



Secrets & Charades

Cindy Ervin Huff

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Jake Marcum's busy ranch leaves him no time for courting, and his wounded heart has no place for love. When battlefield nightmares disturb his peace and his tomboy niece, Juliet, needs taming, somehow a mail-order bride seems like a logical solution.

Dr. Evangeline Olson has no idea her niece is writing to a rancher on her behalf, and she sure isn't interested in abandoning her medical practice for a stranger. But when an inheritance threatens to reveal a long-buried secret, she travels west to become Jake's wife.

Jake soon realizes Evangeline is more than he bargained for, especially when her arrival causes a stir in the community. As the two try to find their way in a marriage of convenience, their fragile relationship is further tested by cattle rustling and kidnapping. Can their hearts overcome past hurts to create a real marriage?

Secrets & Charades Details

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Elaine Cooper says

It wasn't for love that physician Evangeline Olson left her home in Missouri in 1873. There were few options left to keep her fading medical practice alive and she had nothing left to lose by accepting a mail order bride request from a cattle rancher in Texas. But the emotional baggage from her past weighed more heavily on her than the numerous trunks containing her wordly goods.

Rancher Jake Marcum wasn't seeking love but a mother for his orphaned niece. The bride who arrived on the train from Missouri however, soon captured his affections. But it would take time, patience, and divine intervention to unravel the mysteries that shielded Evangeline's heart from his ardor.

“Secrets & Charades” by Cindy Ervin Huff is an engaging post Civil War Western that captures a reader's interest from page 1. Author Huff does an excellent job of weaving complexity into the simple life of the rugged Texas terrain.

A captivating novel of the Old West, “Secrets & Charades” should find itself on the bookshelves beside many long-loved western classics.

rob says

Phenomenal

This was an amazing, touch it, and very inspirational book. I highly recommend for people to read this book and I look forwards to new books.

Patty says

Mail Order brides to me always come with a strong woman and a wonderful man and the two always end up falling in love. Cindy Ervin Huff has taken this premise and given personalities to the characters with a fresh new perspective. Evangeline, a free thinking, progressive woman comes to marry Jake. With secrets in her past, she is hesitant to be completely open with him but does her best to help run his ranch. She is a doctor by trade, something unheard of for the time, is nice to the servants and especially falls in love with Jake's niece. There is trouble on the ranch, and as they work together to find the answers, life becomes more intimate. But will Jake accept her when he finds out what she is hiding? So much goes into this story, but the standout for me is Evie. Her character is wonderful. Even though she comes from a different class of people, she treats all as she would like to be treated. She doesn't feel the need to be like everyone else, and is here to help all. With a strong Christian basis, this story is a beautiful read showing the true merits of this new to me author.

Meghan Kelly is perfect for this book. Her ability to bring characters to life is incredible, giving them each distinctive voices and personalities.

Audra says

Good historical

I love mail order bride stories but some are just plain boring and others suck you in and do not spit you back out until the end. That's how this story went. There is adventure, action, romance, suspense and just all around goodness. I enjoyed this story very much and recommend to those who like clean mail order bride historical.

Martha says

A easy read of a mail-order bride with a twist. AS so many of them are, they have some of the same elements. However, this one had a couple of twists and turns that I found interesting.

Cattle Rustling, women dressed up as men and other content that you would assume to find in a western style mail order bride story are all present and accounted for. A secret female doctor was a new twist, as well as a few other things that I will not spoil for you.

If you like mail order bride stories, you will likely enjoy this one.

Linda Yezak says

Cindy is a fresh, new voice in Christian Historical Romance. Her setting resonates with the type of vibrancy that comes from an author who did her research. Her characters are real and charming. Her story is engrossing. Stellar!

Joleen says

***Secrets & Charades* by Cindy Ervin Huff**

Location: Majority of the book was set in Charleton, TX

Timeframe: 1873

Main Characters:

Evangeline Olson, 28 year old doctor (single)

Jake Marcum, cattle rancher and guardian to his niece, Juliet

Selena, cook

Thomas Farley, Ranch owner close by/bad guy

Normally I'm not into mail-order-bride stories anymore, but this one caught my attention because of all the 5-star ratings, and that the "bride" was a doctor... sounded like she might be a strong character. And in fact she was. It really started out great, but didn't stay that way, in my estimation.

Synopsis:

(view spoiler)

Like I said, the book started off great, but toward the end things seemed to change. The story became choppy. Many things that could have been elaborated on were rushed through, and left me reading back over them to see if I missed something. Too many things happened with not enough detail, and it was an unsatisfying read.

I feel bad, because so many people seemed to love this book, and it wasn't horrible, just not well written in the last third. I think if the author went back over everything from about the time Jake and Thomas Farley rode to a grotto he conveniently remembered, and rewrote it with more detail, it would be a really good story. Brevity through crucial story lines is just not a good idea.

On a plus side, lots of faith issues were brought into the story. I loved that it was a praying ranch, and that the Lord was honored!

Louise Hannah-Rose says

A great story!!! Lot of threads, so not just about two people, but those around them, went from mystery, surprise, heart touching, touched by what was happening, and a stand alone story, no loose ends, not cliff hangers.. Clean in every way. Hard to put down, when I had other things to do. Listened at times until wee hours of morning, rather than sleep.

Carol Ann says

Excellent writer!

Wonderful story of God's plan for our lives! Evangeline bravely seeks God's will as she supports and helps those in need.

Elizabeth Hernandez says

This book was a good read!

I enjoyed reading a marriage of convenience story. I felt there was too many characters and things involved that I was not totally convinced that Evangeline and Jack had fallen in love with each other by the end.

I wanted more to happen between them. I felt the cattle rustling and the kidnapping took over almost the whole half of the story that I was more focus on that as well as in Farley's identity.

I did love Evangeline's character how she was nice to everyone and showed kindness to all the women around her, I also loved using a women doctor and placing her into the household domestic sphere I think the author could have worked more in that by showing how hard it was for her to get used to her new life.

This was a great story, I did love the secondary characters, but I felt this story was more about the people around them, while the main characters were sidelined.

Ratings: 3.5 / 5.0

Cindy Huff says

I loved writing this novel. The characters became family. Hope you enjoy reading it.

Susan Snodgrass says

This was a new to me author. The book was quite good. I enjoyed it very much. The plot was good, the characters believable with great secondary characters. It was well written also, with a firmly built foundation. I look forward to more from this author.

Jean says

Great

This was a great historical western book about a mail order bride with a contemporary flair. It was a great read with romance, mystery and compassion. A few things were left hanging but not enough to distract from the story.

Debbie Smith says

Great clean book full of suspense and love

"Secrets and Charades" is a book with words of love and forgiveness. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this story. The setting is the early west on the American frontier of a cattle ranch. Characters are varied. Enclosed is a story of the hardships that confront a ranch owner who is striving to provide for his niece. He is a civil war survivor with PTSD who runs a cattle ranch with many employees and is expecting a mail order bride to help raise his orphaned niece. She found out that her relative has been writing this rancher for a year without her knowledge. Now he has asked her to come and marry him. She is an educated woman who also is a doctor. She served in the civil war also but has a secret from her past that haunts her. The story reflects redemption, forgiveness, God's faith, prayers and love. Thrown in are episodes of kidnapping, con artist, murder, brothel, past regrets, discrimination and suspense. It is great to read how spiritual faith is portrayed in dealing with all of the problems encountered by this couple before they can obtain HEA.

Connie says

I enjoyed this novel. There are some good things here. I think the most solid aspect was the characters. They are fun and well done with solid development.

There's lots of Christian elements. They are unabashed and strong. Fair warning to anyone who doesn't like characters praying and talking about Jesus. They do it A LOT.

This is pretty darn squeaky clean. It deals with rape, violence, prostitution, and drug/alcohol use. But its barely descriptive about any of it.

I would say the plot flow is the weak spot here. It's choppy and hard to follow in some places. I think, generally, there is just too much going on for one novel. It gets convoluted and could really use some simplification.

There was one plot twist I didn't see coming, though the clues were there. So kudos for that. There's some definite writing talent here, and I will probably be keeping an eye on this author.
