him as tears streaked down his cheeks.



TUESDAY, MAY 10, 1904—MONTANA

Every last bit of patience Eleanor Briggs once claimed as her own had disappeared about two hundred miles ago. This train trip used it all.

But why? It wasn't like this was any different from any of the last hundred journeys with her father. This was her life.

She flipped through the pages of *Century* magazine, trying to find something that would occupy her mind.

When would they arrive at their destination?

Mile after mile of endless prairie had left her feeling rather empty and—dare she say it?—lonely. Thank goodness they had finally reached the mountainous region with its magnificent scenery, but even the views out the windows couldn't change the fact that she was bored. And tired.

Of trains.

Of living out of luggage.

Of the same conversations, articles, and lectures on conservation.

Horrid thoughts really, but as long as no one else heard

them, she could be honest. She used to love traveling with her father. His work in assisting his dear friend George Grinnell in seeing to the formation of a new national park in Montana was a worthy cause. Still, there was a restlessness inside her that, at twenty-four years of age, she couldn't quite explain.

Patience was hard to come by, but she couldn't allow others to see her inner turmoil. Especially not her father.

No matter what, she couldn't damage his work or reputation.

So here she sat. On a train. Bored out of her mind.

The train took a steep incline, and it jerked and tilted on the tracks. Oh, she did not like the looks of the curve ahead. Several passengers gasped, and another woman squeaked and gripped the man's arm next to her.

Never in her life had Eleanor been on such a ride. Heavens, if this was how the railroads were built in Montana, perhaps Father and Mr. Grinnell should address that before attempting to bring scads of people out for a national park.

Her heart jumped at the screech of the train's wheels.

The conductor walked through the car, with a calming voice. "We're going over Marias Pass. Don't worry. This is all normal and the train is perfectly safe."

Forcing herself to look down in her lap, she blew out her breath slowly. Normal. Sure. Hadn't her father said that the rail lines *west* of Kalispell were the worst? Over Haskell Pass? With tight curves and bridges the railroad had a headache keeping maintained?

She closed her eyes against the turmoil in her stomach. Haskell Pass was worse. This was Marias Pass. They were fine.

They were fine.

They were fine.

All she had to do was think about something else.

Anything.

The train jerked again, and a small child whimpered and then cried.

Eleanor turned the pages in the magazine and found the article her father had encouraged her to read. It was written by Mr. Grinnell and spoke of the great beauty held by Montana's mountainous regions. He referenced it as the "Crown of the Continent," and given his vast travels all over North America, she supposed he could be trusted as the expert.

The views so far were lovely, even if the journey here might kill them all.

Wincing, she pushed the dreadful thought aside and made herself read the article.

By the time she reached the end, the tracks were straight and level again.

With a sigh, she laid the magazine back in her lap and allowed her gaze to roam the landscape. For years she had listened to her father and George Bird Grinnell speak of Montana and the grandeur of its mountains and the unspoiled wildness of its vast forests. Grinnell had been instrumental in the creation of the Lewis and Clark Forest Reserve. As was his usual approach, he sought Congress to set aside lands in a forest reserve and then went to work convincing them to do more. In the case of Montana, he wanted a great national park to be created. Her father wanted that too.

So did she.

As a conservationist, Stewart Briggs was well known for his belief that the vast, majestic lands of the United States

should be preserved for everyone to enjoy. For years, her father had touted the perils of farmers and ranchers owning thousands and thousands of acres of land, especially when it encompassed large areas of land best preserved by the federal government. She'd heard him speak to more than one group about the unjust practice, and the idea made sense to her. Although—she smiled—every once in a while her mind liked to argue the other side. Even though she didn't understand it and hadn't researched it. What would it be like to own a large ranch or farm? What if the land was passed down from generation to generation? Questions flourished. But it was best to agree with her father. He'd done plenty of research over the years.

Of course, he was violently opposed to the Homestead Act of 1862 that gave millions of acres of land to settlers who were willing to improve it. "*Why improve what Nature has perfected?*" was Father's motto.

This also made sense to her.

Still, in their travels through the country she'd seen many family farms. That was a piece of the puzzle she wished to understand. Obviously, they needed food to eat, but did one family need so much? It was not a topic she could bring up with her father.

Grinnell often used Father to raise money for his causes, and the two were determined to see land ownership limited in America.

"Did you see George's article?"

She glanced up to see her father return to his seat from the smoking car.

At least some conversation would pass the time. "I did. I must say he intrigued me with his comment that this area is

the Crown of the Continent.” She glanced out the window. “It is impressive, but I could compare it to the Colorado Rockies . . . say, Estes Park. Surely that place could also be called a Crown of the Continent. And what about some of the scenery we’ve seen in photographs of Alaska? Photos never do justice to an area, but it is easy to see that Alaska holds many great views. Perhaps it could also hold the title.” Not that she necessarily *wanted* to argue with her father about the same things they’d already discussed at length, but something inside egged her on.

“You are simply in a disagreeable mood. If Grinnell says it’s the Crown of the Continent, then I doubt we shall be disappointed. Already the scenery has changed from prairie to mountains.”

As if she couldn’t see that for herself—

Stop it, Eleanor. She blinked away the disrespectful thought.

Her father took out his pocket watch and frowned. “This thing isn’t keeping proper time at all. I just inquired of the porter, and it was completely off.” He shook the watch a bit. “Remind me when we’re in Kalispell to seek a repair shop.”

“I will.” Eleanor set aside the magazine and picked up her journal. Just like Father to change the subject and shut down a conversation when he didn’t like where it was headed.

Oh my. She *was* in a disagreeable mood.

She dug a pencil out of her pocket and made a note to herself: *Watch repair in Kalispell.*

She put the pencil back and closed the journal. “How much longer for this trip?”

“Not all that far. Four hours at the most. The mountainous terrain will slow us considerably, but hopefully we’ll soon be able to glimpse the full glory of Montana.”

After days on the train, four hours wasn't all that much. So why did it seem an eternity? She picked up the magazine again but tossed it aside almost instantly. There was nothing in it to hold her attention.

Why was she so . . . restless? Unsatisfied?

Every bit of this feeling was unsettling. She and Father had gotten into a comfortable pattern. Why couldn't she just go on with the way things had been?

She released a sigh.

"I hesitate to mention it"—Father brushed lint off his trousers—"but before we left Chicago, I had a letter from New York."

She turned to him and schooled her features. Father expected her to listen—no matter how mundane the topic. No need to react until he said exactly what the letter was about. Since New York had once been their home state, it was anyone's guess what information the letter might contain.

"It was from the Brewsters."

She tipped her head ever so slightly, keeping her eyes on her lap. The mention of the family threatened to twist her insides. But she willed her heart to slow and kept her mask of indifference. "And how are they?"

"They offered a bit of news. It seems their eldest son, Andrew, is marrying in August. They invited us to attend. A formal invitation will be sent later, but they know how busy I am and wanted to give some warning."

"And do you plan for us to attend?" Every bit of her hoped against hope Father would say no. A long time ago, when she and Andrew were still young, they had been considered a couple. She found him compatible enough, handsome, and even intelligent, but he was also self-focused and

rather greedy. She'd put an end to their relationship long before anything official was declared. It didn't seem prudent to attend with such a history.

Still, Eleanor knew the family meant a great deal to her father. If he wanted to go, she would travel with him. Just as she always did.

"Are *you* of a mind to attend?" He rubbed his bearded chin. "I am not opposed if that is your desire."

"Not at all. I have no interest in his wedding." She smoothed her hands over the cover of her journal. "Seems rather senseless to go all the way back to the East Coast when our summer plans clearly have pointed us west." She had no desire to go anywhere back east after this horrid train ride.

Her father relaxed a bit in his seat. Had he been concerned about her reaction? "I'd rather hoped that would be your conclusion on the matter."

"Would you like for me to send a gift when the time is right?" She picked up her journal.

Her father's expression grew thoughtful. "I suppose that would be a kind gesture. What would be appropriate, Ellie?"

Her chest tightened. Why couldn't he remember she wasn't Ellie any longer? Not for ten years. Mother always called her that . . .

And the nickname died with her.

Over the years, Eleanor insisted Father call her by her full name. But every once in a while, he forgot.

Best not to make an issue of it. She smiled at him. "Knowing them as we do, I might suggest crystal. Waterford, of course."

“That sounds sensible. Pick out a piece and let me know when it’s ready. I’ll pen a letter to send when the time is right.”

Eleanor jotted a note, then glanced at him. “Anything else?”

“Nothing of importance.” He settled back and closed his eyes. “Your mother would tell me to use this time for a nap despite the growing beauty outside. I believe I’ll heed her advice and try for a bit of rest before we arrive in Kalispell.”

Mother.

The band around Eleanor’s heart tightened even more. They had mentioned her less and less as the years passed, but for some reason Father had mentioned her more and more since heading out west this trip.

Was Mother on his mind that much? Even after all these years? Perhaps in his older age, he was simply recalling fond memories of her.

Father’s soft snores filled the space. Didn’t take him long, did it?

Eleanor turned back to the window. Although, instead of Montana, she saw the last few weeks of her mother’s life. Heard Mama praying for death to come quickly . . .

Even now, it ripped Eleanor’s heart in two.

That had been her first experience with death. It was horrible. How could Mama say that if this was the will of God, they would bear it with grace?

The will of God? For a woman to bear such wretched pain that she could scarcely draw breath? The will of God for a fourteen-year-old child and her father to watch their dearest on earth suffer for weeks on end? Where was *grace* in that?

Mama's words washed over Eleanor until she couldn't bear it. She closed her eyes and squeezed them against the barrage.

Pray for understanding and peace of mind.

God will provide comfort.

He's a good and loving Father who watches faithfully over His children.

Trust Him. Trust Him. Trust Him . . .

Rebel tears slipped out from underneath her lashes no matter how much she commanded them to stop.

No.

Eleanor blinked and swiped at her cheeks. No more. She couldn't deal with it.

She frowned and cast a glance at her father. He was still asleep. What would he think of her rambling thoughts?

While Mother was alive, Father had been by her side, at church every time the doors were open. But after her death, he lost himself in his conservation work and the new scientific discoveries of the day, and bit by bit, little was ever mentioned about spiritual matters. That suited Eleanor just fine.

Every once in a while, her mother's teachings drifted through her mind, and a great swell of the faith she'd felt as a child would overwhelm her. But it was easily pushed away.

They traveled so much that their friends and family had no idea if they attended church or not. What did it matter anyway? Most people assumed someone was a Christian if they acted with kindness and bowed their head for the mealtime prayer.

Eleanor propped her chin in her hand, watching trees

and mountains swim together in a dizzying palette of grays, browns, and greens. This was what really mattered, wasn't it? Conserving the land. Making sure generations after them could enjoy the splendor and beauty the western frontier had to offer.

There was enough to do without worrying about faith.

Besides, Father's work and writing had garnered him a small measure of notoriety. People didn't seem to care what he believed since he was making the world a better place. As far as she was concerned, the less said about God, the easier it was to ignore His existence.

Plain and simple.

He'd taken away her mother. He deserved no better.

"We'll reach Kalispell in about twenty minutes." The conductor's voice reached the fuzzy edges of Eleanor's brain.

Opening her eyes, she straightened and looked across the way to where her father sat, his gaze fixed out the window. When had she fallen asleep?

"This is amazing country, Ellie."

She shook the haze from her mind, smoothed her traveling suit, patted her hair, and leaned toward the window. Now that the train had slowed, she could make out the complex details of the landscape. Majestic mountains rose in snow-covered glory against a brilliant blue sky. Forests of pines, thick and lush, pointed ever upward across the green valley floor, scaling the mountainsides like Alpine climbers.

"It's most impressive."

"I can see why George wants part of this state set aside as a national park. We shall have a wonderful time on this trip." He clasped his hands together and grinned like a

schoolboy. “Already I have a feeling of great consequence. It’s almost as if I’m meeting my destiny head on.”

Eleanor stared at him, a chill washing over her. Pulling her gaze away, she shifted it to the window. What had Father meant by that? She had no desire for this trip to be one of great consequence. Normalcy and peace were all that she longed for. Putting aside a momentary sense of panic, she drew a deep steadying breath.

“Maybe we should think of settling down this way, Ellie.”

Ah. So there it was. *And* another use of her nickname. What was going on with him? “But why here? I’ve never heard you *once* speak of settling down. You said there was too much work to do.” She hated that she sounded accusatory, but at least it was honest. They’d promised to always be honest with each other.

“Yes, but I am fifty-five years old. I won’t be able to continue this life indefinitely.”

Since when did Stewart Briggs talk of retiring from his conservationist work? Why would he start now? He was still young and able-bodied. Fifty-five wasn’t all that old. She’d seen him climb mountains and raft rivers with the strength of a man half his age.

“We no longer call New York City home, and I truly have no desire to return there. The only thing we left behind was your mother’s grave, and certainly she would admonish us to disregard that matter. As much as I loved her with my whole heart, I know that she never wanted us to spend our days at the cemetery mourning her passing.”

Panic rose further in her chest. She wasn’t attached to Mother’s grave, and what Father said was true. Still, the

direction of this conversation was unnerving. “No. Indeed not. Mother was clear about that.”

“It seems we should probably give some thought to where we might like to settle.” He leaned back in his seat. “You’re at the age where you should take a husband, not continue traipsing around behind your father.”

What? Eleanor turned and faced him, placing her hand on his sleeve. “Where is this coming from?” She shook her head. “You’ve never been one to push me to marry.”

Father’s face tightened and he refused to meet her gaze. “I suppose it was that news about young Andrew. Sometimes I think about your sacrifice to work at my side and wonder if it was the wisest choice I might have made to allow it.”

Eleanor stiffened. “Have I disappointed you? Have I failed in assisting you?”

“Of course not.” As the train slowed, Father leaned closer and covered her hand with his, giving it a pat. “My thoughts were only that I may have kept you from the life you should have had. You might have married and had children by now. Most of your friends have done so.”

That last sentence sliced through her middle like a knife. “I do not regret my choice to work at your side, Father. I hope you don’t regret it either.” She slipped her hand from his grasp and lifted her chin, giving him a pointed look. If ever there was a time to change the subject, it was now.

He didn’t take the hint. “I don’t. I just think perhaps it’s time for an . . . adjustment. For now, however, let us explore the area around us and see what George has to say about his strides toward getting the president’s ear on this matter.

President Roosevelt is a tremendous supporter of preserving the lands. It would be the perfect end to my career if I should share in the creation of a national park.”

Eleanor clenched the arm of the seat as if she might suddenly be thrown to the floor if she loosened her grip. She forced her hand to relax. Everything would be all right. Father was just having a moment of reflection. He hadn't really had time to think things through. He wasn't going to give up his conservation work. He wasn't going to insist they settle down in one place.

But . . . why did that bother her so? Hadn't she just been abhorring the length of yet another journey?

She was simply tired. Not herself. She squared her shoulders and glanced at her reflection in the window. Her hat was on straight, and her coat lapels lay perfectly flat against the simple collar of her blouse. She was ready for Kalispell and whatever fate it had in store.

The train came to a stop. She stood and collected her bag.

If she was feeling addled and stressed from the treacherous trip the last few hours, then Father might be as well. Maybe that's where all the retirement conversation was coming from. Too much time to think on the train ride.

But then to bring up marriage! He just *had* to remind her that she was a spinster.

Tingles ran up and down her right leg. Then her hat took that moment to come undone, and it flopped down over her eyes.

Reaching a hand up to right it, she fiddled with the cantankerous object until her hand came back full of feathers