



*A Rose  
Blooms Twice*

A Prairie Heritage, Book 1

**Vikki Kestell**

# **A Rose Blooms Twice**

## ***A Prairie Heritage, Book 1***

by Vikki Kestell

*Also Available in Print Format*

Rose Brownlee has suffered more loss than most people can endure. Now she must find a way to move on with her life. Will she bow to conventional wisdom or will she, like Abraham, choose to follow where God leads her . . . even to a country she does not know?

Set in the American prairie of the late 1800s, this story of loss, disillusionment, rebirth, and love will inspire, challenge, and encourage you.

Read [\*Wild Heart on the Prairie\*](#), the prequel and companion to *A Rose Blooms Twice*, and the exciting sequel to *A Rose Blooms Twice*, [\*Joy on This Mountain\*](#).

Visit Vikki's website, [www.vikkigestell.com](http://www.vikkigestell.com) or find her on [Facebook](#).

What Readers Are Saying  
About the Books of  
**A Prairie Heritage**  
***A Rose Blooms Twice***

“I love this author! A must-read for everyone liking inspirational books with some meat to them. Hated to see it end!” —D.D.

“This is one of the best books I have read in a long time! I just ordered Book 2 so I have it as soon as I finish this one.” —Mari Lyn L.

“I loved this book. It has been so long since I cared so much about the characters as much as I did in this book.” —Frances C.

“Enjoyed this so much, hard to put down and will now venture out to look for other books by Vikki Kestell.” —G.A.B.

“Such a captivating tale, I just couldn’t put it down! I look forward to a sequel with the characters that easily captured my heart!” —S.M.

“This was an awesome book. So realistic you felt like you were right there. Waiting patiently for the next one to come out.” —R.

***Joy on This Mountain***

“Extraordinary imagery! From Nebraska to Colorado the scenery is so vividly described that it’s like watching a movie in your head. It was just a wonderful story, and I am soooo dying for the sequel already! I cannot wait to see what happens next!” —B.H.

“After reading her first book in this series I wanted to continue on with this story. It is a real page turner.” —Barbara W.

“I started reading this at 4:30 p.m. and it is now 2 a.m. I couldn’t put it down. What a book, exciting and uplifting. Well worth the money. Be sure and read the first book! Cannot wait until the sequel later this year!” —Michelle M.

“Great story I can’t wait for the next one in the series so hurry up and write it—I am waiting!” —Barbara B.

“Vikki Kestell has done it again! Keep it up, Vikki, and I remain one of your avid fans!” —Troy R.

# Wild Heart on the Prairie

## *A Prairie Heritage, Book 4*

by Vikki Kestell

*Also Available in Print Format*

Jan Thoresen and his brother Karl have left their native land of Norway to bring their families to America—the land of freedom and hope. Like thousands of others, Jan and his wife Elli long for the opportunity of a better life and a future for their children.

After braving an ocean crossing and the arduous journey west, they encounter a land so vast and wide that it defies mastery. Jan finds that his struggles are not only with the land, but with a restless and unmanageable heart. Will Jan find a way to overcome this wild land or will the prairie master him?

[Wild Heart on the Prairie](#), while designated Book 4 in the series, **A Prairie Heritage**, is chronologically the prequel and companion to Book 1, *A Rose Blooms Twice*.

Read the beginning of this beautiful saga, [A Rose Blooms Twice](#), its exciting sequel, [Joy on This Mountain](#), followed by the third book in the series, [The Captive Within](#).

Visit Vikki's website, [www.vikkikestell.com](http://www.vikkikestell.com) or find her on [Facebook](#).

# Joy on This Mountain

## *A Prairie Heritage, Book 2*

by Vikki Kestell

*Also Available in Print Format*

The little town of Corinth, Colorado, lies in the gateway to the majestic Rocky Mountains just west of Denver . . . just far enough from the city to avoid close scrutiny, but close enough to be accessible. Few know of the wickedness hidden in the small town, so picturesquely set in the foothills of the mighty mountains.

[\*Joy on This Mountain\*](#) is the eagerly awaited sequel to *A Rose Blooms Twice*. The legacy of Jan and Rose has far-reaching and unexpected consequences.

**A Prairie Heritage**, Book 2. Spoiler alert! You may not want to read this book until you have read its prequel, [\*A Rose Blooms Twice\*](#).

Visit Vikki's website, [www.vikkigestell.com](http://www.vikkigestell.com) or find her on [Facebook](#).

# The Captive Within

## *A Prairie Heritage, Book 3*

by Vikki Kestell

*Also Available in Print Format*

*The Captive Within* opens the day after *Joy on This Mountain* ends. The two infamous houses of Corinth, Colorado, are closed and the young women who had been imprisoned there have been released. Soon after, Rose and Joy leave Corinth to establish a home and a haven for “their” girls in Denver.

Before long, Rose and Joy face a heartrending challenge: What does it take to unlock and free the soul of a defiled woman? And as they wrestle for a foothold in Denver, Rose discovers that the long-abandoned house given to them hides a dark secret of its own.

*The Captive Within* is Book 3 in the series, **A Prairie Heritage**. Read the beginning of this saga, [A Rose Blooms Twice](#), and its moving sequel, [Joy on This Mountain](#). The saga continues in Book 5, *Stolen*, June 2014.

Visit Vikki’s website, [www.vikkikestell.com](http://www.vikkikestell.com) or find her on [Facebook](#).

# Stolen

## *A Prairie Heritage, Book 5*

by Vikki Kestell  
**Available June 2014**

Life resumes in Denver for Rose, Joy, Grant, Mei-Xing, and the others of Palmer House. *Stolen* takes up the tale where *The Captive Within* leaves off. Will they “let sleeping dogs lie,” or will they be forced to face off with those who would see the work of Palmer House destroyed?

Don't miss this exciting installment as the inspiring saga, **A Prairie Heritage**, draws to a close in books 5 and 6!

Visit Vikki's website, [www.vikkikestell.com](http://www.vikkikestell.com) for updates or follow her on [Facebook](#).

**Book 6: Title to be announced**  
**(Available November 2014.)**

Read all the books of **A Prairie Heritage** as they become available:

Book 1: [\*A Rose Blooms Twice\*](#)

Book 2: [\*Joy on This Mountain\*](#)

Book 3: [\*The Captive Within\*](#)

Book 4: [\*Wild Heart on the Prairie\*](#), **February 1, 2014**

Book 5: *Stolen*, **June 2014**

Book 6: To Be Announced

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# **A Rose Blooms Twice**

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*The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the rose  
and the autumn crocus.  
(Isaiah 35:1, AMP)*

## Chapter 1

Rose glanced up and saw James watching her. Their eyes met and held, and while the carriage jounced and swayed, they smiled, tired and content.

James' birthday party had been wonderful. In the fading light, Rose glanced fondly from James' relaxed and satisfied face to each of the children: Jeffrey was teasing his younger sister, Glory, her chubby six-year-old cheeks dimpled in laughter, while baby Clara bounced on her daddy's knee singing "Ride a pony! Ride a pony!" softly. Jeff and Glory burst out in strains of "Happy Birthday to You" making James chuckle in appreciation. Clara crowed a late "To Yew!" after every line, and they all laughed.

Rose shivered a little as the temperature outside sank a few more degrees. Bundled in warm clothes up to their eyes, the children didn't seem to notice the cold. Only a few minutes ago, while Vincent, their driver, had waited outside the door, Rose had hustled Glory into her coat and warm hat, making sure she had her mittens. James had held baby Clara until Glory's last button was done.

"Goodbye, Mother. Thank you for the party; it was perfect as usual, just like its hostess," James had declared, winking and grinning.

Rose's mother had acknowledged the compliment in her usual gracious manner. "You know how much pleasure it gave me, James! And don't be flirting. What will your children think? Well, you had better be going. It will do none of you any good to be out in this miserable cold very long. Goodbye, dears."

She had kissed Rose, her son-in-law, and then each of the children. "My kittens," she liked to call them. Jeffrey mumbled to his father, "If Grandma has to call me a baby name, it should at least be puppy!" Being the oldest, he had been ready and fidgeting some minutes.

As they had crossed from the doorway to the carriage, the wind had whipped them without mercy until they were tucked into the coach and Vincent had the horses pulling them down the drive.

Yes, everything had gone well. Mother had been a superb hostess, as usual insisting on being allowed to prepare the celebration for James' thirty-eighth birthday party.

*How very odd that he can be that age, Rose thought. He was only twenty-five when we married, and yet he seems no older at all!*

"But *you* are thirty-two," an inner voice whispered, "and no longer a fresh-faced girl." The thought irritated her, and she pushed it aside. Thirteen years of marriage and three children had made a difference, yes, but she was still young. Not willow slender anymore, true, but "round in all the right places" according to James, and his was the single opinion she minded.

But what looked back in her mirror distressed her. The golden blonde hair that had framed her blushing cheeks as a girl was dull ash now, stylishly coiled and curled around her head, yes, but her cheeks, too, had lost their glow. The overall result was a rather colorless, even sallow, one. Oh, if only her brows and lashes had darkened, too, but the solemn gray eyes were the only real color in her face.

Mercifully, the children all took after their father, each with honey-brown curls and James' gentle hazel eyes and bright cheeks. "Such frivolous concerns," she chided

herself. “A good life is too precious for fretting over what cannot be changed—and is inconsequential. No triviality could ever mar the perfect joy of having a wonderful family and a happy home.”

Her musings turned back to the party. Even Roger and Julia had been civil, almost pleasant tonight, for a change. James’ younger brother had always seemed to resent that James, the older son, had inherited the Brownlee family home some years ago. It would be Jeffrey’s one day too, Rose remembered fondly. Altogether, with her brother, Tom, and Abigail, his lovely bride, it had been a memorable evening.

Tom and Abbie had made a happy announcement tonight, too. They would be blessed with a baby in late summer! Rose smiled in anticipation. She would be Aunt Rose! That would be sweet. And a cousin for the children!

Roger and Julia didn’t have children. “They wouldn’t much fit our lifestyle,” Julia had mentioned once in a mocking tone.

“Mummy, I’m sleepy,” Glory whispered.

“Come lay your head on my lap, love,” Rose whispered back. Jeffrey and Glory traded sides in the coach; Clara stayed on Daddy’s lap but cuddled now rather than bounced. Outside, the frigid January wind blew, and Rose was glad that Vincent was well sheltered in the driver’s box. She pulled her own long, heavy cloak about her and stroked a curl of Glory’s sweet, honey-touched hair peeping out from her bonnet. In honesty, the weather was too inclement for them to be out, but January 6 only came once a year, and James rarely unbent from his heavy work schedule except for a holiday.

They seemed to be alone on the dark country road. In addition to the freezing temperatures this evening, the bitter wind had driven and beaten the wet snow into icy drifts and glazed the road.

“Only a half-hour more, son,” James encouraged Jeffrey. The boy began nodding, half asleep in the corner by his father.

They entered their quiet town with its cobbled streets. The river was just ahead, and the Brownlee family home a few miles beyond. The team’s hooves rang with a hallow sound as they mounted the bridge. Below, the river was choked with black, heaving ice floes. Only last week an unseasonable thaw, accompanied by a warm wind from the south, had caused the river to break up. Now with the cold pressing in, the rushing water would soon freeze over again.

The carriage’s progress was slow going up the bridge’s incline because of the unsure footing for the horses, but they labored, sturdy and strong. Across the bridge they trotted now, another lone carriage passing them in the other direction.

Rose looked up and saw James watching her again. He smiled, and she warmed to his look.

The carriage sped down the other side of the arched bridge, and Vincent called to the horses, reining them in, for the ice was treacherous on the downside incline.

Without warning a horse screamed and the carriage lurched. One of the horses had fallen on the slick cobbles! James threw open the door just as the back end of the coach began to swing, making a wide, sliding arc across the breadth of the bridge. Vincent was shouting, panic in his voice. The carriage slammed against the stout railing at the bridge’s edge with an ominous cracking.

Inside the carriage, unable to see what was happening, the children were

shrieking, and Glory fell to the floor. James, holding precariously to the door saw what was now inevitable—the railing was shattered, near to letting go, and the carriage was suspended over the torrent, only moments from disaster. Vincent stood in the box futilely whipping the team, but the horse still standing had no traction, and the far one was splayed on the ice, thrashing in panic.

Clara grasped at her daddy’s legs, and James stumbled over Glory on the floor. Hoarse with fear, he jerked Rose to her feet and to the doorway. “Jump!” he begged. They were hanging so deceptively near the levy.

Rose was frozen in terror, unable to look away from the pain and hopelessness on his face. James wrenched himself free from Clara’s grasp and, with one extraordinary effort, bodily vaulted Rose from the coach.

Then she was falling . . . Later she would never be sure if what she remembered was what she actually saw or if the horrible sounds she heard printed their own pictures forever in her mind.

The railing gave way. The carriage slid over the bridge’s edge, pulling with it the screaming team. Rose landed on the ice-strewn rocks of the levee at the water’s edge. She heard something inside herself snap and felt the painful stabs of icy water soaking her through as the current sucked and pulled.

Then she heard and felt nothing at all.

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## Chapter 2

Out of the black cave she fought her way. Surely daylight was ahead? But it kept moving away. Every time she thought she was at the opening it was farther beyond. Tired, so tired of trying.

Sleep instead.

It hurt to move. Her whole body was on fire, her head too heavy to lift. No, not fire, ice. *Ice!* No, no, no, they were falling in the river, freezing, numb . . . How can it be so hot in the river! Is the water burning? No, no . . . *so cold* . . .

She was in her room. Yes, this was her bed . . . no . . . yes! But her room at home, that is, at Mother's where she grew up . . . Silly! you're not grown up; you're just a girl. You had a bad dream. A dream about James and being married and . . . falling? So tired still . . .

"Mrs. Brownlee. Mrs. Brownlee, do you hear me? It's Doctor Cray. Please try to open your eyes for me, Mrs. Brownlee?"

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Blake, not yet, I'm afraid. But we'll know soon at any rate. If the fever has done . . . damage . . . well, we'll just hope for the best, shall we?"

"Rosie, don't leave us . . . please try to come back! You don't know how much we love you . . . I love you, Sis . . . oh, Rose, it's Tom! Do you hear me?"

Tom? So tired, so heavy. Rest. Rest in the darkness.

Rose forced open her eyes. The light in the room was dim, either early morning or twilight, she couldn't tell. No one was in the room with her, it seemed; no, someone's regular breathing was coming from . . . the chair by the fireplace? She tried to turn to see but was too weak to do more than raise a few inches and fall back exhausted. All around her chest ached horribly.

"Mother?" she whispered weakly.

Well, later maybe.

The next time she awoke it was daylight. She lifted a hand feebly and groaned.

"Ma'am, she's awake. Ma'am!"

Several sets of footsteps hurried to the bed. Anxious faces peered down at her. Mother. Tom. Who was that man? Dr. Somebody she thought she remembered, and someone else standing away from the bed.

"Mother?"

"Yes! Yes dear, I'm right here!"

"Rosie, I'm here too—it's Tom, y'know!"

"Oh. . . . What? I'm sorry . . . I don't understand."

"Mrs. Blake, Mr. Blake, be so kind as to move back and let me examine our patient. Yes, madam, don't be alarmed. I believe you are going to be all right, but see here, you've been ill. Do you understand what I am saying?"

Rose nodded, and the doctor went on.

"You've been ill, and you've had a great shock. We must be quite careful of you right now or bear the consequences. Now, I am Doctor Cray—do you remember me?"

“Yes.”

“Very good. Your mother and brother and a nurse are here with you also. It is enough that they are here—do not talk to them today for you must rest. I will come again this evening, and then we will see how you are. Do you understand me?”

“Yes,” she answered again, because “no” was too heavy, and she was so tired.

“That is good; now sleep again. You are safe, and in time will be sound also, thank God.”

“Yes, thank God!” Rose’s mother added earnestly. Tom sat by Rose’s bed and held her hand until sleep overcame her again.

Four days later they judged it wise to speak the truth to her. Her waking periods were closer to normal now, but reality was still a faint dream just beyond her grasp, a truth that needed to be confronted. Mrs. Blake called Pastor Greenstreet to be with them. Tom and Dr. Cray completed the group, and together they stood around the bed. Tom felt it his duty to do the speaking, to help her the best he could through this ordeal.

“Sis? Rose, we want . . . need to tell you about your illness.”

“Yes, Tom,” she replied softly. “I can’t seem to get it right in my mind. I’m so confused—tell me, what am I so afraid of?”

Tom began cautiously. “They found you, Sis, lying on the rocks at the bottom of the levee.”

Rose was bewildered.

“Well, you’d fallen there, see, and, well, Dr. Cray says you’d broken your ribs and hit your head mostly. You were unconscious and then, see, you’d been lying half in, half out of the cold water and all, so you became ill with fever. We thought we were losing you, Rose! But you’ve gotten better, bit by bit; now you’ll be able to get up soon.”

A small frown puckered her forehead. “How long have I been sick, Tommy?” Her voice was almost childlike in its dreamy confusion.

Tom glanced at Dr. Cray for guidance. He nodded.

“It’s been about three weeks, Sis. Since January 6?”

Puzzlement replaced the frown. Something nagged at the back of her mind. What?

“Rocks, Tommy? I don’t understand where.”

He took a deep breath and his voice quavered, “The rocks on the levee . . . by the river. By the . . . by the bridge. Close to your house?”

“My house? Bridge?”

Tom rushed on, looking down at the counterpane. “You see, Vincent crawled up to the road, and some folks saw him. He was nearly frozen because he was soaking wet, but we would never have found you in time if he hadn’t gotten out. Of the river . . . Rose, do you remember falling in the river?”

Tears were streaming down his honest face, and Rose stared at him bewildered. River? What would anyone be doing in a river in January? January 6. Oh! James’ birthday, of course! His birthday party and . . . the river . . .

Tom held her through the storm. Over again and again she saw the carriage sliding and falling, sliding and falling, James throwing her out . . . sliding . . . falling . . . Clara! Glory! Oh, God! My little boy! Oh, mercy, please God!

James, don't be dead . . .

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### Chapter 3

As she recovered, her memory became sharper, and each recollection wounded her. Vincent had leapt from his box as the carriage struck the water and struggled in the ice-strewn water the few feet to shore. Bleeding and freezing, he'd climbed to the road atop the levee and flagged down a passing coach.

They'd found Rose, as Tom had said, crumpled on the river-washed rocks. No trace of the carriage was found. The next day the river had frozen over again, and with it hope of finding James or the children died under the cruel ice. No compassionate way existed to explain that, sometime in the spring when the water warmed, their bodies would surface, possibly far downstream, if at all.

Rose had been brought to her mother's home to be cared for, and when they began to hope for a speedy recovery from her injuries, fever had set in. For days the battle had raged as delirium, alternating chills, and periods of unbearable heat devoured her strength.

That was when her brother-in-law Roger Brownlee had presented himself to Mrs. Blake and Tom "to carry out a simple bit of business," he said by way of explanation. His attorney accompanied him, and they waited on Rose's mother and brother in the parlor.

"I realize how serious Rose's condition is—that she may very well not recover. And we are deeply concerned for her of course, being my poor brother's wife—"

"My sister will recover, I assure you, sir!" interrupted a fiercely protective Tom. "But I would have expected you to show proper consideration to us all at this time. What possible bit of business is so urgent that it cannot wait for a more propitious moment?" Tom's blue eyes sparked with anger at the man's effrontery.

Tom had never cared for James Brownlee's younger brother. Tom had judged Roger Brownlee as lacking in moral character and natural affection the first moment they'd met.

Roger coughed politely. "I have just lost my only family in this tragic affair. Believe me, I and my dear wife Julia feel *deeply* about Rose's condition. It is precisely the unsure state of things that brings me here—but may I introduce Mr. T.H. Carton of Carton, Simmons and Northbrooke, our family and Rose's attorney? He has some timely information that will concern us all. Mr. Carton?"

Mr. Carton was a mild, honest man whose family's law firm had served the Brownlees for three generations. His father before him was counsel to the Brownlees. Mr. Carton disliked this sprig of the family tree and his task this evening, but he began gamely.

"Mrs. Blake, Mr. Blake, I offer my condolences on your losses and my sincere hope for Mrs. Brownlee's complete recovery." He stroked his short, brown beard nervously. "However, hmm, as you know, when the former, that is the *elder* Mr. Brownlee passed on, the Brownlee estate home was entailed to his older son, James. This included the grounds and furnishings. Some business holdings were attached also. The estate was to pass in time to young Master Brownlee, er, Jeffrey?"

Tom's jaw tightened and Mr. Carton became visibly uncomfortable, shifting his portly figure in his chair. However, he continued.