



Silver Lining

Maggie Osborne

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Hailed as "one of the best writers in the business" by Susan Elizabeth Phillips, multi-award-winning author Maggie Osborne delivers hilarious and heartrending tales of resilient women full of grit, pride, and dignity who shine through hard times. Now meet the most irresistible and independent heroine of them all, a woman called Low Down, who never had anything good happen to her until the day she asked for the one thing that only a man could give her. . . .

As scruffy and rootless as the other prospectors searching for gold in the Rockies, Low Down wanted nothing in return for nursing a raggedy bunch through the pox. But when pressed to reveal her heart's wish, she admits, "I want a baby." Not a husband, not a forced marriage to the proud man who drew the scratched marble and became honor bound to marry her. To be sure, Max McCord was easy on the eyes, but he loved another woman and dreamed of a different life. Yet they agreed to a temporary marriage that could end only in disaster. But can this strange twist of fate lead to the silver lining that both have been searching for?

Silver Lining Details

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From Reader Review Silver Lining for online ebook

Tink Magoo is bad at reviews says

One of my all time favourite films is Calamity Jane (and The Goonies but that's beside the point). Calamity and Low Down are so similar (that was a major factor in how much I liked this book), they prefer trousers, like to drink liquor and do 'men's' work. You won't see them in dresses sitting around sewing and just generally looking dainty. No. Even the thought of that disturbs them. But because they're different the men don't look at them as women or womanly. They're not ladies in any sense the men are used to. They're strong, independent and feisty. They won't be bossed about and have their decisions made for them. GIRL POWER

"I am what I am, and damned if I'm going to apologize for it!"

This wasn't a fluffy romance like I first suspected it would be. It was SO SO angst, the kind of angst that makes your chest ache. That completely drives you up the wall, but you still keep reading because you just can't look away. It's like that last piece of chocolate that you have to eat so it's not left on it's own, even though you already feel slightly sick because you've eaten too much.

Anyway ...

Low Down was amazing. Max, yeah it took some time for me to like him BUT I did (right at the end). Philadelphia - oh how I wanted to hurt that wench. I dislike her more than the words **horny** and **moist** and I **REALLY** hate those words.

Yes, huge parts of this drove me insane, even though I knew what was going to happen. How does that even make sense! This was the type of book that I hate to love but love anyway cause clearly I'm a glutton for punishment.

"Mark my words, Max. Someday you're going to hold that marble, and it won't be a symbol of all you lost. that marble will be the gold you went to Piney Creek to find. It will be the most precious thing you own."

I don't normally pick up historical romance books, I'm not even sure why really, but I can tell you that I'd give Nuki a big wet kiss then maybe smack her, just for recommending this to me. It put me through the ringer.

And I realise (after reading this back) that I make no sense, oh well Tally Ho!

Danielle says

"If she wanted a baby, she had to follow wherever her husband's privates went, regardless of where she might want to go."

Well, this was something.

Silver Lining was full of some belly-aching amusement, a slow-burning romance, human relationships, and life on a ranch in the 1800's.

I've been enjoying these oldie Western romances: long, but layered stories that really drag you into a different world. Something that contemporary romances are really lacking these days being more focused on sex than developed relationships.

So while I enjoyed—and was sucked into—this story, there were just some mechanics I didn't love.

1. The hero pining after a different woman until a good sixty percent.
2. The heroine's lack of femininity. I'm not a prim and proper lady myself, but I found this heroine just a little too rough and tumble, and I wasn't exactly connecting with her the best.
3. The hero did not find the heroine attractive until he falls in love with her.

Even after those things that I do not enjoy, Silver Lining still kept me invested until the end. I was rooting for their happiness, even though it often looked grim.

Low Down is a rough and tumble woman who dresses in men's clothes (this is the 1800's) and walks and talks like a man. When she's the only woman who stays to take care of the men who come down with the pox in their gold mining camp, they offer her anything she wants.

She wants a baby.

All the men pick a marble and the one who gets the lucky one is the unhappy winner of giving Low Down a baby. When the preacher interferes, they realize someone is going to have to marry her, because it was just sinful otherwise.

Max McCord picks the marble.

Let's just say he wasn't happy about it, considering he had a woman he loved and was about to marry back home. But his honor as a man wouldn't allow him to say no.

Meeting his spiteful jilted bride, unexpected news, family drama, blossoming love—and Silver Lining was an interesting yet entertaining historical western that shouldn't be overlooked.

Crista says

Maggie Osborne does it again and I remain a devoted fan after finishing this gem. There is no one like this author.

Silver Lining is a book about two main things:

1. The danger of judging people based on outward appearances, and
2. Transformation.

I won't rehash the plot of this book, but I will say that it begins with a woman named "Low Down" and ends with a woman named Louise McCord. Although in essence the woman is the same person, there is a definite transformation in her throughout the book that will warm the heart and touch the soul!

This is a multi-layered book that involves many different characters and family relationships. The main story is predominantly about Max and Louise, but the entire McCord family plays a crucial role in this story. Objects (namely a marble and a silver spoon) play a symbolic role in what ultimately pulls at the heart strings and Ms. Osborne skillfully and convincingly weaves this tale of unlikely love between two very likeable characters.

I love this author. I love her characters and her ability to remind me about the power love has in our lives. The power to change and transform, the power to heal, and the power to unite.

Audrey says

I'm really not sure how to rate this book. Objectively, it was a very well-written and finely-tuned tale with excellent characterization, storytelling, and character development. However, I didn't really connect with or feel pulled in by the story and characters until about midway through the book. It may in part be my own fault for picking a story that clearly has an "other woman" built into the premise, which is a trope that I'm rather biased against. The hero is engaged to another woman when he pulls out the scratched marble that seals his fate and ties him to the heroine in matrimony. He enters the marriage with a pretty heavy heaping of ill will, and the fall out of scandal that the hasty marriage brings to his family, the town, and his former fiancee is pretty devastating.

I thought the story was portrayed well and realistically, but I just didn't find much *joy* in reading about it for a good part of the beginning. It was a little painful to read their awkwardness together and his resenting the position in which he found himself. I did not feel connected to the hero, but I did feel compassion for the heroine and her unspoken reasons for wanting a baby. She was very likable with her brash, but kind ways. I'm not sure if I'm making any sense, but it's one of those things where, although I recognize this story unfolded in a very deliberate and precise way, I didn't feel all that invested in their romance or HEA until maybe halfway through, if that. I'm cautiously going with a 3.5-4 stars, though, because I did like the payoff and ending, and I know the storytelling deserves high marks.

?Karlyn P? says

A fantastic romance, one of the best I've read all year. I am so going to find more books by this author. The heroine Louise/Low Down has to be one of the most original and likable heroines ever written, and Max was such a great match for her.

[~Ami~]♥Sexy Dexy♥ says

4 stars

I don't even know how to rate this book. Louise is by far one of the most amazing heroine I've ever read in a very long time. There wasn't a time I wasn't routing for her. The other characters on the other hand were debatable and the plot in some ways felt like a soap opera. This wasn't as action packed as MOs other book I read but I found it more emotional and the pace of their relationship is exactly how romance should be written.

KatLynne says

This is my first novel by this very talented author and recommended to me by Jill and Denise. Thank you my GR friends...**I loved it!**

Without a doubt, my emotions were completely involved and the journey of Low Down and her transformation into Louise Downe is what held me captivated. This amazing heroine will forever be one of my favorites! Downtrodden yes, but filled with a remarkable resilience that I very much admired. And as the story unfolds her soul-wrenching admissions tore at my heart. I found myself wanting EVERYTHING Good for her!

Max McCord is a man of honor who always tried to do what was right even if his choices were hard. At first, he didn't have me in his corner with the love triangle involved. But that quickly changed and by the end I was pulling for him and knew he was perfect for Louise.

I laughed; I cried and did not want to put this book down!

Foxfire says

I hated this book and skimmed much of the second half.

The plot in a nutshell: Out of misplaced sense of obligation, the hero marries an uncouth spinster, jilting his fiancée, shaming and humiliating her and ruining her future because he has already taken her virginity. But hey, it's okay, as he eventually falls in love with his wife and the jilted fiancée turns out to be a bitch anyway.

The story combines two elements I dislike in romance—unrealistic premise and betrayal.

The heroine nurses a crowd of prospectors through illness and they want to reward her. She decides she wants a baby—not a husband, just a baby. The story is set during a period when illegitimate children were outcasts in society and brought great shame to the mother. On top of that, we are led to believe that the heroine is almost destitute, unable to provide for a child. I have no sympathy for a woman who puts her

maternal yearnings above the welfare of the child she plans to have. Moreover, the heroine does not appear to have any maternal instincts anyway—there are orphans in the mining camp but she has taken no interest in them. The whole situation is unrealistic, a contrived vehicle to create conflict.

However, if the heroine really wanted a baby, surely in a territory with a huge shortage of women she could find any number of men to have sex with her, including volunteering in a whorehouse if she cannot be bothered with the social aspects of finding a man to bed her.

But, as the plot goes, one of the prospectors has to impregnate her. There are no volunteers. For the sake of decency the impregnation is upgraded to marriage. Again, there are no volunteers. Due to the lack of single women in the West many lonely men scrimp and save to pay the passage for a mail order bride from the East where there is a surplus of unattached females. However, in this story the single men prefer to remain lonely and celibate. Another strike against credibility.

The men draw lots to pick a bridegroom. Despite his imminent wedding to his fiancée, the hero does not exclude himself from the draw, and he gets picked for the duty. He says he doesn't want to marry the heroine, the heroine says she doesn't want to marry anyone at all. Both are extremely strong-willed people but somehow they allow themselves to be pushed into saying the required words in the hasty wedding ceremony and end up husband and wife.

The next day they regret the whole thing and decide to divorce, but just to create another contrived twist to the plot, a few days later they have sex—not because of lust, but to try to take care of the impregnation business. Of course, this means the marriage has been consummated and can no longer be annulled. I cannot believe that neither of them thought about this before they jumped into bed.

They still plan to divorce, and yet the hero takes the heroine home to live with his family, introducing her to all and sundry as his wife, at which point he finally gets round to telling his fiancée that she's been dumped.

The hero is not blind to what he is doing. He broods over the fact that he is tarnishing his honour, shaming and humiliating the woman he loves, ruining her future and creating a scandal that will blight his family and hers for decades to come. But he goes ahead and does it anyway, and instead of trying to limit the damage by going to live somewhere else, he settles on his family's ranch in the town where his fiancée lives, thus ensuring that all their friends and neighbours get to witness the scandal as it unfolds. However, in terms of loss of honour he draws a line at allowing his wife to buy her own dresses, as it would be dishonourable for a man not to be able to support his wife.

The dumped fiancée, who is pregnant, is expected to be nice about it all. She is expected to treat the wife with courtesy. It is not the wife's fault that the hero drew the lot, they tell her. Nobody suggests that the heroine, who knew the hero was engaged, could have said, sorry, I'll pass on this one as he is already taken and can you please pick an unattached man for me.

The fiancée is portrayed as a caricature of a spoiled, self-centered bitch. Her hatred of the wife is so fierce, she comes across as hysterical. She is self-absorbed to the extent of appearing delusional. She has secrets to protect, and yet, instead of going away to have the baby—which would protect her secrets—she agrees to save her reputation by marrying the hero's brother, which forces her to live in the same house as the heroine and is guaranteed to expose her guilty secret. What kind of an idiot would do this—instead of choosing the easy way out by going away to have the baby, she decides to hang around to ensure her misery and ruination?

It's annoying when characters act in a completely illogical manner for the sake of creating plot twists, and I hate it when the happiness of the central couple is achieved at the expense of someone else's destruction. Society beauties getting their come-uppance and gutter-girls triumphing over them seem to be a trend for this author. Although I enjoy the writing style, I won't be reading any more of her books

Kiri Fiona says

multiplied a hundred times over. My first re-read of this beauty in 2017.

Would you like to see something pretty? It might make you feel better.

I would rate this book a 5 just for Low Down - forgetting everything else that made this book spectacular.

I read this many times over, years ago, and decided to re-read before reviewing just in case it wasn't as all that as I remember. It is. Probably even more so, now that I have so many more books to compare it to. Where to start?

Low Down is glorious. She is tenacious, authentic, grateful, open, bull-headed, appreciative, funny, quirky and resilient. And deep down, she's a sweetheart.

The spoon. Oh, the spoon.

Maggie Osborne makes me laugh.

Maybe I better take your arm again," she muttered, eyeing the staircase.

"If I fall down the stairs," she added in a low, dry voice, "and end up sprawled at the bottom in front of all those swells, I'm going to pretend that I'm dead. You tell someone to haul me off to the nearest boardinghouse, then go have your supper.

I was so frustrated with **Max**. I'm putting this in the 'things I loved' box because I was *meant* to be frustrated. He was so stuck up his own ass over Philadelphia that he couldn't see all the amazing-ness that was right in front of him. I wanted to beat his ass so hard over how he treated my girl Low.

Did I mention I loved Low Down? Maybe I did, but did I mention that she is the only character I've ever read that singlehandedly carried a ranch through winter. She was the shit. Like - never met a character as *everything good* as this one. And the humiliation she faces when this book kicks off - I don't know anyone who could bear that, and yet she does. Repeatedly, she takes the shit life throws at her and never complains. Just keeps on going, looking for the good in life.

She wished Billy Brown would end his speech right there. At the same time she secretly hoped he'd say more good things. Compliments were as rare as finding a nugget in her pan. She remembered every one that had come her way.

- I also really enjoyed **the peripheral characters:** the McCords, the boys from the mountain, the ranch hands, the gossip-y bitches in town, Philadelphia... even if they were assholes, I enjoyed the way they were portrayed.

- There's this sad thing that happens, or rather, there's this thing Philadelphia does because she's a cunt. For me, it was too much. Too sad. Too cold. Too unfair. And I so wish Philadelphia died a slow and agonizing death over it.

Perfection. Apparently, Susan Elizabeth Phillips is a Maggie Osborne fan. That's like Santa thinking someone is better than Santa, and then getting a visit from the Better-than-Santa Santa. In other words - of course this was going to be a 5 star read.

Mo says

Aw, I really loved this one.

“All my life I dreamed of having someone think I was beautiful.”

As scruffy and rootless as the other prospectors searching for gold in the Rockies, Low Down wanted nothing in return for nursing a raggedy bunch through the pox. But when pressed to reveal her heart's wish, she admits, "I want a baby."

Louise Downe (Low Down) was such a strong heroine. She didn't back down from what she wanted and she wasn't going to change her ways to suit anyone. Louise is vulnerable but doesn't want folks to know that. She tries to be strong and come across as one of the boys.

Max, Max, Max. Oh, how you did not want to be cornered into what you had to do but you did. But she grew on you and you on her.

"I love you, Louise Downe McCord. You drive me absolutely crazy sometimes, and this is one of those times, but I love you."

Philadelphia. Stupid name. Stupid girl. Did not like her at all.

Life on the land was tough but Max and Louise worked hard.

All Louise wanted was a baby, but in the end she got a loving family. Not just Max but his mother and his siblings.

I will definitely be checking out more by this author.

I would have loved an epilogue but that's just me!!

Pamela(AllHoney) says

As scruffy and rootless as the other prospectors searching for gold in the Rockies, Low Down wanted nothing in return for nursing a raggedy bunch through the pox. But when pressed to reveal her heart's wish, she admits she wants a baby. Not a husband, not a forced marriage to the proud man who drew the scratched marble and became honor bound to marry her. To be sure, Max McCord was easy on the eyes, but he loved another woman and dreamed of a different life. Yet they agreed to a temporary marriage that could end only in disaster. But can this strange twist of fate lead to the silver lining that both have been searching for?

What a hoot! Actually, this was really a heart wrenching story at times and I went from wanting to slap somebody (dagnamit) to wanting to hug someone. I absolutely loved Low Down aka Louise. She was such an unusual and wonderful heroine. A beautiful sunflower surrounded by roses. It took a little longer to like Max but I had his back by the end. There wasn't a lot of surprises for me but getting there was a joy. The story ran at a nice comfortable gait from the starting point to the finish line.

SheLove2Read says

I. LOVED. THIS. BOOK!

Where do I start? "Low Down" nurses her fellow miners through a smallpox outbreak when no one else would. As a token of their gratitude they offer her "anything her heart desires", little knowing what was to come. After goading for her several moments she finally says she'd like to have a baby. She doesn't want marriage or a commitment, just a baby. Suddenly the miners and the local preacher take to this like duck to water and the next thing Low Down knows, she's the prize for a husband lottery.

Max McCord draws the fated marble and marries Low Down, even though he is engaged to someone else

and slated to marry in 2 weeks. He tries to tell the preacher that but they hold him to it. So Max, being an honorable man, marries Low Down and they set off for his hometown (close to Denver) to stay with his family. He and Low Down agree to get her pregnant and then quietly divorce, since neither of them wanted a marriage in the first place.

Low Down starts the book as a scruffy, dirty, hasn't taken a bath in several months woman miner. In fact, her own husband realized he doesn't know her real name until after they are married! "Louise Downe" she replies upon being asked. She goes on to explain she is an orphan and was adopted on the orphan train from NYC by a Missouri Couple. They were cruel to her and the mother called her a "Low Down good for nothing *&^%" most of her life. So at 13 she ran away and has been called Low Down ever since. After a good bath and some new clothing, Louise is while not a ravishing beauty, still a very "handsome" woman of 28.

Back in Max's hometown we discover that his fiancee is pregnant! This only makes the scandal of Max's marriage that much worse and his fiancee is forced to marry Max's brother Wally in order to deflect some of the scrutiny and shame. Its a tense situation for everyone, but mostly Louise, who in a gesture of trying to fit in and not cause her new "family" any more trauma, takes horrible remarks made about her in silence. That is not to say it doesn't affect her, but she tries to brush it off saying that her past has prepared her for it and "it doesn't matter". Max, while not being outright mean to Louise, does have some moments where he blames her for all his troubles.

Louise is what I'd call a tortured heroine. Having grown up an orphan in an abusive foster home, she has never known love. Having her own baby she believes will be all she will ever need in life - someone to love unconditionally that will love her back the same way. She puts everyone else ahead of herself, including those who are spiteful and mean to her and never seeks retribution. Some might say that's being a doormat but if you read the book, you'll see that Louise just doesn't expect anything less - its what she's used to.

Alot happens at the end of the book and there most definitely is a happily ever after, which in my opinion makes this a desert island keeper. A western Cinderella story!

Zumbagirl says

4.5 stars

"Every tub must stand on its own bottom. That's how I've always lived, standing on my own bottom."

Ain't that the truth! I loved Louise a/k/a Low Down - a strong, spirited, no-nonsense or complaining woman. Ms. Osbourne writes the best heroines. Louise is the star of this book and made it all worthwhile - it was kind of depressing in the beginning.

My son's teacher gave the class some interesting advice: Every woman is crazy; you just have to pick what kind of crazy you can live with. I thought about that and heck, he is totally right!! But in Silver Lining sometimes fate - in the form of a scratched green marble - decides who you marry.

Low Down and Max McCord were both looking for gold - but unfortunately for Max, he caught the pox and almost died. Low Down helped and nursed all the men who got sick. They all decide they should do something for her in gratitude for her hard work. She gets one wish. She's always wanted a baby. They have a drawing and guess who gets the winning marble - a man who is already engaged to be married - Max McCord. But not only does he sign on to give her a baby, but get married to her. Well, neither one of them wants to get married - Low Down just wanted a baby, not a husband. And Max has a real "prize" of a fiancee waiting for him back home. But the wheels are set in motion.

The preacher says they have to get married and I loved what he said to Max: *"I only got one more thing to say. This situation ain't Low Down's fault, so don't go blaming her. She didn't choose you. God put that marble in your hand. If you're fool enough to blame God and fight His plan, then good luck to you son, because you're going to need it. Just don't go punishing someone else for something that isn't her fault."* Life is full of surprises and this book has a whole pile of them.

Very strong secondary characters: Philadelphia - the evil ex-fiancee, Wally - Max's brother, Livvy McCord - Max's mother, Gilly - Max's sister, and Gilly's daughter, Sunshine (she's so cute).

This is a beautiful story - it starts out sad and seems like there's no answer or solution to the many problems. But you see how families work together, love and accept each other, and how you really don't know how things are going to work out. The worst thing in life can turn out to be a blessing. Every cloud has a silver lining - oh, and I loved Louise's silver spoon! She was so humble and deserved a family who would love and appreciate her.

The only reason I didn't give it 5 stars is because I loved and this wasn't quite as good - the epilogue alone in PofJJ was the best ever and this one didn't have an epilogue. And Max was annoying at first and it took me three-quarters of the book before I liked him. Still, it was a great story and you can't go wrong with this if you like westerns, an awesome heroine, strong secondary characters and a twist of fate like you've never seen.

Jane Stewart says

It's a feel good story. Nicely done. I loved Louise.

STORY BRIEF:

Smallpox comes to a community of gold miners in Colorado. Low Down (Louise) is the only one who doesn't get sick. She cares for all the sick men, cleaning up their vomit, feeding them, and insulting them to make them want to fight and live. They survive and owe her their lives. They ask her to name whatever she wants. They will give it to her. At first she declines, but in a moment of openness tells them her dream is to have her own baby. So a drawing is held among the guys, and Max draws the marble with an X scratched into it. Then the local preacher insists the future child not be a bastard and marries them on the spot. All the other miners are counting on Max to do the honorable thing and make her pregnant. Low Down tells Max that she will be happy to get a divorce and be out of his life as soon as she is pregnant.

Max and Low Down leave the mining camp and travel to his family ranch. Max had been engaged to Philadelphia. Max breaks the news that he can't marry Philadelphia until he and Low Down can get a divorce later. But then Philadelphia announces she is pregnant. So Philadelphia is forced to marry someone else to reduce the scandal.

REVIEWER'S OPINION:

What a wonderful story. Low Down was an orphan, mistreated, and now self reliant. She has wonderful qualities. All of a sudden she's part of a large loving family and doing things she had never done before. She falls in love with Max. Philadelphia is a lying, cheating, mean, rude, manipulative, selfish girl. Max has no idea how lucky he is to have escaped being married to her. I enjoyed it. It was fun. I loved the relationship that developed with Low Down and Max. It was an interesting and unplanned coincidence that Low Down was like Max's mother. Max had chosen to marry petite, short, pretty Philadelphia, yet he ends up with someone like his mother, tall, strong, with good values.

If you're looking for a strong, smart hero to swoon over, you might be disappointed. Max is a dolt, because he falls for Philadelphia (a shallow woman) and takes a long time to see Louise's values. He didn't do anything to impress me, but I liked it because it's a neat story about a wonderful character - Louise.

One part kind of stuck with me. Page 210. When Philadelphia was introduced to Low Down (Louise), Philadelphia said cruel and mean things. Louise responded politely. Later Louise "thought about all the things she might have said in response to Philadelphia's remarks. The only reason she'd taken Philadelphia's comments lying down was because she felt sorry for her, and because she knew Livvy (Max's mother) desperately did not want an open breech within the family. For Livvy's sake, Louise had decided that she would do whatever it took not to cause further trouble. If that meant letting Philadelphia walk all over her, well, so be it. There was nothing Philadelphia could say to her that she hadn't heard before." Most of the time I think we need to stand up for ourselves when treated rudely, but this was a touching example of someone who did not stand up for herself, and it was the better thing to do. I admired Louise not only for that but for other things as well.

DATA:

Story length: 344 pages. Swearing language: mild, including religious swear words. Sexual language: none to mild. Number of sex scenes: 4. Total number of sex scene pages: 11. Setting: probably late 1800s Colorado. Copyright: 2000. Genre: western historical romance.

OTHER BOOKS:

I've read the following Maggie Osborne books. Dates are copyright dates.

3 1/2 stars. The Wives of Bowie Stone 1994

4 stars. The Promise of Jenny Jones 1997

3 stars. A Stranger's Wife 1999

4 stars. I Do, I Do, I Do 2000

4 stars. Silver Lining 2000

Lisa Kay says

★★★★★ Whoa, baby! (Baby being the operative word here!) Another great book by the exceptional Ms. Osborne. I just love the way she gets me to care about a different type of heroine. I can ache with them, yet *not* pity them. Watching them each transform in different ways is a pleasure.

Every cloud has a silver lining. ~ Proverb

In this one the heroine, Low Down, is definitely not your mainstream historical romance heroine. Instead she is a complex blend of an eternal positivist and someone suffering from unrealized self-worth. She often slips a proverb into her conversation or thought process, but she literally embodies one: Every cloud has a silver lining! With this attitude toward life, how can she help but have all her dreams come true; discovering she *is* worthy of them along the way. Of course, *I* knew that all along; she captured my attention, my sense of humor, and my heart from the very first page.

I must admit that when I read reviews that the hero, Max, was already promised to another woman, yet made to be part of the “unlucky twenty-four,” I was a little skeptical about this storyline. Nevertheless, the way Ms. Osborne writes the scene and sets it up in **escalating stages** worked for me.

Max is the one who does the majority of the growing in this story – and, let me tell you, he needs to! I had a few problems with him (and why, at first I was going to mark it off by ½ star -- he frustrated me so much at times), but his transition was absolutely inevitable, deliciously slow, and entirely realistic. So neat to see him realize the treasure he has in his wife. Amazing secondary characters in this one too.
