

Tulsa Trespass

The Tulsa Series #3

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Tulsa Trespass

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Note from The Author

Regarding the Tulsa Series

The 4-title Tulsa series has had a long and interesting journey. In the late 1990s, I had just completed the last of four contemporary romance novels for Barbour Publishing's *Heartsong* line. At that time, I was approached by my editor at Barbour to submit ideas to him for historical fiction.

Because I've lived in the Tulsa area for most of my adult life, I knew a little bit about the infamous Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. But honestly, at that time, no one talked much about it. (That later changed as survivors began to speak up.) I knew that that event would serve as the backdrop for my historical, Christian, Tulsa series.

The very same day that my editor asked me for historical fiction ideas, I sat down and wrote out thumbnail sketches for all four titles. He liked the ideas and offered a 4-book contract.

All four, then, were originally published through Barbour's *Heartsong* line where they enjoyed immense popularity. (I still have file folders full of fan letters.)

Later, when the idea of eBooks was in its infancy, an independent group offered to publish my series digitally. As often happens in the publishing industry, the whole thing fell apart due to 1) being ahead of the

curve regarding digitally-produced books, and 2) poor business management.

And, yes, yet another group purporting to be an independent publisher, also had their hands in the pie. That too fell apart.

Discouraging to say the least.

The Tulsa Series languished until I recently resurrected them and placed them on Amazon's Kindle. Even with that, little was done to promote the titles.

But this is a new day!

Presently, the four titles are decked out in delightful new covers, plus all will now be available in both print *and* digitally.

I trust as a reader, you will enjoy these stories as much as I enjoyed researching and writing them.

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Chapter 1

Tessa Jurgen pulled her hankie from the pocket of her green-striped Halliburton-Abbott smock and patted the perspiration from her forehead. The ceiling fans above her turned lazily, seemingly a joke as they gave no relief from the sweltering heat. Normally, she enjoyed the aromas of crisp new fabrics from the bolts of cloth on the shelves, but in the dead, hot August air, the musty odor was overpowering.

The customer on the other side of the counter, Mrs. Drake, was one Tessa preferred not to wait on. The woman was hopelessly indecisive. Her simple housedress hung on her limply and the artificial flowers in her brimless toque hat looked as lifeless as Tessa felt. Mrs. Drake hadn't even bothered to arrange the veil.

At her customer's request, Tessa reached up to pull down a large bolt of pink tissue gingham, which was nearly as big as she was. As the bolt hit the wooden counter with a slam, Mrs. Drake was already shaking her head.

"Oh no, no, Miss Jurgen." Rubbing the cloth between her fingers, she said, "This will never do. Too thin. Much too thin. My Sue Lynn likes fabric with more substance for her school dresses." She scanned the rows of bolts lining the shelves behind Tessa. "Let me see the printed voile. There, the one with the pink flowers against the green background."

"Yes, ma'am. Printed voile coming up." Again, she strained to pull down the bolt without dropping it from sheer weight. A sharp pain stabbed through her arm reminding her of the bullet wound she'd received during the Tulsa riot three months ago.

Gaven had told her she shouldn't be lifting so much weight, but she had to work somewhere. She might be engaged to Gaven MacIntyre, but he wasn't supporting her yet.

Again Mrs. Drake tested the fabric by rubbing it between her fingers. "Mmm. Better. Both the same price?"

"Both are forty-nine cents a yard, Mrs. Drake." Tessa shifted from one foot to the other, her feet feeling hot and sweaty in the heavy oxfords. Absently she fingered the strand of pearls at her neck.

Mrs. Drake pulled a McCall's dress pattern from her shopping bag. Pausing a minute, she used the pattern envelope as a fan. "Goodness. This frightful heat. I'll be thankful to see fall get here." After giving a couple more waves, she studied the back of the pattern. "Figure number two with the gathered skirt calls for about four yards."

Out of the corner of her eye, Tessa saw her black friend, Chloe Franklin, walk slowly into the dry goods department staying well out of the way of all the white customers. Tessa gave her a smile and Chloe smiled back.

"Well, Miss Jurgen? Are you going to measure my fabric or not? I said four yards."

"Oh, yes ma'am. Four yards." Tessa deftly unrolled the bolt, measuring each yard against the brass ruler fastened to the edge of the wooden counter. "Will you need thread?" Tessa asked as she cut the piece of fabric and folded it neatly.

"Let me think." Mrs. Drake resumed her fanning with the pattern. "I can't remember whether I have any spools of green."

The floor superintendent, Ila Taylor, came strolling through the department, keys jingling from the belt of her dark high-throated dress. Tessa watched as she stepped up to Chloe to tell her to move over out of the way. Chloe picked up her heavy shopping bag and moved further back. Tessa clenched her teeth to keep from speaking out. Grabbing the sales pad, she quickly figured the price of the fabric and scribbled the numbers.

"Do you need thread?" Tessa asked again, her mind still on Chloe. Before the race riot destroyed most of the black business district of Greenwood a few months ago, Chloe and her friends would never have shopped at the Halliburton-Abbott department store. But now their own stores were gone. Burned.

"You just asked me about the thread, Miss Jurgen. Is the heat getting to you?"

Tessa pulled out her hankie again to touch her face. "Perhaps it is, Mrs. Drake. What did you say about the thread?"

"I said I can't remember if I have green thread at home or not."

Tessa lifted the glass top on the Coats and Clark thread case and selected a spool which matched the fabric and set it on the folded cloth. "Here, Mrs. Drake. As much as you sew for your daughter, you can't have too many spools of green thread, now can you?"

Mrs. Drake chuckled. "I suppose you're right, Miss Jurgen. What a good little sales girl you are. And now let's look at trim. Shall I use lace or rick-rack?" She browsed the case of trim continuing to fan with the pattern package.

"Rick rack would be much more practical for a school dress, don't you think," Tessa suggested as she added the price of thread to the sales slip.

"Oh, you are a dear. Of course, you're right. I need two yards of rick rack. And I think I'll use pink."

Completing the sale, Tessa entered the numbers into the cash register and pulled down the handle to ring up the sale. The drawer flew open with a cling.

After Mrs. Drake left, Chloe took a step to approach the counter when another customer came up in need of a dress zipper. Tessa glanced over at her and gave a slight shrug. Chloe shook her head slowly as if to say it didn't matter. But Tessa wondered if her friend ever got used to such treatment.

At last, the counter was cleared and Tessa motioned to Chloe. "Hurry before someone else comes," she said.

"A body can't hardly hurry in this heat," she said. Her shopping bag appeared to be almost full. "How's the job coming along?" Chloe wanted to know.

"I'm thankful to even have a job, but I'd much rather be teaching. How're Lucie and Wesley?"

"They don't like they new nanny much at all. Nice lady named Mrs. Dunbar. When you was there, Tessa, you was making headway with that contrary little Wesley. Now he acting just like he did before. Trouble, trouble all the time. And little Lucie, she be so sullen. Mrs. Dunbar try her best, but it ain't easy."

Tessa nodded. Her job as governess for the Patton children was terminated the day she befriended Chloe's son, Jasper, when he was in jail. But Tessa was never sorry, since later the boy had been lynched by an angry mob—just days before the riot.

"There's to be another meeting tonight with the attorneys," Chloe said, lowering her voice to a mere whisper. "Will you and Gaven be there?"

Tessa nodded. She was amazed at the giddy feeling which came up in her midsection at the sound of Gaven's name. The strange sensation seemed to well up out of nowhere. "We'll be there. Gaven says if we know what the attorneys say about the pending cases, we can better speak out at the city council meetings."

"You sure gots you a sweet fella in that Gaven. His heart's big as all outdoors. But it took meeting you for him to discover all that love he gots."

"And so, Chloe, just what colors of embroidery thread are you looking for?" Tessa said, raising her voice a level as Ila Taylor sauntered by. She eyed Tessa and Chloe with a critical, calloused expression.

"Variegated. Most definitely variegated." Chloe pointed to the case lined with loops of the colorful threads. "Lavenders and pinks be my all-time favorites."

After the coast was clear, Tessa lowered her voice again. "I know I have a wonderful man in Gaven," she said. "But sometimes I wonder if he's gotten much of a catch in me. Look at me, just a plain old dry-goods clerk in a department store." She touched her strand of pearls at her throat which had been a special gift from Gaven.

"If I wasn't in the presence of all these white folk, I'd turn you 'cross my lap and give you a sound switching for that kind of talk. You the best thing what ever happened to that Gaven boy. He knows it—now you needs to get it into your little noggin as well."

Tessa smiled. "Thanks Chloe. You're exactly what I need." She opened the case to return the embroidery thread.

"Say there. Bring that thread on back out here."

"You really did need embroidery thread?"

"Might sound silly in the face of all we gots to do." She shook her head. "But since I lost all my pretties in the fire, I says to myself, 'Chloe, just making one little pretty is gonna make you feel a whole heap better.'" A soft chuckle bubbled up. "So toss in a set of embroidery hoops girl, and I'm gonna get these old fingers busy."

As if those fingers weren't constantly busy in the kitchen at the Patton mansion, and now in a much larger degree, those hands were helping to rebuild the Greenwood district of Tulsa.

After Chloe left, Floy from housewares came to relieve Tessa for lunch. Floy was a dimpled, vivacious girl with a mop of curly brunette hair and a mouthful of chewing gum. Each morning the hair was perfectly arranged in orderly finger waves beneath her tight-fitting cloche hat. By afternoon the curls were all askew.

"I don't see how you stand the smell of all this fabric," she said wrinkling her turned-up nose as she popped the chewing gum. "I hope I don't sell any more than a paper of pins while you're gone. I sure don't want to drag down one of those heavy bolts."

"It's not been very busy. You may get your wish."

"Anything you need me to do while you're gone?" she asked, working the gum a little harder.

"I can't think of anything. Just hold the fort."

Thankful for the short respite, Tessa removed her smock, folded it and placed it on a shelf under the counter. She decided to get out of the store and run down the street to Kress's lunchroom for a sandwich.

Out on the street the heavy heat pressed down over her like a scratchy wool blanket. When Tessa still lived back in the Sasakwa Hills, she could run into the woods and wade in the streams to ward off the summer heat, but not here. Not in the city.

As she turned the corner of Fifth and Main she noticed a large sign in the window of Seidenbach's which said: "Back to Pre-War Prices." She stared at it a moment and wondered who ever thought about the Great War now that it was 1921. She certainly didn't. Shimmery waves of heat rose up from the sidewalk as she crossed Main and hurried down to the five-and-dime. In the center of the store, wide steps led down to the basement which was somewhat cooler than out on the street.

"What'll it be today, Tessa?" asked Marvin, the young man behind the counter as he adjusted his white paper hat.

Tessa hopped up on one of the red padded swivel stools, and scanned the menu on the wall. What she really wanted was a sandwich and a cold malted milk, but her money wouldn't stretch that far. Even though she lived at the home of her friend, Pauline Walsh, pennies were still tight. With each paycheck she paid a little for her room and board, and sent a portion home to Mama.

"Just a ham sandwich, Marvin," Tessa said, "with plenty of lettuce. And a glass of ice water."

"Coming up."

Once in a while the memories of her own private garage apartment, which was tucked behind the Patton mansion, flooded Tessa's mind. How she missed that privacy, and having her own little kitchen. The few months she spent there were happy ones. Life with the busy Walsh family was comfortable enough though, and she had no room to complain. She at least had a place to sleep and food to eat, which was more than most of Chloe's friends and neighbors had.

The lunchroom wasn't crowded since most Tulsa citizens knew better than to come downtown in the mid-day heat. After Marvin

set her sandwich down, he stepped into the kitchen area. Tessa returned thanks for her food, then bit into the thick sandwich. As she thought of the long hot afternoon stretching before her, soft voices from a nearby booth behind her broke into her thoughts. Two ladies were whispering, but Tessa, unfortunately, could hear every word clearly.

"That's the one. That's the girl," said a rather high squeaky voice.

A deeper honeyed voice drawled the answer, "I thought so. I hear the Pattons fired her flat out."

"Kicked her right out on the street, I was told."

Tessa's cheeks burned. In vain, she attempted to shut out the voices. The ham sandwich went dry in her mouth.

"Imagine her walking right into that courthouse, right up to that jail cell to spend time with those colored boys."

"Tsk, tsk," clucked the squeaky voice. "Such audacity. I understand Trevalene Patton was distraught for weeks over the nasty episode."

"Well, she's back now from summer holiday and feeling more fit. She's determined to throw herself into the relief work for those suffering blacks."

"My my. Such nobleness after the atrocities all those militant blacks committed."

"Noble. Most noble," cooed the honeyed voice.

"What about the poor daughter—what's her name?"

"Sadella."

"Sadella Patton, yes. The one who was accosted in the alley by those colored boys. What have you heard about her?"

"After a nightmare experience like that? Who knows. She may never be quite herself ever again."

Stomach churning, Tessa slid down off the stool.

"Tessa," Marvin said, coming out of the kitchen. "You've left half a sandwich."

"I'm too hot to eat," was all she could say as she hurried out of the lunchroom, not wanting to even glance back to see who spoke such hate-filled words.

[For More of Tessa's story click HERE](#)