

*Virtues*  
AND VICES  
OF THE  
OLD WEST  
BOOK 1

THE TROUBLE  
WITH  
*Patience*

A NOVEL

MAGGIE BRENDAN

  
Revell

a division of Baker Publishing Group  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Maggie Brendan, *The Trouble with Patience*  
Revell Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2015. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

© 2015 by Maggie Brendan

Published by Revell  
a division of Baker Publishing Group  
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287  
www.revellbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Brendan, Maggie, 1949–

The trouble with Patience : a novel / Maggie Brendan.

pages ; cm — (Virtues and vices of the old west ; 1)

ISBN 978-0-8007-2264-7 (softcover)

1. Man-woman relationships—Fiction. 2. Frontier and pioneer life—Montana—Fiction. 3. Montana—Social life and customs—19th century—Fiction. I. Title.

PS3602.R4485T76 2015

813'.6—dc23

2014034286

Most Scripture, whether quoted or paraphrased by the characters, is taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture quotations labeled NIV are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

Background image of the town on the cover courtesy of 1880 Town, Murdo, South Dakota.

15 16 17 18 19 20 21      7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Maggie Brendan, *The Trouble with Patience*  
Revell Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2015. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

For my dear sisters,  
*Doris* and *Dianne*





It has been my experience that folks that have  
no vices have very few virtues.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A gentle answer turns away wrath,  
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 15:1 NIV



# 1

## **Nevada City, Montana Territory Spring 1866**

Trying to beat the rain, Patience Cavanaugh hurried up the single main street of raw Nevada City. But large droplets began to pelt her way ahead, leaving that distinctive smell when spring rain mingles with the thick dust of a dirt road. She wasn't sure why it mattered to her if she were wet or not. It wasn't likely anyone would be taking any second glances. She knew all too well her figure was a bit fuller than her younger and more slender counterparts in this frontier town.

She sighed and hurried on, clutching the basket of fruits and vegetables from the market. But her real worry was how she would survive here without a single tenant yet in her boardinghouse. Run-down though it might be, it was the only place of its kind in a small town busy with newcomers coming and going. Many of those were miners hoping for a gold strike at Alder Gulch, and when they did—strike gold, that is—everyone knew before you could holler “jackrabbit.” A few folks stopped in for lunch now and then since she'd hung the new sign over the boardwalk—CREEKSIDE INN. She'd

kept its original name in her beloved grandmother's memory. Wouldn't Granny be sad to see her once-beautiful boarding-house fallen into neglect since her death? But Patience didn't have the wherewithal to make the needed repairs, and most of the miners didn't have the wherewithal to pay her for room and board, even if they were so inclined.

*Poor Granny . . . But poor me. What have I gotten myself into?* Moving to a town where she didn't know a soul, only to realize how long it would take to return the boardinghouse to a thriving business. One glance at the dilapidated clapboard building provided all the evidence she needed.

Reaching the front door just as the bottom fell out of the dark cloud above her, Patience hurried to the kitchen with her purchases, looped her cape within easy reach on a nail by the back door, and decided a good cup of coffee and a fire would take the chill away, maybe lift her spirits a bit. Then another long afternoon . . . waiting, hoping, and praying.



Jedediah pushed the desk drawer shut and stared out the window to the other side of the street. Some movement had caught his eye, and he stood up, his hand automatically going to his gun holster as he moved closer to the window. Outside, a man, reins for his horse in hand, cast furtive glances around at his surroundings. He sidled up to a chestnut horse tethered in front of a store and quickly released the cinch underneath the horse's belly, yanking the saddle right off the horse's back. Just as the man slung it onto his own horse, Jedediah snatched his hat from its nail and ran out the door of his office.

“Hey, you! Hold it right there!” Jedediah’s shout brought all street activity to a stop. He waited, right hand loosely resting on the holster.

“What? You got a problem, Marshal? Can’t a man saddle up his horse in the middle of this here town?” The man paused, his hands on the top of the saddle.

“Not when it’s a stolen one,” Jedediah warned, his tone and gun-ready stance carrying more weight than the words. A small audience was gathering.

He moved forward a few steps across the street, and the man pushed his cowboy hat back, then spit a long string of tobacco juice into the mud in front of Jedediah’s boots. “You accusing me of somethin’, Marshal?” He looked around at his silent audience with a sneer and reached for the saddle’s straps.

“Don’t have to.” Jedediah narrowed his gaze at the young fellow. “That horse belongs to my friend Monty, and I’d advise you to put his saddle back just like you found it. But either way, you’ll be getting acquainted with the jailhouse.” He spoke deliberately, took another slow step, and started to pull out his gun. The man looked at the weapon, wavering with apparent indecision.

Two doors down, Jedediah heard the front door of the Creekside Inn slam back on its hinges, and a quick glance showed a young woman starting up the boardwalk toward them. Jedediah already had caught a glimpse of the new proprietor. He hadn’t spoken directly with her yet, but he’d heard her name was Patience and that she was attempting to reopen the boardinghouse.

Jedediah held his hand up, palm out, as she drew closer. “Ma’am, stay back till I settle this.” By now a few more

passersby had stopped to watch the altercation, but he paid no mind to the growing crowd.

“Why, marshal,” the man said, “you act like I’m a hardened criminal!”

The Marshal took another step forward. “In the past you’d have been strung up for stealing a saddle in these parts—”

“Marshal, you can’t mean that!” Jedediah heard a female voice call out toward his right. He didn’t take his eyes off the thief, but he groaned inwardly at the thought of an interfering woman.

Ignoring her, he continued to address the man in front of him. “Lucky for you I abide by the sworn office of the marshal,” he said, keeping his voice low.

But she wasn’t done yet. “There’s no cause to hang a man for stealing.”

Jedediah turned his head, his gun steady on his prisoner. “I don’t need some woman mucking up the law,” he said through clenched teeth, “so go on back to baking your biscuits.” What was it about females? Did they always have to have the last word? Actually, this one *was* kind of pretty when her face flushed pink like that. He tipped his hat to her and returned to the task at hand.

“Well, I never!” she shot back. “I will not be talked to that way!”

“Suit yourself, lady,” said another voice, male this time, “but Jedediah here is not known for his soft touch. Best you stay out of his way.” He watched as his friend Monty strolled up.

The thief dropped his hands from the saddle, fingering the holster at his hip.

“I wouldn’t even consider that if I was you,” Monty drawled. “The marshal’s right. That’s my horse and saddle.”



Jedediah looked between his friend and the saddle snatcher. “Don’t worry, Monty. He’ll put it back—won’t you?”

In a flash, the thief drew his gun. But Jedediah already had his aimed, and like greased lightning he fired his handgun. The force knocked the weapon from the thief, who immediately howled, grabbing his hand in pain. Jedediah had heard the woman’s scream from behind him and shook his head. “He’ll live, lady,” he said over his shoulder and turned back in disgust.

“I warned you, you no-account scoundrel,” he went on. “Now, put that saddle back on Monty’s horse and don’t try anything foolish again. If you weren’t going to jail before, you sure enough are headed there now.”

The man glared at him. “Are you crazy? You near took my hand off! Can’t you see I won’t be able to lift that dumb saddle?” He removed the bandana from his neck and wound it around his hand, dripping with blood.

“Should’ve thought of that before committing a crime against a law-abiding citizen in our law-abiding town,” Jedediah answered, motioning with his gun toward the saddle. “What’s your name?”

The man’s halfhearted attempts to remove the saddle merely dropped it on the ground. “Shorty,” he muttered. He struggled to lift the saddle back onto Monty’s horse.

“Now step away,” Monty ordered him. “I’ll tighten the cinch myself.”

Shorty snorted his contempt as Monty picked up the thief’s gun and handed it to Jedediah. “A word of warning,” Monty added. “Stay away from me and my horse if you know what’s good for you. I just might give our marshal here a little help.” Monty cinched the straps and swung up into the saddle.

Jedediah poked his gun into Shorty's side, and they both shuffled across the street to the jailhouse.

Patience followed them and shut the door behind her. "And just what can I help you with, Miss . . . ?" the marshal barked over his shoulder, glaring at her. He shoved Shorty into the cell and twisted the key in its lock.

"Cavanaugh. Miss Patience Cavanaugh. Perhaps the question is what I can help *you* with, Marshal Jones." She stood firmly in place, arms crossed above her waist. But she felt far less confident than her stance suggested.

He gave a short laugh. "I've never needed help from any woman and don't intend to start now."

Shorty snickered behind him. "Ya just might now."

"This is none of your concern, Shorty." Jedediah threw him a look of distaste and motioned Patience away from the small cell toward the other side of the room.

As soon as he sat down at his desk, she picked up the conversation again. "Perhaps we can start with your manners—for example, when a man insults a woman in front of half the town, it's customary to apologize!" Patience's hands gripped the sides of her dress to avoid their shaking. She wasn't sure what possessed her to barge into the marshal's office like this, but the man was rude, confirming things she'd heard about him. She had to admit—only to herself, of course—he was handsome in a rugged sort of way. Fairly tall, sturdy build, tanned leathery skin, light brown eyes with flecks of green and a mustache curving down around his lips. From the look of his furrowed brow and dark, bushy eyebrows, he didn't seem too pleased that she had entered his domain.

Shorty's voice intruded once more, his grinning face pressed against the bars. "That's right, ma'am. He sure's a rude—"

"Will you please shut up, Shorty! Or I'll do it for you."

Patience could see the muscles in the marshal's jaw working. He now looked her square in the eye. "Apologize? When you're intruding on the law? Is that the way a lady behaves? Hardly. Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got paperwork to fill out. Don't let the door slam on your backside as you leave." He jerked open the desk drawer and tossed his hat with precision to the hook on the wall, revealing a thick head of brown hair indented around his head from his hatband. He pulled out a sheaf of papers and began sifting through them, grumbling under his breath about "all this paperwork he left for me to do."

"Marshal Jones," she pressed on while a small voice inside wondered if she was going crazy, "I am offended when you tell me to go back to baking biscuits, like I am some empty-headed female. I assure you that I am not!" She'd gotten quite a head of steam up by the time she finished.

Shorty's voice joined in the argument. "Those biscuits you bake are beautiful, ma'am!" She saw him grinning again at her from across the room, but she ignored him.

The marshal leaned back in his chair, steeped his fingers in front of him, and stared at her. He finally shrugged. "That so? Look, I know very little about you except for the fact I can smell your biscuits baking—and they smell mighty good, I might add."

"It doesn't matter what you *know* about me, Marshal, it's how you *spoke* to me." She wasn't about to let him off with a little sweet talk. "It's likely you'll never get the opportunity to know me better. You were rude and demeaning, telling me

to be quiet like I was some child.” Patience tried to keep her voice steady, but she could feel that her face was warm. “And if you talk like that to other women—well, it’s no wonder you haven’t found any woman that will have you!” She heard the prisoner snort his delight at the exchange.

“She’s right,” the thief called. “I always treat a lady with respect, jes like my mama taught me.”

“Sure you do.” Marshal Jones threw him a disgusted look. “Just like you honor other people’s property.” He stood and picked up an empty mug from his desk. “If you’re finished jawing at me, I’m going to get myself a cup of coffee . . . unless you care to stay and get to know me better,” he said, eyeing her with a sarcastic grin.

“And you, Marshal, are sorely lacking in any social graces. I don’t know why I expected an apology from you.” She took a deep breath and clasped her hands together. “But since you offered, I’ll take that cup of coffee.” She was very surprised at herself since she wasn’t normally comfortable talking to men.

She took a seat in the chair in front of the desk, adjusted her skirts, and waited. He had an uncomfortable look on his face, momentarily staring at her with his mouth open as though to speak. Instead he took his mug over to the potbelly stove, poured it full from the coffeepot, and returned to plunk it down on the desk. He went back, grabbed another mug from the shelf above, slopped coffee into it, and stalked over to her with it. She nodded her thanks as she accepted it. He went around his desk and sat down.

*How dare he look me over as if—as if I were stock to be evaluated for purchase!* If she never had to set eyes on him again, it’d be too soon.

“Marshal,” she began once more, “you are not aware of this, but I’m writing a collection of devotionals to help people. I have always faithfully read the Scripture and take its heeding to heart, and . . . and, well, I want to extend grace wherever it is needed.” She stopped for a deep breath. “In fact, the one I wrote just this morning deals with regret, and remembering how the soldier felt after gambling for Jesus’s robe, how he was looking for grace. Perhaps you have a few regrets . . .”

His eyes glazed over and she wasn’t even sure he was listening. He drank coffee, shuffled papers, finally stood and went over to the stove, refilled his mug, and returned to the desk. “Well, *Miss Patience Cavanaugh*, I don’t know about grace, but there’s one virtue you clearly forget to extol—humility.” As he set his down, the two mugs banged together, nearly spilling the coffee into her lap.

Shocked, she sat up straight, squaring her shoulders. She took a sip, and it made her cough and sputter. She put the cup down on the desk and pushed it away, then covered her mouth with her handkerchief to keep from choking. The coffee was the worst-tasting brew she’d ever drunk. *Who knows how long that’s been sitting on the stove?* she thought with a grimace.

“I take it you don’t want a coffee refill,” he said with a grin. She shook her head and glared at him above her handkerchief.

Far worse than the coffee was the attitude of this man. She was not going to sit here and listen to his belittling comments.

She pushed her chair back, rose, and moved slowly toward the front door with her head held high.

Shorty’s voice followed her. “You seem mighty humble to me, lady.”



Patience went straight to her kitchen and began peeling and chopping potatoes and carrots with far more vigor than necessary. She was angry at that cocky marshal and his even cockier prisoner. They had no right to mock her, when all she was trying to do was . . . what? She truly did want to help people—that’s why she was attempting to make this broken-down old boardinghouse into something thriving once more, why she put her best into cooking lunches for the town’s residents, why she was diligently doing her devotional writing . . . Wasn’t it?

Her granny had told her once that people should take the specks out of their own eyes before accusing others of faults. Patience put down her chopping knife with a sigh. Today she’d probably wound up only embarrassing herself, alienating the marshal, and providing some humor for that poor Shorty.

She picked up the knife with another sigh to finish the stew for lunch. She’d totally forgotten she’d been planning to go to the post office when she’d heard the confrontation. *But*, she reminded herself, *I only just opened the boardinghouse a short time ago*. Perhaps when word got out about it being available again, newcomers would inquire for a room. She prayed it would be so. *And, Lord, I do want to show grace and humility. Teach me, please.*



Jedediah propped his feet up on his desk, leaned back in the worn leather chair he’d inherited from his predecessor, and took another swallow of the thick black liquid the lady had ungraciously complained about. Well, she hadn’t

actually said anything, but she didn't have to, what with all her choking and sputtering. He couldn't help but grin as he put his mug down and looked over at his prisoner, finally quiet and asleep on the cell's cot. He'd hold Shorty till the end of the week when the circuit judge made his rounds and pronounced a sentence.

Jedediah shook his head with another grin. What a lame-brained thing to do in broad daylight—in the middle of town, no less—and right across from the marshal's office. But he knew folks like Shorty liked taking risks. In fact, he probably thrived on it. What amused him most was this Miss Patience trying to interfere. Maybe she was simply being impulsive, but somehow she didn't strike him as being that kind of woman. And he sure would like to know how she came to take him up on the offer of coffee. But he was one up on her since she'd nearly choked on it. He took another sip and grinned once more.

Actually, she had really pretty green eyes, though her expression had been accusing and dour looking. When she'd walked out, he couldn't help but notice, in spite of her simple calico dress and apron, her clothing did not hide her feminine curves.

He sighed. No need to even give her a second thought. She spelled trouble, and he wasn't looking for any. He was new in town, new on the job, and didn't need anything she had to offer. But he couldn't deny he had been hankering after one of those fresh, hot biscuits Monty bragged about. His own cooking left something to be desired, so he ate most of his meals at the Longhorn Café. Maybe he'd give Creekside Inn a try . . . maybe get her ire up again. Another grin.

But then he closed his eyes, and another face, this one

smiling, floated behind his eyelids. Emily worked at the Longhorn. Now there's a woman he'd like to get to know better, but that would mean eventually opening up about some things he didn't care to reveal. He sighed and turned back to the stack of papers he'd probably never get through at this rate.