



Cowgirl, Unexpectedly

Vicki Tharp

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A Harley and a highway are all an Iraqi war veteran needs to soothe her restless spirit—until a pit stop puts her on the front lines of love . . .

Settling down is not an option for Mackenzie Parish. Since the end of her tour of duty, the former Marine has been on the road, doing what she can to ease the pain of her wounded shoulder and mind. But when her money runs out, she takes a job on a Wyoming ranch—and finds herself in unfamiliar territory once more . .

Mackenzie's lesson number one: a horse is definitely nothing like a motorcycle. But even knee deep in manure, and saddle sores aside, Mac finds comfort in the daily routine of hard work and the great outdoors. Only her bunkmate, Hank Nash, provides an unsettling distraction. The former champion bull rider has returned home to reconnect with his estranged daughter. Yet despite his own struggles, he has the patience to show Mac the ropes, and the sweet touch to draw her out of herself—and her violent past.

But when the ranch becomes the target of violent threats, Mac will have to choose between the call of the road—and the man who has helped her feel whole again . . .

Cowgirl, Unexpectedly Details

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From Reader Review Cowgirl, Unexpectedly for online ebook

Cheryl Thomas says

Good book

This was a good story, not just romance but life too. I really liked it! I will read more from Vicki Tharpe.

Mary says

One of the best books written about PTSD and unique in that it is written from a female perspective.

Denise Schenk says

I won this book and had not read any of Vicki Tharp previous books. I just loved this book. The story was well written the characters had depth. There is a book coming out in Feb 2018 and I will be reading it when it is released.

Mackenzie is a war veteran and has PTSD and Hank is a former rodeo champion. The both have a past but see each other for the good in that person. Again it is worth the read.

Cheri says

4.5 stars

Another story with the woman character being the military veteran. When I read His Cowboy Heart it seemed this type of heroine was few and far between. Then I read two books with a female military hero as the main character within a week of each other.

I found myself thoroughly respecting Mac from the very beginning, but not being sure if I really liked her very much. No worries, I grew to love her. She reminded me (in her attitude) of a crusty old sailor. She has a heart of gold but you have to get her to stay in one place for more than a day to learn that. Lucky for Hank, Jenna, and the rest of the Lazy S Ranch she decides to stick around a few days since she needs the cash.

The same can be said for Hank, but in a different way. I understood what he was trying to do but didn't know if I liked him. His past relationship with his daughter had me on guard. He definitely made some mistakes in his past. Mistakes I wasn't quick to forgive him for...until I realized how much it tore him up inside. Plus, when we first start learning his sins, we are getting them from his teenage daughter's point of view which is fraught with emotion.

This is really a romantic suspense. There are a lot of shady things going on at the ranch that had my mind hopping around from suspect to suspect. Once we learn about a particular person who is on the "list" I

thought I had it figured out. I did in a way, but it was quite the convoluted operation and it made the climax intense!

There are so many layers to this story. We have the vet with PTSD, the cowboy with regrets, the daughter with self-worth issues, the dangerous odd events happening on the ranch, and the relationships developing and being mended among all of the players involved. On top of all of that, the love story of Hank and Mac gave me MAJOR feels. They are just so good together. I love his nickname for her, too.

Vicki Tharp is a new to me author and I am excited to see more from her in the future. She doesn't have a huge library of published works yet, but I'll be looking for the next book in this series for sure.

****I received an ARC of this book courtesy of Net Galley and the publisher in exchange for an honest review****

Mona says

Normally when we read about a scarred veteran with PTSD it's a man.

Not this time.

This veteran is a young female marine who can't seem to get her life back on track after Iraq. Now that she's back home and healing, she spends her time on the back of her motorcycle running away from herself and life. A bit of bad luck puts her in need of a job, and she goes from riding her motorcycle to riding a horse.

I loved the story. I loved Hank, the cowboy who helped heal her. And I loved the intensity in everything she did. I couldn't stop reading and stayed up way too late at night knowing full well I had to get up early. But then, when I went to bed, I couldn't sleep for thinking about it.

Just awesome.

BJ says

This book offers well developed characters, and interesting and very real setting. The only issue I had was there seemed to be a lot of people - sometimes I found it hard to keep track of who was who. The h is a returned Vet, and although she struggles with PTSD, she's very strong. The H seems strong, but as the story develops, we find out that they both have flaws of course, but they work well together to overcome the evil that lives amongst them. It was great and I will buy more from this author.

cola_bear says

Copy provided by Netgalley

4.5 Stars

I enjoyed this story more than I expected to, and while this is my first time reading Vicki Tharp, it definitely won't be my last.

The Good: the first person POV is done well in this book, and I was immediately drawn to Mackenzie. She's a wonderful narrator and I don't think the book would have felt the same if had been written in 3rd person- that's not something I say very often. I also think this may be one of the best books I've read involving PTSD and the effects it has on the person suffering from it as well as the impact on those around that person.

The romance was refreshing, and I liked that it was more intimate rather than just relying on sex/sexual attraction to bring the two together. Hank was a great character, and I think the two are well matched.

The secondary characters were well-rounded and made the story richer.

The Bad: I actually had no issues with this book. Nothing knocked me out of the story, the pacing was excellent, and the editing was well done.

Overall: I would highly recommend this book for those who not only like western romance, but those who enjoy a strong heroine who is flawed, and would rather read a slow-burn romance than a straight-into-the-sheets romance (I like those romances, too :)).

Theresa Wade says

This is the first book I have read by the author Vicki Tharp. This author is amazing. The story and the character building is great. What I love most about this book is how smooth the writing is and you can visualize in your head exactly what is going on. She keeps the story moving and doesn't have a lot of extra useless dialog or explanations in the story. This is definitely an excellent "Unexpectedly" great book. Thanks.

Steve Bender says

I received the ebook in a Goodreads giveaway. It was an entrancing book that kept me up at night. The heroine was an Iraqi war vet with a case of PTSD who was just traveling on a motorcycle to escape her problems. She runs out of money and gas in a little western town. She is a very strong character who responds to her circumstances without running away this time, although the temptation is strong. Highly recommended.

Emmy says

****3.5****

Carol [Goodreads Addict] says

Cowgirl, Unexpectedly is book one in the new series, Lazy S Ranch by Vicki Tharp. Do you ever look at the cover of a book and just feel like this is a book you have to read? That this book will be important to you? Well, it does happen to me from time to time and such is the case with this book. Something about it just called to me. I have read several books where the male character is the war Veteran suffering from PTSD. It felt unique to have the female in this case the heroine returning home from her deployment with scars both on the outside and on the inside.

Mackenzie (Mac) Parish has been back in the states for a year after returning from her deployment to Iraq. She is an ex-Marine and still suffers from a bullet wound to her left shoulder. But most of Mac's scars are where you can't see them, on the inside, in her heart and soul. Since her return she has been on the back of her Harley. The road calls to her, quiets her demons. But she is out of money, barely able to scrape together enough coins to pay for her last cup of coffee. She needs to earn some money so she can get back on the road. So she applies for a job as a hand on the Lazy S Ranch. She may have fibbed a little bit when they asked her if she could ride a horse. But when they asked her if she could shoot, she had no problem with that answer.

Hank Nash was a champion bull rider until a serious injury ended his career. He is now working for his ex-inlaws on their ranch, the Lazy S. He is trying to re-establish a relationship with his seventeen year old daughter who lives on the ranch with her grandparents but things aren't going very well. On top of that, they have had a string of bad luck with vandalism.

The relationship between Hank and Mac is rocky in the beginning but Hank has a way of calming Mac's demons, of making her feel things she thought were long dead inside of her. She also seems to click right from the beginning with his daughter. She finds a feeling of family, of belonging on the ranch. She's not afraid of hard work and throws herself into the job. But the vandalism escalates quickly into something more. Both the animals and the people are at risk. But with no idea who would want to hurt these kind people, how do they determine who is behind the acts?

“This was not the quiet, little back mountain job I'd thought I was signing up for. Unfortunately, the more I was getting to know the people at the ranch, the more difficulty I was having minding my own business.”

Hank seems to understand Mac like no one else. He really sees her for herself, both the bad and the good. This tough cowboy had such a soft side and one look with those eyes of his had Mac questioning everything.

For the first time in a year, the road's call had quieted. She started wondering if she could make herself a home here, a home with Hank. But she still had demons to conquer. She didn't feel like she could be good for them. She didn't trust herself most of the time.

“Even if you had never served and sacrificed for our country, even if you were the girl next door or anyone else for that matter, what you’ve shown me this week, your tenacity, strength, fortitude, smarts...stubbornness...and your heart, make you the most amazing person I have ever met.”

This book was just incredible. Not only was I moved by Mac's story and her heart, Hank had me melted into a puddle of goo. This book was so sweet and sexy but also, there is plenty of suspense as this group of ranch owners and ranch hands all band together to protect their home against unknown enemies. When it's all over, the question is, will Mac finally be able to leave the past behind her and accept the life Hank can offer her, or will the road's call to her be too strong to deny?

“With Hank beside me, I was no longer alone, and the relief overwhelmed me, knowing I wasn't worthy of a man like him.”

Don't miss this amazing book. I definitely need to see what else this author has written. Her books are the sort that stay with you forever. I can honestly say that I won't be forgetting either Mac or Hank anytime soon. Thank you, Vicki, for this amazing book.

BookAddict says

After discharging from the Marines, Mac sets out on the open road with her antique Harley, her grandfather's bomber jacket and her demons. Realizing she's somehow managed to lose the last two hundred dollars she has to her name, she takes a job as a hand at the Lazy S Ranch. Riding a Harley and riding a horse are practically the same thing, right? No matter that she knows nothing about ranching, the sexy retired rodeo star and ranch hand, Hank, will show her the ropes, and more, if she's willing. Always one kick-start away from hitting the road, when trouble comes to the Lazy S, Mac discovers a different side to herself as she fights to protect those she's come to care for while facing down the phantoms from her past.

The advance copy I read of this book is my first by this author and I'm head over heels after reading it. OMGee, there's so much to love about this book! At one point Mac purchases a horse who's been neglected and is headed to the slaughter house, almost an equine version of Mac's struggles and suffering, and there's such fantastic symbolism and a glorious instant bond between the two. It also makes for an anxious, exciting scene when the mare gives birth. The foal, born during a thunderstorm, is fittingly named Boomer.

Mac and Hank are such great characters, and their relationship is a delight to behold and experience. After the author has spent the first half of the book stringing the sexual tension so tightly it's ready to snap, in one paragraph she paints a beautiful, poetic picture that fills the heart to bursting, and in the next she had me laughing out loud. This back and forth, up and down workout of the heart and emotions is just one of the things that makes this such a terrific read! Mac is much stronger than she realizes and a lot less broken than she thinks, and Hank is the perfect man for her. Somehow knowing when to push and when to hang on

loosely, he loves every fascinating aspect of Mac, flaws and all, and is strong and secure enough to appreciate and embrace her every facet. Something about Hank quiets her inner demons and lessens the lure of the open road, and for the first time since her discharge, Hank has Mac wanting to put down roots, with him.

Not only is there a unique premise with a female war veteran with PTSD, the storyline is engaging and captivating, and you'll find just the right mix of mystery, danger, angst, love and romance. There are also a few secondary stories to keep things interesting – Hank's relationship with his seventeen year old daughter and her nascent romance with a ranch hand, the stoic ranch foreman's family problems, Mac's Marine friend Boomer whom she calls for help, and the return of someone who throws everyone into an emotional turmoil. The characters are so lively, colorful and authentic, and the setting so detailed and realistic that I felt like I spent real time in this fictional place and was sad to leave it. Ms. Tharp is definitely an author to watch, and she goes on my list of must reads. In an indie literary world of overdone tropes, this book is truly a breath of fresh air. Don't miss this unique, heartwarming, phenomenal book!

Cathy Geha says

Cowgirl Unexpectedly by Vicki Tharp
Lazy S Ranch #1

Loved, loved, LOVED this book! The main characters are strong, intelligent and full of courage. They are people I admired and would love to call friend. The Lazy S Ranch is a place unlike most and one that I want to revisit in the next book when it comes out!

Mackenzie "Mac" Parish is a strong ex-marine with PTSD that has been on the road for a year when she lands in small-town Montana in need of money. She is taken on at the Lazy S Ranch and then works hard to learn the skills needed to be a member of the team. Her biggest help is ex-rodeo-bull-rider-pro Hank Nash. Hank is a man with many layers. He is strong, dependable, a man who cares and gives while also trying to reengage with his teenage daughter, Jenna. The supporting cast of characters is great and they are people I want to know more about, too, in whatever books may follow.

The ranch has suffered some trouble in the past and trouble is something Mac wants to avoid BUT as the pieces of her heart and self begin to realign in the peace she finds on the ranch (and with Hank) she begins to want to find out who is behind the meanness being dished out and deal decisively with the perpetrators and the road seems to call to her less and less.

There are two love stories, a rodeo, old west style rustling, shooting, a mystery, suspense and more in this wonderful book that I did not want to put down. The writing is great, the story well plotted, the characters have depth and I am thrilled to have found a new-to-me author that I would love to read more of.

Thank you to NetGalley and Kensington-Lyrical Press for the ARC – This is my honest review.

5 Stars

Karen Roma says

Cowgirl, Unexpectedly is a story I would highly recommend to anyone who enjoys a complex storyline, a strong, but fractured heroine, and a man who can see past her surface issues to the heart of the woman beneath.

This is an exceptionally written story that depicts the all too prevalent topic of PTSD and helps to clarify the long-term effects and struggles that the sufferer endures on a daily basis. Ms Tharp should be commended on her ability to delve into this sensitive and all too often ignored condition.

While this was my first read by this author, it will most definitely not be my last, and as always my heart and thanks go out to the men and women who serve their countries without any expectation of gratitude. May you all return home to your loved ones.

Kara says

DNF at 30-something percent.

This one stopped working for me around the time the heroine was discussing the hero's well-known past of hooking up with buckle bunnies on the rodeo circuit with his teenage daughter. Gross. There's no reason a child should know that much about his or her parents' sexual history. And the H appears to have left his daughter with his in-laws to raise so he could go ride horsies and screw women. Sorry, but that's not a romance hero to me - that's the kind of dipshit absentee father I know from real life. So no, I won't be sticking around for your redemption, friendo.
