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Traditional Romance
Approximately 50,000 words

Retitled: Chasing Charlie

MY HEROES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN COWBOYS

SYNOPSIS

by
Kathy Carmichael

H's
GOAL

When Davis Murphy, owner of Murphy Title Company, avid cowboy wannabe and one of Dallas's most eligible bachelors asks Charlie Nelson to pretend to be his fiancé, her first reaction is to run like hell.

Charlie, who was raised by her over-protective older brothers on their south Texas cattle ranch, wants only one thing in life, and that's to avoid thrill-seeking cowboys. She clings to the security of her safe, yet dull life as a librarian in Dallas.

Davis needs a fiancé so his widowed mother will marry her beloved Jim, whose company is transferring him to Tokyo in two weeks. She has refused to wed until Davis is settled. Charlie is the perfect answer if only she'll go along with the scheme.

Davis shows up at Charlie's home just as her ex-boyfriend arrives, bearing an engagement ring. She pleads with Davis to rescue her from what promises to be an embarrassing situation.

He whisks her off to meet his mother. While his plan

story
question

Heroine's
I.C.

her
motivation
her
goal

his
motivation

Hero's
I.C.
thinks
@ I.C.

external
conflict
plot

succeeds, and his mother accepts Charlie as her future daughter-in-law, his engagement creates unexpected consequences.

getting it
wrong
ups
ante

His mother sets her wedding date for the next weekend and announces it will be held at Jim's home on Lake Texoma. She begs Charlie to be her maid of honor. Charlie, who has longed for a mother as endearing as Mrs. Murphy, finds it impossible to refuse her request, even though it means spending a weekend with Davis.

While Charlie intellectually refuses to become involved with a cowboy, her heart doesn't cooperate. Davis isn't like any cowboy she's ever known and she keeps forgetting he is determined to be one, especially when he kisses her.

emotional
change

mention of kiss

All hell breaks loose the next weekend when her overprotective brothers arrive -- prepared for a shotgun wedding. Her roommate let slip that Charlie had gone out of town, alone, with a man. They are hurt and angry when they learn of Charlie's engagement and that she hadn't told them about it.

ups
ante
further

Davis steps into the breach and takes the heat off her. He weaves a story of how they fell in love at first sight and only became engaged the previous week.

romance

Once the Nelson brothers calm down, they put their heads together with Mrs. Murphy. They decide to throw an engagement barbecue at their ranch the following weekend, just before Davis's mother and Jim leave for Tokyo.

ups
ante

Charlie's unable to tell her brothers that her engagement to Davis is a sham without risking Mrs. Murphy canceling the nuptials scheduled for the following day.

getting it
wrong

Davis is pleased at the chance to see how a real ranch is run and can't wait for the following weekend. The Nelson brothers are well known and respected ex-rodeo circuit riders who provide the livestock for one of the largest rodeos in Texas.

During the next week, Davis can't stop thinking about Charlie. One moment prissy and the next incredibly sexy, she's an enigma that leaves him laughing and breathless at the same time. He realizes he loves her with a depth he'd never believed possible. When he tries to make his feelings known to her on their way to the Nelson ranch, it doesn't come out as he intended. Charlie is left with the belief he'd like to continue their engagement, but only because her brothers are his heroes.

They arrive at the ranch and there's no time to make his intentions clear before her brothers come out to greet them. Davis decides to ask her again on their way home, when hopefully he'll find the right words to ask her to marry him.

Although Charlie suspects she has lost her heart to the cowboy, she believes she can't measure up to what Davis wants in a woman. She resolves to play out the final act in the charade and then she'll never see Davis again.

Later that evening, she's horrified to learn her brothers entered Davis in a small town rodeo the day after the barbecue. She spends the weekend pleading with Davis not to do it. He convinces her that he must. She can't ask him to give up the dream he's worked so hard to achieve.

The barbecue passes in a blur and before she knows it the

1st love
hero

getting
it
wrong

wrong

1st love
heroine

ups
ante
&
her
internal
conflict

why they
can't be
together

time for the rodeo has arrived. With tears in her eyes, she watches the cowboy she's come to love in spite of herself, ride into the arena, all the while reliving her past. Her parents had been killed on their way to compete and the adult who'd taken their place in her heart had ridden into the ring certain of victory. Instead, she'd cried over his casket.

She squeezes her eyes shut, unable to watch another death of a man she is helpless to protect. Damn these idiot cowboys! Years of pent-up anger wells up inside her, anger for not being able to stop a risk-taking cowboy. Why can't she mean more to him than some foolish need to prove he's macho or braver than all the others?

The crowd around her exclaims loudly and she snaps her lids open. Is he injured? There before her stands Davis, with his steer roped in record time. Yet, he could have been killed.

Davis is thrilled, but his success doesn't bode well for any future they might have had together. No matter how she feels about him, she won't allow herself to go through the pain of watching him take life-threatening risks. He was incredibly lucky, but what will happen the next time?

She returns to Dallas, certain she's right: life with a cowboy is no life for her.

Davis spends the next week rethinking how he might have done things differently and trying to understand Charlie's reactions. Eventually he realizes what she objects to isn't cowboys but taking risks with his life. He considers this a sign that she

VPS
I.C.
ante
not what

heroes
Black
moment

getting
it
wrong

getting
it
right

returns his love.

Another heartbreaking week later, Charlie is stunned when he shows up at the library. He asks for her hand in marriage. With tears in her eyes, she says she loves him but can't marry him.

So the
wrong

He asks her to wait to give him her final answer. He takes her to an area outside the city where the countryside is dotted with ranches and homes. Eventually, he pulls into a gravel driveway. Overhead, there's a circular metal sign that reads: The Dallas Branch Ranch.

It's only a twenty-acre ranch, just enough for him to get his feet wet with ranching, but he has an option on enough acres to make a go of the business should it work out. Her brothers have gone into partnership with him and he's breeding a half-dozen head of cattle to start.

hero's
Black
Moment
- he's
risking ALL

He tells her his dreams of ranching will be futile without her to share it. He points out that to have really lived, a person has to make choices and take chances.

Charlie loves Davis. Could short-term happiness with him be worth the risk of losing him? She hasn't been avoiding cowboys. She's been avoiding life by hiding behind the stacks at the library. Is she strong enough to marry a man who takes risks on almost a daily basis? Feeling as though she's stepping off a cliff, she opens her mouth to say yes.

getting it
right

Davis interrupts. He explains that he's more than willing to give up the rodeo in return for a life with her. The reality of ranching is what he wants, not the fantasy of chasing buckles

Resolution

as a rodeo cowboy. He asks her to take a chance on him.

Charlie loves Davis and realizes that sometimes risking everything is the only way to find happiness. Davis is ecstatic when she agrees to ride off into the sunset with the only kind of cowboy she could ever love: one exactly like him.

THE END

↑
*wrap it
up with
answering
the story ques:
use that same
language

Have
circle
answers
story
question

Will she
keep
running the
hell