



Heartbreak Trail

Shirley Kennedy

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1850. Lucy, a pampered New Englander, is dragged by her husband and coldhearted brother-in-law on a wagon train bound for California. The first casualty of the arduous trek is her husband. Lucy longs to return home, but that would mean abandoning her little stepson. How fortunate then that rugged Clint Palance, a former trapper and Indian scout, is watching over them both! As the journey progresses, Lucy faces deprivation, heartache, hardship, and more death. Then, with California just around the bend, Lucy must part from Clint. Will she find him again? Or must she return to a dull life in Boston, forsaking forever the beautiful West she has grown to love?

Heartbreak Trail Details

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Author : Shirley Kennedy

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From Reader Review Heartbreak Trail for online ebook

Emmy says

I've been going back and forth between giving this book a 2.5 and a 3. It lands somewhere in between the two. I liked how it didn't shrink from a lot of the harsh realities of living on a wagon train. People died from drowning, buffalo stampedes, typhoid, childbirth and accidental shootings. Only a fraction of the characters survived the trip. I'd never read about a wagon train before and it reminded me a lot of the old computer game Oregon Trail, where you were lucky if your five family members survived. So I found that aspect interesting.

However, the dialogue was incredibly unbelievable at times - particularly all of the conversations between Lucy and Clint. At every one of their interactions I would be screaming in my mind "no one talks like that!" That is actually what bothered me the most about this book - the setting felt so real and then the dialogue felt so fake. I mean who describes sex to their sister as "floating on the wings of love." *gag* And then there were times where it actually made me feel uncomfortable. It says a lot when you can make a hopeless romantic uncomfortable when talking about love.

The other thing that bothered me was there were a few situations that Lucy found herself in that seemed to me to be easily solvable. But she would just allow herself to be forced along by Abner. It seemed diametrically opposite of the strong character that we've been told, and shown, that she is. I understand it was needed to move the plot forward, but it just seemed inconsistent with her character.

C Nicole says

I enjoyed the main story in general. I had to keep remembering that this was a time where women had little power. However, at some point, the wagon train became the definition of insanity. Doing the same thing over and over, and expecting a different result. It was hard to believe that such a large group that was continually upset with their captain would continue to acquiesce to his whims, especially after EVERY time, the result was exactly as bad as the guides warned. Also, each time there seemed to be a way out of her miserable situation, the heroine abandoned her confidence and the strength she seemed to be gaining. By the end, I didn't know that I wanted her happy.

Glenda Denson says

I wanted to like this book but the heroine was too stupid to live. There's a big difference between being weak and being stupid. Unfortunately the heroine was stupid. The author spent the entire book describing how terrible the villain was and how much everyone disliked him. The heroine proceeds to make terrible decisions because no one would believe his threats. That reasoning never made sense because she had so many people to rely on.

Anna Marie says

Having had NO success with the free contemporary fiction lately, I went historical. And this book... WoW. It's not just a love story, it's mostly an epic about the wagon trains during the Gold Rush. More people die in this book (and get sick, and get injured) than any other book I've ever read. I was vibrating off the sofa (which my husband finds amusing) with the intensity of the action... from rattlesnake to roaring river to Indian attack. It was a VERY good book.

The only reason I didn't give it five stars is because Shirley Kennedy - while excellent at writing action and historical accounts - didn't make me feel emotion for the characters. I could picture them - she is good with details - but as for conveying feeling? I just didn't get into it.

PS: At first I thought this was a religious book, because of all the (extraordinarily irrelevant) scripture quoted. But it is NOT a 'chrischun' novel. There's a lot of language, and more than one sex scene. Which was a pleasant surprise.

LadyCalico says

I wanted to like this book, it had many charms and strengths, but there were just too many stupidities that the author threw in to ruin it. Being captain of the member's council of the wagon train did not grant the individual dictatorial power over running the train or making the decisions, that was the job of the wagon master. Granted wagon trains did have a member government to settle internal personal disputes, but they did not give the orders about running the train--that would be like the president of the student council overruling a qualified paid Principal and having dictatorial power over the high school. Seriously, who hires an experienced and capable wagon master in order to just ignore him and put an inexperienced fool in charge of running the train--save your money? Even so, the internal government was not a dictatorship but a council and if the captain turns out to be a jerk, just vote the jerk out...problem solved. If the petty tyrant doesn't like it, he can take his family and leave the train...adieu. Although there were times, Lucy appeared trapped into obeying Jacob, then Abner's, orders, much of the time her "reasoning" just didn't work. She had ample opportunities after Abner broke his leg to grab the baby and escape, leaving the scum to rot, so for that simple reason, the latter part of the book was just too ridiculously melodramatic to work for me. It didn't portray Lucy as hopelessly trapped, just Lucy as Too Dumb To Live. It really badly needs a re-write to give the story internal consistency and its characters sanity.

Historical Romance Books says

“Heartbreak Trail” by Shirley Kennedy

After hearing about the gold rush going on in California, Joseph Schneider tells his wife Lucy to pack up her belongings and leave everything behind, because they are going West to strike it rich in California. Lucy does not want to trek across the country and leave her sister and father behind, but whatever her husband says she must do. There is going to be so much death, arguing, and treacherous terrain ahead for Lucy and her wagon party. Will Lucy endure, and make it to California, or will she return to Boston? This is going to be a trip that will change absolutely everything.

Shirley Kennedy writes a captivating story of perseverance and dedication. The love that Lucy has in her heart and perseverance will have you wishing that Lucy was your friend. This book is absolutely fantastic and is worth the read. When I read this book I had no idea how much I would fall in love with it. The detail is amazing. I applaud Shirley for writing such a vivid and moving portrayal of what the early settlers must have experienced, so good in fact, that you will feel like you are amongst them. Please pick up this book and read it. You will fall in love with reading "Heartbreak Trail" just like I did. Marvelous job Shirley.

5 Hearts Out Of 5

Reviewed by Lady Victoria

Visit my Website at <http://www.historicalromancebooks.ca>

Misfit says

3/24/12. Kindle freebie. Klausner says it's a "super historical".

Julie Baker says

I found this book absolutely fascinating. I enjoyed the characters and the interactions of the wagon train a lot. Lucy and Clint were fantastic characters. The two of them together inspired my imagination and took me on the wagon train with them. Lucy's assessment of the people and Clint's descriptions of the land were great. My absolute favorite thing said throughout though was Clint giving his reason for being a guide. Read it for yourself to find out what it was. I am confident you won't regret it even if you don't enjoy it as much as I did.

Lisa C. says

Five stars because it kept my interest, was very accurate in the depiction of what pioneers, specifically women, had to endure to settle the west and great character development. I read it in one sitting and will be looking for more from this author.

Phycilla Gable says

Amazon review

I am so disappointed that I could not finish reading this book because of the language. The story started out so good and as soon as I got interested the language turned filthy. I don't understand why writers think the f... word adds to the story. Beware unless you want to fill your mind with this kind of filth.

Chris says

I believe this book was pretty accurate as far as the tremendously hard traveling on a wagon train all the way across the country from Boston to California. Its amazing that anyone lived to see the California. I really enjoyed this one.

Kbee says

Very good story. Wasn't so sure in the beginning that I was going to finish it but kept on and did like it. It shows how women didn't have a say and how they did make the best of it and that they were a lot more important than men thought. As I was reading I kept thinking this would make a pretty good movie. Lucy got trapped in her marriage then her brother in law kept an hold on her with one thing or another.

Only thing I really didn't like is the ending...RUSHED!
Made me think the author had got to the maximum pages allowed and had to finish.

Book Review Diva says

“Heartbreak Trail” by Shirley Kennedy

After hearing about the gold rush going on in California, Joseph Schneider tells his wife Lucy to pack up her belongings and leave everything behind, because they are going West to strike it rich in California. Lucy does not want to trek across the country and leave her sister and father behind, but whatever her husband says she must do. There is going to be so much death, arguing, and treacherous terrain ahead for Lucy and her wagon party. Will Lucy endure, and make it to California, or will she return to Boston? This is going to be a trip that will change absolutely everything.

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Reviewed by Lady Victoria

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Sue says

This was a heartbreaking account of a wagon train headed to California (where the streets were 'paved with gold') and all the personalities involved. I could hardly put this one down! I won't type any spoilers - but this was well worth reading, if you like historical romance and adventure.

Marja McGraw says

Heartbreak Trail, by Shirley Kennedy, takes the reader across the country with a wagon train in 1850, and allows an inside look at the daily lives, joys and terrors that faced the pioneers.

What I thought was going to be a romance story turned out to be so much more. Heartbreak Trail included romance, drama, heartbreak and triumph, and history.

Lucy Schneider reluctantly leaves the comfort of her Boston home, having just learned she's pregnant, to travel across the country with her husband. This woman faces trials that most people can't even imagine, and she learns her self-worth along the way. Death awaits many of these pioneers, including her husband, and life changes forever. Her husband's domineering brother makes the trip almost unbearable, but Lucy discovers she has strengths that she's never imagined. Clint Palance, one of two men leading the wagon train, turns out to be Lucy's salvation as life and death situations become an almost daily event. The hardships were unimaginable.

Ms. Kennedy managed to create a true villain, someone whom you can't help but hope the saying, "What goes around, comes around" was meant for.

She obviously did some in depth research for this story, and I commend her style of writing. I highly recommend this book for all readers who enjoy historical fiction, romance and drama.
