

May, 1783, the Virginia Frontier, the Allegheny Mountains

That terrified cry came from the stream. Zane didn't have much time to reach her. And he was so close!

He slid the musket strap from his shoulder. Grasping the long firearm, he raced over the misty path. Like a buck taking flight, he dodged stones and sprang over fallen limbs. He skirted an enormous downed trunk capped with toadstools. Shouldering the musket again, he pushed through the underbrush. Branches snagged his brown hunting shirt. Briars snatched at his leather breeches and wool leggings. He tore free. A tangle of vines lay between him and the woman. Taking the tomahawk slung at his side, he chopped his way through. Chest pounding, he arrived at the engorged stream.

With eyes honed to detect the barest hint of man or beast, he scanned the swift current. Woodland debris bobbed in the brown flood. No woman. She must be farther downstream.



He sprinted along the edge of the bank. Whoever this unfortunate female was, she was about to drown. Even without knowing her, it goaded him. And the urge to save her swelled inside like the muddy water overflowing its banks.

There! Zane spotted the young woman clinging to a branch as the torrent did its damndest to rip her away. "Hold on! I'm coming!"

Her head swiveled toward him, face white with fear and fatigue. "Hold on!"

She managed the barest nod.



He laid his musket on the ground. Wedging his moccasins against the stones and roots, he sidestepped down the slick earth. Then reached out and grasped the branch she held to—testing its strength. The wood was firm beneath his hand.

So far, so good. He leaned over the swirling water. Careful. One misstep and they'd both be swept away to a watery grave.

Desperate eyes met his, the hue of summer leaves and marbled with brown like the forest. Her fingers slipped.

Quick! He snagged her shoulder, digging in his fingers so her cloak wouldn't come away in his hand. "I've got you!"

She clutched at him. "Don't! You'll pull us both in!"

A look of misgiving flitted through her panicked gaze.

"Trust me. I'll not you let go."



This short American historical with a *The Last of the Mohican's* flavor is intended to give readers a taste of my longer historicals. If you like it, chances are you will enjoy them too.