

## Book 2 of the Wilderness Time Travel Series

### Into the Wilderness

Pamela Ackerson

Returning to the past, Karen, known as Spirit of the Mountain, had prayed for strength. It had been two days since she'd left her beloved Standing Deer at the ranch. He was riding north to Rosebud, she to the Standing Rock Agency. Time was slipping by too quickly. By Friday she should be in his arms again. It had taken her years to figure out how to control the time-travel. All she had to do was decide where she wanted to go before she fell asleep and she would arrive there.

Spirit of the Mountain found that if she didn't do that, she ended up being at the cave in the Black Hills where she'd first met Jumping Bull. Then, she would have to wait for her horse to arrive so she could find the village. The waterfall there was one of the most beautiful she'd ever seen. She fell in love with it from the very beginning.

With so much needing to be done, she hoped she wouldn't run out of time. She may not be able to change the future or the past, but she could avoid potential problems. It was why she chose to hide the buffalo, why she was heading to the Standing Rock Agency.

The heat was penetrating. With a slight humidity to the air, the caravan continued with few stops for water. A hushed silence swept among the Indians, many stared at the group, fear dulling their eyes. The Indians on the reservation called her the "man who brings death". Red Cloud was the only one who knew who she really was.

The lies that had been told about Red Cloud were devastating. If the Indians only knew the truth, how much he was helping them, they wouldn't feel betrayed.

The men, women, and children stood behind Red Cloud as the caravan of eight unsaddled horses and two wagons pulled up in front of the agency office. The wagons were full of blankets, clothing, medicinal herbs, and food. Food the Indians preferred and the agency men wouldn't touch. Live cattle were brought for them to butcher when they saw fit.

She knew the Indians would never feast on the beef. It was why she hid more food underneath the clothing and blankets.

Dressed in men's clothing, a large hat strategically placed on her head to hide her hair and face, she rode next to Two Horns. It was better for him to deal with the agency men, if they heard her speak they would know she wasn't a man. She didn't know their names and preferred to keep it that way.

It had been two years since she started taking Indians from the agency. It wasn't hard for them to convince the agency men to take the gold and supplies in return for the "use" of the troublesome warriors, the rebels who needed to be punished. The troublesome warriors would work on the cattle ranch as punishment for their misbehavior.

Spirit of the Mountain hid her grin.

When they had first negotiated with the agency, she had taught Two Horns to quote certain parts of the constitution, making it easy to twist the laws to the advantage of the ranch and the agency. Two Horns quoted the thirteenth amendment and stressed the servitude of the Indians on the ranch as a punishment for their crimes. Since there wasn't a judicial system available, he emphasized that the officers of the agency had the authority to make conscious decisions for creating a safe environment by punishing the rebel Indians.

It had worked all too well.

They didn't blink or hesitate when they started requesting the wives and children as well. More gold kept their mouths shut and fattened their pockets.

She stood a short distance from the shackled warriors that had been brought to her for inspection while the agency officers instructed men to empty the wagons and corral the cows.

She signed to Two Horns that she wanted more men to take with them. It would most likely be the last time she could take warriors from the holding cells and reservation, She wanted as many as she could get.

After he spoke with the two officers of the agency he explained to her that there would be no volunteers. He'd been told there were five warriors locked up that the officers didn't want taken because they were too hotheaded and uncivilized. She whispered to him to get those warriors, regardless of the cost.

The price for the "use" of the Indians was tripled even after they feigned leaving without them. Shielded by her enormous hat no one but Two Horns saw the fury lashing out of her eyes. Without hesitation, she handed the sack of gold over.

As she watched the five warriors being dragged, beaten into submission, she contained her fury as they lined up in front of her. She inspected their bruised and beaten bodies. Standing in front of her with as much pride and courage as any man could, she could see the rebellion in their souls.

Without looking directly at any of the warriors she was taking, she nodded her head in approval. Dragging the five warriors over to the wagon, they shoved and manacled them onto the poles attached to the inner walls. The others reluctantly climbed into the other wagon but hadn't caused much commotion. Their meager belongings were placed on the horses with the wives and children following behind on foot. The caravan was ready to leave.

She signed to Red Cloud that she wished the Great Spirit to be with him always and told him that this may be the last time they would see each other. Thanking him for his friendship, she made a final farewell as the caravan of "prisoners" made its way out of the confines of the agency.

The two days ride to the ranch was disconsolate and arduous. Spirit of the Mountain could feel the hateful stares from the Indians throwing invisible daggers at her back. When they arrived at the ranch they would know the truth soon enough.

Reaching the property line, she waited in anticipation for the approach of the men that chose to stay on the ranch to help her. She could feel their eyes and knew the warriors in the wagon felt it also. Their demeanor changed to caution, alert as they watched the horizon.

Three warriors approached on their ponies. She knew immediately something was amiss.

Squawking Bird quickly spoke in Lakota. Two soldiers were killed escorting a family through her ranch. The warriors knew no warring was allowed on the property. They had fired in self-defense. They were waiting for her at the house. All of the extra men had been alerted and were on guard scouting for more soldiers and wagons.

When they arrived at the house, the women and children who lived on the ranch swarmed around the wagons and newly arrived families. Excitement filled the air and she could feel the new members relaxing with each hearty welcome. Curious and puzzled about the surroundings the "hotheaded" warriors stood quietly and no longer struggled. She could feel them watching her as the shackles were being removed.

Murmurs of explanations and encouragement to the new arrivals hummed in the distance as she closed the door. The newcomers would be shown where to bathe and be deloused. Such a shame, it was rare to find children or adults in an Indian village with lice. The reservations crawled with them and were found everywhere.

By the time they were situated comfortably, Karen would be ready to speak with them. So far they had not heard her voice, still didn't know who she was.

Entering the living room where Little Eagle and Red Bird waited she greeted the men. They were sitting on the buffalo hide rug like two children waiting to be reprimanded, staring straight ahead. They hadn't been living on the ranch long and still didn't quite believe they weren't captives.

Looking at the comfortable furnishings in the room, she shook her head and sat on the floor next to them. The Indians rarely used the furniture, always preferring the floor.

"Tell me what happened?"

In their village, it would have been a coup; here they knew it would cause trouble. Worried about the killings of the two soldiers and what it could mean, the young warriors were more afraid of Spirit of the Mountain's reaction than to the fact that they killed two soldiers. They knew if more soldiers came the plan for the ranch would be ruined and Spirit of the Mountain would be furious.

Red Bird spoke for the two of them.

"We were bringing stray cattle from the east side of the ranch when we saw the soldiers and the wagon. They were maybe a hundred feet from us when they fired. We didn't have rifles, weren't expecting to need them. We did have our bows and arrows." Red Bird stopped for a moment, gathering his thoughts.

"We gave them the sign of peace but they didn't listen. One of the soldiers lifted his rifle to shoot and the other pulled a handgun out of his belt. The man with the handgun missed me and we shot them both with our arrows before the man with the rifle could shoot.

The bullet from the handgun hit one of the cattle."

There was silence for a few moments before Red Bird continued. "Little Eagle approached the wagon and spoke to them in English. They agreed to allow us to escort them through your property. We explained that we would offer no protection beyond the property line."

She nodded. "Did they see any buffalo? Did they see the house?"

"No, they didn't see anything," Little Eagle replied. "We also gave them dried meat and berries to take with them. They were afraid and begged us not to kill them, said they were going to Deadwood to start a new life. We told them to keep moving. We warned them that it wasn't safe for them to go to Deadwood and were better off heading west to California."

"Did they listen?"

Both men nodded yes.

Little Eagle answered. "It appears that way. We told them the best route to travel and the safest way. That was the direction we saw them go."

"What did you do with the soldiers?"

"We looked for papers but couldn't find any, so we buried them in the white man's way. We're sorry if this has caused you trouble."

"And the guns?"

Both men pointed to the corner.

"Keep the rifles for yourselves. Don't worry about the soldiers. They may have been renegades. It doesn't make sense that they wouldn't have any identification papers with them. Our biggest concern is to keep those buffalo hidden so the white hunters don't exterminate them."

Standing, Spirit of the Mountain smiled at both warriors. Young and strong, their choice to stay and work for her cause surprised and pleased her. Both had worked hard since they arrived.

"Go, count your coups. You deserve them. I'm going to get myself cleaned up for the new arrivals." She stretched her neck, "Thank you both."

With a whoop and cheer both men nodded their heads. As they left the room she turned to the bookcase and pulled on it to expose a hidden door to where they lived inside the cave home.

Smiling, she recalled the day Standing Deer had brought home an old Mother Earth News magazine showing a picture of a rock sheltered home. They had already found the hidden valley for the buffalo and were trying to figure how they would be able to house so many Indians. His idea to build a house covering the cave opening was superb. If anyone did find the home, they would never realize that there were over a hundred Indians living in the shelter of the cave.

He'd gotten the idea for hidden doors in one of the gothic books he'd read. All of the rooms that lay against the cave have hidden doorways. It was amazing and ingenious.

There were three natural hot springs in the cave. She looked forward to a leisurely bath. The women would keep the newcomers from the hot spring nearest the house so she could bathe. Normally all three water holes were available to everyone but her cause hadn't been disclosed to the newcomers yet. Until they knew how the newcomers would respond to her offers, the hidden rooms would not be revealed.

The hot spring she chose for her bath was smaller than the others, about 6 feet wide and 10 feet long. The shallow edge was about 3 feet, deepening toward the center where she could immerse her tired mind and body. The steam rising from the water was a godsend after an arduous and miserable journey.

Entering the hot pool, Spirit of the Mountain felt the smooth stone under her feet. Submerging herself under the water, she felt the heat surge through her, snatching the tension as it lifted away.

Closing her eyes, she recalled the last time she'd been in this particular pool. Standing Deer had made love to her. Soon, she would be in her love's arms and would show him how much she missed him.

Reluctantly she left the comforting waters, wanting to read the financial reports before she spoke with the newcomers.

Delving into the figures for the ranch, she smiled. She'd made an excellent choice with Two Horns. He was good with figures and led the warriors with a fairness that made anyone proud to work for him.

There were 47 new buffalo calves, ten more than last year. If they kept reproducing at that rate they'd have to find another valley to hide them.

It was working well.

Two Horns interrupted her train of thought when he alerted her that the newcomers were ready and waiting in the living area of the house. She followed him through the hidden door that entered the kitchen area.

The new warriors and their families had not responded well to their new captivity. Their animosity wasn't encouraging, they were more rebellious than any who had come to the ranch.

They smiled at each other. She had an ace in her pocket.

Crazy Horse stood outside the double doors of the living room away from the penetrating eyes of the newcomers. He greeted her with a silent kiss on the cheek. The three entered the room together, with her in the middle.

A hush slammed through the room and all eyes went to Crazy Horse and then to Spirit of the Mountain. Four of the warriors recognized her.

All recognized Crazy Horse.

Thank you for taking the time to read the excerpt from Into the Wilderness.



Contact information:

PamelaAckerson.com

Amazon author page: [www.amazon.com/Pamela-Ackerson/e/B00QY1ARI4](http://www.amazon.com/Pamela-Ackerson/e/B00QY1ARI4)

Twitter: @PamAckerson

[www.facebook.com/pam.ackerson.7](http://www.facebook.com/pam.ackerson.7)

Books by Pamela Ackerson

The Wilderness Series

Across the Wilderness

Into the Wilderness

Wilderness Bound

Warriors of the Wilderness

Out of the Wilderness

Dear Margaret,

A Granny Pants Story (New Series of Children's Stories)

The Long and Little Doggie

Riley Gets into Predicaments

Available in Spanish

El Perrito Largo y el Perrito Pequeno (La Serie del Perrito Largo y Pequeno)

**Non-Fiction:**

I Was Just a Radioman (The Memoirs of a Pearl Harbor Survivor, Black Cat, and decorated war veteran.)