



Fire and Rain

Elizabeth Lowell

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Elizabeth Lowell's favorite family is back in town. Don't miss this reader favorite!

Owner of the wildest, loneliest ranch this side of the Rockies, Luke MacKenzie hadn't laid eyes on Carla McQueen for three years. Not since they day he'd sent his best friend's kid sister storming from the Rocking M Ranch and out of his life -- for what he thought was forever . . .

Now Carla was back, lovelier and even more desirable than in his burning memories. But Luke knew he could never give in to the raging need to make her his woman. For he'd made a vow long ago -- one that he was determined to keep -- that he would never fall in love with Carla McQueen. No matter how badly his body and soul ached for her . . .

Fire and Rain Details

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From Reader Review Fire and Rain for online ebook

Cathy says

I can't remember when I first read this series, but while I was cleaning out my bookshelves, I decided to re-read all 4. I'd call these books guilty pleasure reading. Lots to like, lots to dislike, all carried along by interesting plot and great descriptions of the area.

StMargarets says

Cruel-to-hide-his-impossible-love trope.

Why impossible? Because hero is the sole heir of his family's isolated Colorado ranch that either killed the women who lived on it or drove them away like his mother.

There is also a May/December I-knew-you-as-a-kid complication

The plot:

Heroine declared her love for her brother's friend when she was 18. Hero was mortified by his lust so he was cruel while first kissing her and then rejecting her. Fast forward three years and a bedroom set of handmade furniture: It's the heroine's 21st birthday and the hero shows up at her pizza party with a magnum of champagne. They play cards and the heroine ends up committing to a summer of cooking and housework at the hero's isolated ranch.

Heroine has mixed feelings. She loves the ranch, and thinks this proximity to the hero will help her over her crush.

Hero is a walking hard-on, basically. All that unrequited lust has to go somewhere, so he is jealous of anyone the heroine talks to and he is increasingly cruel to the heroine in hopes she'll quit.

She doesn't and in the last week of the summer she goes camping looking for ruins of an indigenous tribe that lived high in the mountains. The hero follows her for protection since her brother can't make it. They finally have sex. Hero thinks he should marry her because she was a virgin.

Heroine turns down his duty proposal. Hero ignores her for the last few days she's on the ranch – spending all of his time in his workshop.

Heroine tells him he will have to come to her if he wants them to have a relationship. She finds out she is pregnant and returns to the ruins to leave a piece of pottery the hero had given her long ago. It's her symbolic goodbye to the hero. Hero finds her there and tells her he is going to sell the ranch. He's discovered his love for her is greater than his love for the ranch.

Heroine tells him he can have them both because she loves them both. Hero confesses he's making a rocking chair and cradle in his workshop. HEA

While the characterization/ plot is a bog standard two star, EL adds some literary flourishes that take this

story to the next level. Warning – English major overreach and analysis ahead.

First of all, the world-building is fascinating. The ranch is an almost other worldly place, where the hero is not the master of all he surveys. There are parts of the ranch that are unexplored, known only by legend. Yet there is great beauty and riches for those who are brave enough to go off the beaten track. (A nice metaphor for life and for romance)

EL provides history that is both known and unknown. The settlers' history is written down and seems to support the hero's view that no woman can stand living in such rugged country. The indigenous people's history is not written down, but is revealed through artifacts and their ruined settlement. It also seems to support the idea that no families can be raised on this land. However, both the settler's history and the indigenous people's history show that it was the women who endured to carry the next generation. The descendants of those unknown people are still walking around as are the descendants from the 8 children of Moriah Mackenzie. (The heroine is the next Moriah Mackenzie, carrying the future generation).

The author also has the characters do stuff that seems unrelated to the romance. That's not unusual, but what activities she chooses while they are waiting for their impossible love is interesting.

The card game is an unusual way to get the heroine to the ranch. It's a nod at destiny and the luck of the draw and greater forces so that the H/h don't have to admit they would really like to be together. At the end it's revealed that the heroine's cardsharp brother engineered it, but it still doesn't take away from the H/h's reluctance to take responsibility for their feelings - or their ability to bow to inevitable.

The heroine's first cooking experience is described in great detail. Besides showing how she is tenacious and resourceful, it does something else as well. There are no ready-made ingredients so the heroine has to cook and thaw a block of ground beef to make spaghetti sauce. Then there is a long wait to boil water in a huge pot for the pasta. The heroine almost burns herself trying to drain the water from the heavy pot, but the hero does it for her and is concerned about burns. Then the men eat all the pasta and the heroine realizes they never should have thrown out the boiling water since she could have used it cook more spaghetti.

It may seem like a small thing, but that regret of throwing that heated water away – and the long wait for it - mirror the course of the H/h's road to commitment. Later, the heroine needs a spice for stew, but no one is going to town and she has to improvise. She finds the ranch has what she needs – juniper berries. Another sign that she belongs on this land and not in town.

And speaking of using the resources of the land, after the hero ran the heroine off the first time, he felled trees and used the lumber to make an elaborate bedroom set. It took him the three years the heroine was away. He puts heroine in that bedroom (and not in any other employee accommodations) when she returns as the cook. Hero is a destroyer, but out of that destruction a new creation. I don't think the bed symbolism needs to be spelled out. Heroine got a college degree in that time. So their separation was not wasted.

As my skeptical students used to say to me, there is no way the author thought of all of this symbolism when she was writing this story. And I would have to agree that for a first draft, she probably didn't. But she certainly went back and refined the scenes she had already written.

Winning/losing a card game is a fun romance story trope that was used intelligently. The isolated ranch was a great excuse for the hero not to love – but she elaborated on the symbolism of the ancestors and the meaning of the landscape. Cooking has been used to prove a heroine's mettle many times, but there is rarely regret from both the H/h about throwing something valuable away. And I don't dare touch the meaning of

the cherry cobbler she served for dessert.

So while I wasn't swept away by this romance, I have to give EL some mad props for writing a literary category with some meat. Even the title is evocative and I think she must have had something to do with it (most category authors do not name their stories – it's the marketing people who come up with The Greek Billionaire's Baby Secret) Fire and Rain are opposites that extinguish one another, but are also of evocative of passion, hearth and home, and quenching after a drought. The characters do mention their fires during love making, but the author doesn't hit you over the head with it.

/end English major fun.

Alexis-Morgan Roark says

To me, this one was not as good as the first, and I really didn't enjoy the snippets of Case's life offered within its pages-I wanted MORE and I wanted to know what happened with Ty and Janna. Ty/Janna were barely glanced over and this just didn't seem right given the full treatment from the previous book. It just didn't sit well with me.

I will say that Luke is quite yummy-all big and hard and hairy. What's not to like? Our heroine, Carla, should have kicked his butt to the curb and gone after Ten!

But she has loved Luke since she was a teenager, and even though he did spurn her rather cruelly, true love does prevail in the end.

Sheila Melo says

Classic and Yes a Bit Melodramatic

"Three years ago he had wanted Carla so badly that he had sent her running for her life from the Rocky M. And him."

THE STORY: Luke MacKenzie knows that he will never marry and bring a woman to his family's ranch where marriages have been destroyed for a century. After a childhood where his mother and sister were torn from him and his father drank himself to death, Luke is determined to avoid falling in love and marrying. His problem is that he has wanted his best friend's sister for years. Carla McQueen loves Luke and the ranch and has for years but has cut herself on Luke's fears and determination for years. Three years ago, she offered herself to Luke and he dismissed her in an emotionally scarring matter. Carla is back for the summer to try to overcome her feelings for Luke.

OPINION: I love this book. There are many reasons why I shouldn't. Luke is emotionally abusive to Carla at times. Carla takes far too much of Luke's behavior when she should walk away. But this story is about how neither Luke nor Carla can walk away. The language of the book is lush and emotional and at times melodramatic and gives the entire tone of the book a more mythic or classic tone. I have never felt that this book is intended to be realistic, but rather almost like a fairy tale. In that vein, I don't ask for realism and don't overly analyze the characters. This book was very sexy and sensual for its time. It might be tame

compared with some of today's explicit books, but the romance is lush and definitely adult fare.

WORTH MENTIONING: FIRE AND RAIN was first published in the late 1980s and was a category romance so it is short and relies on typical conventions of the time including an emotionally distant hero and a virginal heroine.

FINAL DECISION: I love this book. Luke is a man who has been deeply harmed by his forefather's bad marriages and by his own childhood. He is a wounded hero who cannot stand before the love of Carla who is like a rock who refuses to turn away from him.

CONNECTED BOOKS: FIRE AND RAIN is the first contemporary book in the MacKenzie-Blackthorn series. There is a historical romance RECKLESS LOVE that is also about the MacKenzie family. It is not necessary to read RECKLESS LOVE before reading FIRE AND RAIN.

STAR RATING: I give this book 4.5 stars.

Jenny says

Carla has been in love with her brother's best friend Luke for ever. Luke wants Carla but he is determined to push her away. He doesn't want to fall in love or marry and bring Carla to his ranch cause he believes such a life would make her unhappy. Years ago Carla offered herself to Luke and he rejected her cruelly. Now Carla is back from college and is determined to win Luke's heart.

Loved, loved this book. the way Luke fights his feelings for Carla when it's so obvious she is the love of his life, the pain he goes through, his jealousy, his insecurity. when he makes the rocking chair for her. When Luke finally succumbs to his desire for Carla, it melted my heart!

Rose Maria says

h21

Crista says

5 stars! *(Even after all these years!)*

I read this book back in January 1990 when it was first released under the Silhouette Desire line. It was a favorite of mine the instant I read it, and remarkably, after just re-reading it 25 years later, it's STILL is a favorite of mine!

Luke MacKenzine, the owner of the Rocking M ranch, has had feelings for his best friend's little sister for what seems like forever. The initial "big brother" feelings eventually morphed into an elemental, physical, and sexual attraction. Luke fought these feelings with everything in him, as he didn't want to ruin the friendship between he and his best friend Cash McQueen, and he wanted to keep Carla in his life (if only

from a distance).

When in a matchmaking ploy, Cash intentionally loses a card game with Luke that sends Carla to the Rocking M for a summer to cook and clean, it's like lighting a match to a powder keg: things are bound to explode!

I love this book (and series) for so many reasons. In this first book, we are introduced to the secluded and yet remarkably beautiful Rocking M ranch, that almost serves as another character in the book. The descriptions of the land, and the history of the Anasazi people added depth and life to an already remarkable love story. I also enjoyed the everyday life descriptions of what daily life is like on a ranch. Carla's cooking and cleaning for the men was at times hilarious and I never forgot Carla's first meal experience feeding a dozen hungry cowboys!

The attraction and sexual tension between Carla and Luke is really off the charts, and is what I remembered most about this book. When Luke finally succumbs to his attraction and desire for Carla, it is an absolutely beautifully written chapter.

This book reads like a series title, but it also has depth that was often times missing with Silhouette books. There was a stubbornness in Luke that was very irritating, but when he finally falls and realizes what he has and what he's been pushing away, he holds on to Carla for what turns out to be a destined union.

There are few books that remain with me for the entirety of my life, and this is one of them!

Patricia Marin says

Terminado el tercer libro del #RetoRita2 #RitaLowell

Una historia muy sosa, protagonista enamorada del mejor amigo de su hermano mayor. La verdad es que me estaba gustando, pero a medida que lo terminaba me aburría. Carla, enamorada hasta las cejas de Luke, dueño de un rancho y el mejor amigo de su hermano, decide pasar tiempo con él en su rancho como ama de casa para limpiar y dar de comer a los trabajadores de la zona. Luke solo sabe pensar en Carla en términos sexuales y decide no acercarse a ella para evitarle disgustos (no le basta con rechazarla xD) y no llevarse él tampoco un chasquito. Lo peor no es que el personaje masculino tenga unos pensamientos o un comportamiento machista, resulta hasta gracioso ver semejante estereotipo y la cantidad de tonterías que dice; al final, pues cansa y deja de ser divertido. Además, se repiten constantemente hechos que ya habían quedado claros (que sí, que Carla se enamoró de él y se declaró a los 16, que estudió, que es muy lista, que es muy guapa, blablabla... // que Luke pobrecito, que tiene un trauma, que lo quiero tanto que dejo que me trate como si fuera tonta porque pobrecito...). Total, que me gustó más el lore relacionado con los indios y la historia de los antepasados de Luke, que la historia de estos dos adultos con comportamientos adolescentes. La narrativa es rápida y apenas profundiza en los personajes. No ha sido un chasco completo, pero no me apetece leer nada más de esta serie.

Christine says

I have been disappointed in these books in this series after the 1st book. This was short, ended abruptly and was too similar to all the other books after the 1st one.

Andrea lindeman says

Loved this book

I read this book years ago ,and decided to read, it again for old time sakes. It is still just as good now,as the first time I read it .Classic!!!

Corandra says

3.5 stars

Noemí says

Otro libro más leído más para el #RetoRitaDos

Y otra nueva autora que descubro gracias al Reto.

Una historia corta que se lee en un suspiro (No es mi caso) Soy una tardona, lo sé jajaja entretenida y sin mucho drama. Para cambiar de aires no esta mal.

Puede que lea los demás libros de la serie, que también parecen cortos.

Zeek says

I loved these when they were category romances back in the day. Doing a re-read of the series right now to get reviews up.

Wow- Luke has gotta be one of the stubbornest sonofagun heroes I ever wanted to slap the back of a head on in a romance novel. He loved Carla- his best friends little sister- desperately. But he couldn't believe she'd ever want to stay on a ranch the rest of her life- sure she'd run off like his mother and many Mackenzie women before her. So he ran her off instead.

But she's back. Now that she's finished school she wants both Luke and all that comes with him. And he's helpless to resist her. Now he's gotta learn to trust that she truly does want him AND the life they can build together on the Rocking M ranch.

Beside the sexual tension- which these old books do well- I like the setting and the characters that live on the ranch. It's fun being part of their lives, however overwrought they may be.

Nikki M Henton says

One of my all time favorites! I've reread this book, several times. Luke Mackenzie, to me, is the epitome of what a real man should be. Tough on the outside, and always does the right thing, where he really wants to or not. Oh, and boots & jeans! Yum. This book has always been a favorite. I've read the whole series. One regret. WHY DIDN'T UTAH GET A STORY?? I would have loved that!

Rebecca Crowley says

This is a classic, old-school romance that really hit the spot. The formula is tried and tested for a reason: virginal heroine overwhelmed by her passion, emotionally unavailable hero with a heart of gold, set on an isolated, wild ranch full of Anasazi ruins. What could be finer?

Lowell's writing is florid and rich, and although none of the swoony, melodramatic dialogue is even within orbit of being realistic, it's all the more fantastic as a result. This is an enjoyable glimpse into romance novel history, with high drama and passion that stand the test of time.
