



Texas Heir (The Cowboys series Book 4)

By Linda Warren

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It's just the reality check Cari needs to get over Reed. But when a plane crash strands her in the west Texas desert with the man she loves, she can't hide her feelings. And now they have only each other to depend on for their survival.

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Editorial Review

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Cari Michaels was having a "take two Tylenol" type of day.

And it was only five minutes to eight.

With tires squealing, she swerved into her parking spot with the speed and arrogance of her sixteen-year-old nephew. She had five minutes to make the executive meeting on time.

Why was Reed Dalton Preston, CEO of Dalton's Department Stores, calling an impromptu gathering of his executives this early? The one morning her alarm clock chose to die.

Seconds ticked away.

No sweat. She'd make it.

Thrusting the gearshift into Park, she turned off the engine and grabbed her purse and briefcase. Then she was off at a run for the elevator, her heels tapping in three-quarter time across the pavement in the parking garage. She prayed Homer, the elevator operator, was waiting with the door open.

He was. She could see his smiling round face, and then she heard a snap. The next thing she knew she was kissing hard, dirty concrete. She moaned as burning needles of pain shot through her knee and elbow.

Damn! Damn! Damn!

Her day just got worse.

"Ms. Cari, are you okay?" Through a wave of humiliation she heard Homer's worried voice and rolled to her feet faster than a quarterback nailed for a loss.

"Yes, Homer. I'm fine." She brushed off her black Prada pantsuit and took a deep breath. "Just broke a heel." She raised her foot to remove the offending shoe and held it up, but she didn't have a moment to chat. Time was running out and she knew she'd get "The Look" from Reed if she slid into her seat one second late.

Homer picked up her briefcase and purse and handed them to her with a concerned look in his eyes.

"Thank you," she said, and hobbled into the elevator. "Can you make Louise fly?"

"No, ma'am," Homer replied, adjusting his bellman's cap with the Dalton logo on it. "She only goes one speed." Homer was mentally challenged and he took his job seriously. He'd named the elevator Louise and sometimes he stayed until every executive was out of the building because he didn't like anyone pushing Louise's buttons but him. Everyone loved Homer, including Cari.

As the elevator smoothly glided upward she removed her other heel. Being just five feet three inches tall, she really needed the heels for the extra confidence-boosting height.

Glancing down, she saw she'd ripped her slacks at the knee. There was also dirt on her cobalt-blue silk blouse. Great. Now she was going to look like a street urchin, but she wasn't missing the meeting.

Elevator music, Bach or Beethoven or something, played in the background and it started to get on her nerves. Why was this thing going so slow? Louise needed a checkup.

"My mama says it doesn't matter what you look like as long as you have a good heart." Homer's bit of wisdom made Cari wonder if she looked that bad.

"You have a good heart, Ms. Cari."

"Thank you, Homer. So do you."

The doors opened. She smiled at Homer a second before she dashed out and down the hall to the private door of her office.

Homer's "Have a good day" followed her.

She threw the shoes and her briefcase onto her desk and took a moment to glance at herself in the mirror by the door. Slipping her purse strap over her shoulder, she ran her fingers through her short, blow-and-go, dark brown hair. At the moment it was more blow than go.

Her sister, the beautician, had talked her into the style. Chic and stylish, Kitty had said—just what Cari needed for her busy lifestyle. Shaking her head, she hoped her hair looked chic instead of looking more like it had been cut with a weed-eater.

And who's going to notice, she asked herself as she darted out the door to the boardroom. Certainly not Reed Preston. Cari remembered vividly the first time she had seen Reed. He and Richard Preston, his father, were making a tour of the store, something Mr. Preston didn't do too often. But Reed was home for the summer from the University of Texas and Mr. Preston was priming him to take over the reins of Dalton's. Everyone had been on their toes, watching their p's and q's for the momentous occasion.

She'd been a naive, gauche teenager determined to make something of her life away from the small farm where she'd been raised. When she looked at Reed, she saw everything she'd been looking for and everything she could never have. He was tall with dark hair and warm, brown eyes. Cari knew Reed was as far out of her reach as Prince William. Not that she wanted the prince, but that's how she thought of Reed—as the Prince of Dalton's.

So did a lot of other women.

She kept her feelings secret. No one knew how she felt about Reed except Marisa Kincaid, Reed's sister, a woman whose struggles with her difficult, demanding family had put her in desperate need of a good friend.

When Marisa was seventeen she'd fallen in love with a rodeo cowboy, Colter Kincaid. Marisa was in training to be a concert pianist and her involvement with Colter was unacceptable to the Prestons. With lies and threats her family had broken them up, but Marisa soon discovered she was pregnant. Unable to locate Colter, Marisa had to deal with her parents alone. She refused abortion and adoption, intending to keep her baby. She had underestimated her parents, though.

Marisa had problems with the pregnancy, so the Prestons devised a plan. They told their daughter the baby was stillborn. In truth, they had called Colter and offered him the baby. For years Marisa grieved for her child. At the time she lived with her mother in New York, and she sank into deep depression, unable to play the piano. Her father had brought her to Texas to heal.

Once Marisa was in Texas, the lies and deceit began to unravel. Marisa found out her daughter was very

much alive. It had taken a while, but she and Colter had fallen in love again, too. It hadn't been an easy time and Cari had been there for Marisa when she'd needed to talk. Cari admitted their friendship had undoubtedly helped her gain a vice presidency at Dalton's, but she also had earned it.

She had realized at an early age that she didn't want to spend the rest of her life as a salesclerk and, with four siblings, her parents couldn't afford to send her to college or even junior college. So that first year she'd saved every dime she could and took night courses at a junior college, finally finishing up her business degree at the University of Texas in Dallas while continuing to work for Dalton's.

When she entered the boardroom, Cari summoned her years of experience and quietly took her seat at the polished oak table, which could seat twenty people. The paneling on the walls was made of the same vibrant wood, trimmed in an ornate, hand-carved pattern unlike anything Cari had ever seen. Photos of all the stores across Texas, as well as the store's founder, Harold Dalton, hung on the walls. The first time Cari had stepped into this room the sight of it had taken her breath away.

An arrangement of white irises and lavender lilacs took pride of place in the center of the table. Fresh flowers always adorned this room. Their delicate fragrance drifted to her and Cari relaxed, uncaring that her slacks were torn and her blouse was dirty.

The executive team had already taken their seats and Reed stood at the head of the table, looking directly at her. She stared back at him. Yet those honey brown eyes didn't waver for a second.

Nor did hers.

"Nice of you to join us, Ms. Michaels," he said in his deep, smooth voice that usually curled her toes into her shoes. Since she wasn't wearing shoes, her toes curled against the polished hardwood floor that felt cool to her stocking feet.

She smiled sweetly, not rising to the bait.

"I know you're wondering why I called this meeting." Reed turned his attention elsewhere and she let out her breath, not even realizing she was holding it. Her elbow was throbbing and she just wanted to go to her office and regroup for the day. She was sure she'd left her pride somewhere on that garage floor and she desperately needed to get it back.

George, the man on her right, sat with a pen in his hand ready to jot down every word out of Reed's mouth. Mike, across from her, was poised the same way. Cari's pen was in her purse and she didn't see the need to fish for it. Reed's personal assistant always sent memos just in case anyone missed anything.

"I'll make this short," Reed said. "I know you're eager to get back to your jobs. Or at least I hope you are."

That caused a round of muffled laughter.

Cari took a moment to study Reed. In jeans, a crisp white shirt, a lightweight sports jacket and cowboy boots—she couldn't see them but she knew he always wore custom-made Kincaid boots—he appeared to have stepped out of the pages of *Texas Monthly* magazine. His tall lean frame showed off the clothes, but there was something about him that bespoke power and wealth. Maybe it was the way he looked directly into your eyes. Or that strong chin. Or that razzle-dazzle, made-for-Hollywood smile. Or an elusive quality that was embedded in the way he moved and spoke.

But to her it was none of those things. She admired the man within, the man who was striving to prove to his

father he could run Dalton's with strength and compassion. Reed was more involved with his employees than Mr. Preston had ever been. Homer had a job because of Reed. Mr. Preston would never have allowed Homer to be hired.

Reed had new ideas and a new way of doing business. It was showing results. Profits were at an all-time high and Cari enjoyed working with her boss, being on his team. But she wondered if he'd ever see her as a woman.

A desirable woman.

At thirty-four, marriage and family were becoming important to her. If she kept waiting for Reed Preston, her biological clock was going to spit and sputter and run out of time.

"I wanted to let my executive team know before the news hits the papers," Reed was saying. "Daphne Harwood and I are engaged. We're planning an early spring wedding."

What did he say?

People jumped up, shaking his hand and congratulating him. Cari felt herself turning to stone. All her dreams, everything she'd ever hoped for, ended in...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Thomas Welty:

Do you considered one of people who can't read gratifying if the sentence chained in the straightway, hold on guys this particular aren't like that. This Texas Heir (The Cowboys series Book 4) book is readable by simply you who hate the perfect word style. You will find the details here are arrange for enjoyable studying experience without leaving also decrease the knowledge that want to supply to you. The writer of Texas Heir (The Cowboys series Book 4) content conveys objective easily to understand by many people. The printed and e-book are not different in the written content but it just different in the form of it. So , do you still thinking Texas Heir (The Cowboys series Book 4) is not loveable to be your top list reading book?

Luke Palmieri:

Reading can called head hangout, why? Because if you find yourself reading a book specially book entitled Texas Heir (The Cowboys series Book 4) the mind will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in every single aspect that maybe mysterious for but surely will become your mind friends. Imaging every single word written in a guide then become one web form conclusion and explanation this maybe you never get before. The Texas Heir (The Cowboys series Book 4) giving you another experience more than blown away your mind but also giving you useful data for your better life on this era. So now let us present to you the relaxing pattern the following is your body and mind will be pleased when you are finished reading it, like winning a game. Do you want to try this extraordinary paying spare time activity?

Carole Clark:

Texas Heir (The Cowboys series Book 4) can be one of your beginner books that are good idea. We all recommend that straight away because this e-book has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining but delivering the information. The article author giving his/her effort to put every word into satisfaction arrangement in writing Texas Heir (The Cowboys series Book 4) although doesn't forget the main point, giving the reader the hottest along with based confirm resource data that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information can certainly drawn you into brand-new stage of crucial pondering.

Scott Manuel:

In this era globalization it is important to someone to acquire information. The information will make professionals understand the condition of the world. The fitness of the world makes the information much easier to share. You can find a lot of recommendations to get information example: internet, newspapers, book, and soon. You can see that now, a lot of publisher which print many kinds of book. The actual book that recommended to you is Texas Heir (The Cowboys series Book 4) this book consist a lot of the information on the condition of this world now. This specific book was represented just how can the world has grown up. The words styles that writer use to explain it is easy to understand. Often the writer made some investigation when he makes this book. That's why this book suitable all of you.

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