



Moonfire

By Linda Lael Miller

Download now

Read Online ➔

Moonfire By Linda Lael Miller

An American beauty stranded by a shattered promise on Australia's vast shores. . . .

After sailing to Australia only to find that the man who asked her to marry him has no intention of fulfilling his part of the bargain, Maggie Chamberlain vows to shape a new life for herself in Sydney. Then arrogant, wealthy Reeve McKenna captures Maggie's untried heart, thrilling her senses with the sweet, dark rush of desire. But Reeve cannot be hers alone, for he is obsessed by his search for his beloved brother James, lost two decades before. Reeve's fierce hunger for the Yankee beauty is not yet love, and Maggie wants both the breathless pleasure of his passion and the full surrender of his heart—or nothing at all.

One of America's most romantic writers, Linda Lael Miller brings the white-hot passion of *Moonfire* to the Australian frontier country in this sensuous story of two lovers bound by desire.

↓ [Download Moonfire ...pdf](#)

📄 [Read Online Moonfire ...pdf](#)

Moonfire

By Linda Lael Miller

Moonfire By Linda Lael Miller

An American beauty stranded by a shattered promise on Australia's vast shores. . . .

After sailing to Australia only to find that the man who asked her to marry him has no intention of fulfilling his part of the bargain, Maggie Chamberlain vows to shape a new life for herself in Sydney. Then arrogant, wealthy Reeve McKenna captures Maggie's untried heart, thrilling her senses with the sweet, dark rush of desire. But Reeve cannot be hers alone, for he is obsessed by his search for his beloved brother James, lost two decades before. Reeve's fierce hunger for the Yankee beauty is not yet love, and Maggie wants both the breathless pleasure of his passion and the full surrender of his heart—or nothing at all.

One of America's most romantic writers, Linda Lael Miller brings the white-hot passion of *Moonfire* to the Australian frontier country in this sensuous story of two lovers bound by desire.

Moonfire By Linda Lael Miller Bibliography

- Rank: #283830 in eBooks
- Published on: 2011-05-24
- Released on: 2011-05-24
- Format: Kindle eBook

 [Download Moonfire ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Moonfire ...pdf](#)

Editorial Review

About the Author

The daughter of a town marshal, Linda Lael Miller is the author of more than a hundred historical and contemporary novels. Now living in Spokane, Washington, the “First Lady of the West” hit a career high when all three of her 2011 Creed Cowboy books debuted at #1 on the *New York Times* list. In 2007, the Romance Writers of America presented her their Lifetime Achievement Award. Visit her at LindaLaelMiller.com.

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Chapter 1

1934

Jackie was flying a plane, so Jackie was happy.

Soaring high, catching the breezes, winking at the setting sun, Jackie stretched and the plane stretched. Jackie moved and the plane moved. As though the body of the plane were a second skin to her, she could move the airplane as easily as she moved her arm or her leg. Smiling, she dipped one wing downward to look at the beautiful high mountain desert of Colorado.

At first she didn't believe what she saw. Sitting in the middle of nowhere, miles from the nearest road, was a car. Thinking that the vehicle had been abandoned, she turned her plane, dipping the wings, turning on a dime, to backtrack to have a second look. The car hadn't been there yesterday, so perhaps someone needed help.

She swooped down as low as she dared, not that the piñon trees, rarely over twenty feet tall, were going to interfere with the height she needed to stay aloft. As she came back for a second pass she saw a man stand up from the shade of the car and raise his arm in greeting. Smiling, she turned her plane back toward her home base. He was all right, then, and as soon as she landed at her airstrip in Eternity, she'd call the sheriff to send the stranded traveler some help.

She was chuckling to herself. Travelers often were stranded in Colorado. They looked at the flat landscape off the side of the road and decided to see nature up close. But they didn't take into consideration the thorns as large as a man's little finger and rocks whose sharpness had not been worn away by heavy yearly rainfall.

Maybe it was because she was laughing and not watching what she was doing that she didn't see the bird, as big as a lamb, that flew straight into her propeller. She doubted that she could have avoided hitting it, but she would have tried. As it was, everything happened very quickly. One minute she was flying toward home and the next minute there were feathers and blood all over her goggles and the plane was going down.

Jackie was a good pilot, one of the best in America. She'd certainly had a great deal of training, having received her license at eighteen years of age, and now, at thirty-eight, she was an old hand. But coping with this bird took all of her knowledge and skill. As the engine began to sputter, she knew she was going to have to do a dead-stick landing, a landing without power. Quickly, tearing off her goggles so she could see, she looked about for a place to set it down. She needed a wide, long clearing, someplace free of trees and rocks that could tear the wings off the plane.

The old road to the ghost town of Eternity offered the only possibility. She didn't know what had grown or rolled across the road in the many years that it hadn't been used, but she had no other choice. Within the flash of an eye, she lined up the nose to the "runway" and started down. There was a boulder blocking the road -- it had probably rolled down during the spring thaw -- and she was praying to stop the plane before she hit the enormous rock.

Luck wasn't with her, for she plowed into the rock. As she crashed, she could hear the sickening crunch of her propeller being destroyed. She didn't think anymore. Her head flew forward, hitting the stick; she was out cold.

The next thing Jackie knew, she was being held in a pair of very strong, masculine arms and carried away from the plane. "Are you my rescuing knight?" she asked dreamily. She could feel something warm running down her face. When she put up her hand to wipe it away, she thought she saw blood, but her eyes weren't functioning properly and the daylight was fading fast.

"Am I badly hurt?" she asked, knowing the man wouldn't tell her the truth. She'd seen a couple of men mangled in airplane wrecks, and as they lay dying everyone had reassured them that tomorrow they'd be fine.

"I don't think so," the man said. "I think you just bumped your head, cracked it a bit."

"Oh, well, then, I'll be okay. Nobody's head is harder than mine." He was still carrying her, but her weight didn't seem to bother him at all. As best she could, considering how dizzy she felt, she pulled her head back to look at him. In the fading light he looked great, but then, Jackie reminded herself, she'd just cracked her skull in a plane wreck. For all she knew, he had three heads and six eyes. No one could be so lucky as to crash in the middle of acres of nothing and find a handsome man to rescue her.

"Who are you?" she asked thickly, because all of a sudden she felt very sleepy.

"William Montgomery," he answered.

"A Montgomery from Chandler?" When he said yes, Jackie snuggled against his wide, broad chest and sighed happily. At least she didn't have to worry about his intentions. If he was a Chandler Montgomery then he was honorable and fair and would never take advantage of the situation; Montgomerys were as honest and trustworthy as the day was long.

More's the pity, she thought.

When they were some distance from the plane, near his car, which she could just make out in the dim light, he gently set her on the ground. Cupping her chin in his hand, he looked into her eyes. "I want you to stay here and wait for me. I'm going to get some blankets from the car, then build a fire. When you don't show up at the airfield, will anyone come looking for you?"

"No," she whispered. She liked his voice, liked the air of authority in it. He made her feel as though he'd take care of everything, including her.

"I was planning to spend the night out here, so no one will look for me either," he said. "While I'm gone, I want you to stay awake, do you hear me? If your head is concussed and you go to sleep, you might not wake up again. Understand?"

Dreamily, Jackie nodded and watched him walk away. Very good looking man, she thought as she lay down on the ground and promptly went to sleep.

Mere seconds later he was shaking her. "Jackie! Jacqueline!" he said over and over until she reluctantly opened her eyes and looked up at him.

"How do you know my name?" she asked. "Have we met before? I've met so many Montgomerys that I can't keep them straight. Bill, did you say your name was?"

"William," he said firmly, "and, yes, we've met before, but I'm sure you wouldn't remember. It wasn't a significant meeting."

"Significant meeting," she said, closing her eyes again, but William sat her up, draped a blanket around her shoulders, then rubbed her hands.

"Stay awake, Jackie," he said, and she recognized it for the order it was. "Stay awake and talk to me. Tell me about Charley."

At the mention of her late husband, she stopped smiling. "Charley died two years ago."

William was trying to collect wood and watch her at the same time. The light was fading quickly, and he had difficulty seeing the pieces of cholla on the ground, as well as the deadfall. He had met her husband many times, and he'd liked him very much: a big, robust gray-haired man who laughed a lot, talked a lot, drank a lot, and could fly anything that could be flown.

Now, looking at her, drowsy, he knew he needed to warm her up, get some food inside her, and make her stay awake.

Right now she was in a state of shock, and that, combined with her injury, might keep her from seeing another dawn.

"Jackie!" he said sharply. "What's the biggest lie you ever told?"

"I don't lie," she said dreamily. "Can't keep them straight. Always get caught."

"Sure you lie. Everybody lies. You tell a woman her hat is nice when it's hideous. I didn't ask you if you had lied or not; I just want to know what your biggest lie was." He was stacking up what wood he could find as he questioned her, his voice loud; he couldn't let her sleep.

"I used to lie to my mother about where I was."

"You can do better than that."

When she spoke, her voice was so soft he could barely hear her. "I told Charley I loved him."

"And you didn't love him?" William encouraged her to talk as he dropped a pile of wood near her feet.

"Not at first. He was older than me, twenty-one years older, and at first I thought of him as a father. I used to skip school and spend the afternoons with him and the airplanes. I loved planes from the first moment I saw

them."

"So you married Charley to get near the planes."

"Yes," she said, her voice heavy with guilt. She sat upright and put her hand to her bloody head, but William brushed her hand away and turned her face up toward his as he used his handkerchief to wipe away the blood.

After he'd reassured himself and her that the cut on the side of her head was minor, he said, "Go on. When did you realize that you loved him?"

"I didn't think about it one way or another until after we'd been married about five years. Charley's plane was lost in a snowstorm, and when I thought I might never see him again, I found out how much I loved him."

After a moment of silence she looked at him as he bent over the wood he was trying to coax into a fire. "What about you?"

"I didn't once tell Charley I loved him."

Jackie smiled. "No, what's the biggest lie you ever told?"

"I told my father it wasn't me who dented the fender of the car."

"Mmm," said Jackie, becoming a little more alert. "That's not a very horrible lie. Can't you come up with something better?"

"I told my mother I wasn't the one who'd eaten the whole strawberry pie. I told my brother that my sister had broken his slingshot. I told -- "

"Okay, okay," Jackie said, laughing. "I get the picture. You're a consummate liar. All right, I have one for you. What's the worst thing a woman can say to a man?"

William didn't hesitate. "'Which silver pattern do you like best?'"

Jackie grinned. She was beginning to like this man, and her overwhelming sleepiness was starting to subside.

"What's the worst thing a man can say to a woman?" he asked.

Jackie was as quick to answer as he had been. "When you're shopping and the man says, 'Just exactly what is it you're looking for?'"

Chuckling, he walked the few feet to his car to open the door and remove camping gear. "What's the nicest thing a man can say to a woman?"

"I love you. That is, if he means it. If he doesn't mean it, then he should be horsewhipped for saying it. And you? What's the nicest thing for you?"

"Yes," he said.

"Yes what?"

"Yes is the very best thing a woman can say to a man."

Jackie laughed. "To any question? No matter what she's asked, it's what you most want to hear?"

"It would be rather nice to hear yes from a woman's lips, at least now and then."

"Oh, come on, a man who looks like you has never heard a woman say yes to whatever you asked her?"

His arms full of blankets and canteens and a basket of food, he grinned at her. "One or two, but no more."

"Okay, it's my turn. What's the kindest thing you ever did for someone and didn't tell anyone about?"

"I guess that would have to be adding a wing to the hospital in Denver. I sent the money anonymously."

"Oh, my," she said, remembering how rich the Montgomerys were.

"And you?"

Jackie began to laugh. "Charley and I had been married for about four years, and with Charley you never stayed in one place long enough to learn your neighbors' names, much less put down roots. But that year we had rented a small house that had a very nice kitchen in it, and I decided to cook him a marvelous Thanksgiving dinner. I talked about nothing else but that dinner for two weeks. I planned and shopped, and on Thanksgiving Day I got up at four A.M. and got the turkey ready. Charley left the house about noon, but he promised he'd be back by five when everything would be ready to serve. He was going to bring some of the other pilots from the airfield, and it was going to be a party. Five o'clock came and there was no Charley. Six came and went, then seven. At midnight I fell asleep, but I was so angry that I slept in a rigid knot. The next morning there was Charley, snoring away on the sofa, and there was my beautiful Thanksgiving dinner in ruins. You know what I did?"

"I'm surprised Charley lived after that."

"I shouldn't have let him live, but I figured the worst thing I could do was not let him have any of my dinner. I bundled everything up in burlap bags, went to the airfield, took up Charley's plane and flew into the mountains -- we were in West Virginia then, so it was the Smokies -- where I saw a dilapidated old shack perched on the side of a hill, a measly little trickle of smoke coming out of the chimney. I dropped the bags practically on the front porch."

She pulled her knees up to her chest and sighed. "Until now I never told anyone about that. Later I heard that the family said an angel had dropped food from heaven."

He had the fire going now, and he smiled at her over it. "I like that story. What did Charley say when he got no turkey?"

She shrugged. "Charley was happy if he had turkey and happy if he had beans. When it came to food, Charley was into quantity, not quality." She looked up at him. "What's the worst thing that's happened to you?"

William answered without thinking. "Being born rich."

Jackie gave a low whistle. "You'd think that was the *best* thing that had happened to you."

"It is. It's the best and the worst."

"I think I can see that." She was thinking about this as William poured water from a canteen onto a handkerchief and, with his hand cupping her chin, began to clean the wound on the side of her head.

"What's your deepest, darkest secret, something that you've never told anyone?" he asked.

"It wouldn't be a secret if I told."

"Do you think I'd tell anyone?"

She turned her head and looked up at him, at the shadows the firelight cast across his handsome face: dark hair, dark eyes, dark skin, that long Montgomery nose. Maybe it was the unusual circumstances, the dark night surrounding them, the fire at the center, but she felt close to him. "I kissed another man while I was married to Charley," she whispered.

"That's all?"

"That's pretty bad in my book. What about you?"

"I backed out on a contract."

"Was that really bad? If you changed your mind..."

"It was a breach of promise, and *she* thought it was *very* bad."

"Ah, I see," Jackie said, smiling as she wrapped her arms around her knees. "What's your favorite food?"

"Ice cream."

She laughed. "Mine too. Favorite color."

"Blue. Yours?"

She looked up at him. "Blue."

He came to sit by her, dusting off his hands. When Jackie shivered in the cool mountain air, he put his arm around her shoulders, as naturally as breathing, and pulled her head to his chest. "Do you mind?"

Jackie couldn't even speak. It felt so good to touch another human being. Charley had always been cuddly and affectionate, and she had often sat on his lap, snuggling in his arms, while he read some airplane magazine aloud to her.

She didn't realize she was drifting off to sleep until his voice jolted her awake.

"What's the biggest regret in your life?" he asked sharply.

"That I wasn't born with a few Mae West curves," she answered quickly. She used to whine to Charley that the guys treated her like one of them because she looked like them: an angular face, with a square jaw, broad shoulders, straight hips, and long legs.

"You are joking, aren't you?" William said, his voice full of disbelief. "You're one of the most beautiful women I've ever seen. I can't tell you how many times I've stopped dead in my tracks as I watched you walk down the streets of Chandler."

"Really?" she said, now wide awake. "Are you sure you know who I am?"

"You are the great Jacqueline O'Neill. You've won nearly every flying award that is given. You've been everywhere in the world. You once were lost for three days in the snow of Montana, but you managed to walk out."

"Actually, I rolled down a mountain. It was only by luck that I landed at some cowboys' camp."

He knew she was lying, for he'd read everything written about her at that time. After crashing in a snowstorm, she had made her way out, climbing down the side of a steep mountain by using dead reckoning, by navigating with the faint sunlight during the day and the stars at night. She'd kept her head, often leaving huge arrows made from tree branches in the snow so airplanes looking for her could find her. Smiling, he tightened his arm around her shoulders and was pleased when she moved closer to him.

"Ah, how do I walk?" she asked tentatively, not wanting to sound as though she were asking for a compliment, which was just what she was doing.

"With long strides that eat up the earth. Grown men stop what they're doing just to watch you walk, your shoulders back, your head held high, your beautiful thick hair catching the breeze, your -- "

Jackie started to laugh. "Where have you been all my life?"

"Right here in Chandler, waiting for the day you would come back."

"You might have had to wait forever, because I never thought I would return. I was so restless back then. All I wanted was to get out of this tiny, isolated town. I wanted to move, to go places and see things."

"And you got to do that. Was it as good as you thought it would be?"

"At first it was, but after seven or eight years I began wanting things, like a flower box. I wanted to plant seeds and watch them grow. I wanted to know for sure that where I went to sleep was going to be the place where I woke up."

"So after Charley died, you came back to dreary old Chandler."

"Yes," she said, smiling against his chest. "Boring old Chandler where nothing changes and everyone knows everyone else's business."

"Are you happy now?"

"I -- Hey! why am I doing all the answering? What about you? Why haven't I met you before? But that's right, it was not a 'significant meeting.' I don't think we have met before, because I would have remembered you."

"Thank you. I take that as a compliment." He moved away from her to throw more wood on the fire. "How about something to eat? A sandwich? Pickles?"

"Sounds delicious." She could tell that he didn't want to discuss their original meeting, and she figured it was because she'd probably snubbed him. She used to do that to men; it saved her pride. She'd tell a boy she wouldn't be caught dead at a dance with a bullfrog like him rather than tell the truth -- that she couldn't afford a new dress.

She'd grown up in Chandler. After her father died when she was twelve, her mother, who considered herself a southern belle, had prostrated herself on a fainting couch and spent the next six years there. They had insurance money, and her mother's brother sent them money, but it was barely enough. It had been left up to Jackie to see that the decaying old house at the edge of town didn't fall down on top of their heads. While other girls were learning to wear lipstick, Jackie was spending her weekends hammering the roof back on. She chopped wood, built a fence, repaired the porch, built new steps when the first set wore out. She knew how to use a hand saw, but had no idea how to use a nail file.

One day when Jackie was eighteen an airplane flew overhead, a long banner tied to its tail announcing an air show the next day. Jackie's mother, who was as healthy as a dandelion in a manicured lawn, decided to have a fainting fit on that day because she didn't want Jackie to leave her. But Jackie did go, and that was where she met Charley. When he pulled out of town three days later, Jackie was with him. They were married the next week.

Her mother had gone back to Georgia where her brother refused to put up with her hypochondria and put her to work helping with his six children. Judging from the letters Jackie received until her mother's death a few years ago, that had been the best thing for her. She had been very happy after she'd left Chandler and gone back to her own people.

"Twenty years," Jackie whispered.

"What?"

"It was twenty years ago when I left with Charley. Sometimes it seems like yesterday and sometimes it seems like three lifetimes ago." She looked up at him. "Did we meet back then, before I left with Charley?"

"Yes," he said, smiling. "We met then. I adored you, but you never even looked at me."

She laughed. "I can believe that. I was so full of youthful pride."

"You still are."

"Pride maybe, but no longer am I youthful."

At that, William looked at her across the fire, and for a moment Jackie thought he was angry at her. She was about to ask him what was wrong when he briskly stepped around the fire, pulled her up into his arms and kissed her firmly on the mouth.

Jackie had kissed only two men in her life: her husband, Charley, and a pilot who was just taking off and might not come back. Neither of those kisses had been like this one. This kiss said, I'd like to make love to you, like to spend nights with you, like to touch you and hold you.

When he released her, Jackie fell back against the ground with a thud.

"I think there's still a little youth left in you," William said sarcastically as he pushed a stick back into the fire.

Jackie was speechless, but her eyes never left him. How in the world could she not remember him? There were at least half a dozen Montgomerys in her high school class, but she couldn't remember one named William. Of course the Montgomerys all seemed to have five or six last names on the front of their family name. Maybe he'd been called something else, like Flash or Rex, or maybe the girls just called him Wonderful.

After William kissed her, there was an awkward silence between them, which he broke. "Okay," he said enthusiastically, "you get three wishes, what are they?"

She opened her mouth to speak but closed it again, looking up at him sheepishly.

"Come on," he said, "it couldn't be that bad. What is it?"

"It isn't really a bad wish at all. It's just that it's so...so boring."

"Jackie O'Neill, the greatest female pilot who ever lived, has a thought that's *boring*? Not possible."

Right away she realized that she didn't want to tell him her wish because she didn't want to disappoint him. He seemed to know all about her -- if one can know anything about another from records broken and set, from inflated newspaper accounts that dramatized happenings that were in truth actually rather ordinary.

"I want to put down roots, stay somewhere, and Chandler is familiar to me," she said. "Now that I've seen the rest of the world, I know Chandler is a nice place. But I can't live anywhere if I don't have a way to make money." She put up her hand when he started to speak. "I know, I know, your family and the Taggerts pay me well when they want me to fly somewhere, but I'll never make any money in a one-man operation. I want to hire a few young pilots, run a little business. I'd like to delegate some of the work. I'd like to run passengers and freight, maybe some mail, between here and Denver, but I'll need a healthy nest egg to be able to set up an operation like that."

"But..." He couldn't think how to word his thoughts so he wouldn't be offensive.

But Jackie knew what he was thinking. "Jackie O'Neill, the greatest female pilot of this century reduced to flying mail from Colorado to the East Coast. Queen of the snap roll reduced to hauling picture post cards. Oh, the horror of it. Oh, the great tragedy of it. Is that what you're thinking?"

William ducked his head, but she could see that his face was as red as the fire. A man who blushes, she thought.

"All that daredevil stuff is for kids. I've had my fill of it."

He came to sit by her again and looked at her earnestly. "I'm sure you could get your business established if you wanted it. There are ways to make that kind of thing happen.

If you have as much money as the Montgomerys do, she thought, but of course she didn't say that. "Even the very, very best pilot has to have an airplane, and the last time I saw mine, its nose was pressed against a three-ton boulder." There was a patronizing tone to her voice.

"I see your point." As he put his arm around her, he kept his eyes lowered. "Wish number two."

"Nope. I want your wish number one."

"I have only one wish. I wish I could accomplish something on my own, something that Montgomery money couldn't buy for me." He looked at her. "Your turn. Second wish."

"Curly hair?" she asked, making him smile.

"Tell me the truth. There must be things in life you want besides a business." He made it sound as though she had disappointed him by not wishing for a magic carpet or perhaps world peace. "What about another husband?"

There was so much hope in his voice that she laughed. "Are you volunteering?"

"Think you'd accept my offer?"

At the eager, almost-serious tone in his voice, she tried to pull away from him, but he held her fast. "All right, I'll behave."

"What's your second wish?" she asked.

"Probably to be as good a man as my dad."

"With your lying you're not as good as the Beasley girls."

He laughed, and the tension between them was gone. "So you won't tell me your other wishes, your other wants out of life?"

"If I told you, you'd think I was ridiculous."

"Try me."

There was something earnest about him that made her want to tell the truth. If she'd been with some of Charley's friends, she'd have made up something entertaining, like winning the Taggie, but now she just wanted to say what she really wanted. "All right, what I want most is normalcy. For the first twelve years of my life I had an ailing father and a hypochondriac mother. After my father's death, I had an invalid mother. I longed to go to school dances and such, but I didn't get to. One of my parents always needed me. For the last twenty years I have traveled and flown and had an enormously exciting life. Sometimes it seemed that every day brought some new and thrilling event. Charley was as unsettled, as fidgety, as my mother was unmovable. I've had lunch at the White House, been to about half the countries of the world, met an enormous number of famous people. After the..." She barely glanced at him. A few years ago she had

performed a service that had to be done at the time, and afterward America had made a fuss about it. "I've had my photo in the newspapers," she finished.

"An American heroine," he said, his eyes glowing.

"Perhaps. Whatever I was, I loved it all."

"But then Charley died and you changed," he said, sounding almost jealous.

"No, it was before that. Somewhere in there I realized that people wanted my autograph for themselves, not for me. Don't get me wrong, I loved it all. But one day after Charley and I, in separate planes, had spent three days with no sleep, on harrowing flights through a raging forest fire, I was told the president was calling to congratulate me. I sat there on a stiff chair in some dingy little office and thought, Not again."

She smiled. "I think that when you get to the point where a call from the president of the United States elicits nothing but boredom, it's time to do something else."

William was silent for a moment. "Normal. You said you wanted normal. What is normal?"

She grinned at him. "How would I know? I've never even seen it, much less lived it. But I don't think calls from the president, champagne in hot air balloons, living in hotels, and being rich one day and poor the next is normal. It's exciting, but it's also very tiring."

He chuckled. "It's true that we all want what we don't have. I have had the most normal life in the world. I went to the right schools, studied business administration, and after college I came back to Chandler to help run the family businesses. The most exciting thing I ever did was spend three days in Mexico with one of my brothers."

"Yes?"

"Yes what?"

"And what did you do in Mexico during those three days?"

"Ate. Saw the sights. Fished a little." He stopped. "Why are you laughing?"

"Two handsome young men alone in a place as decadent as Mexico and you went to see the sights! Didn't you even get drunk?"

"No." William was smiling. "What is the most exciting thing you've done?"

"It would be difficult to choose from the list. Dippy twist loops are rather exciting." Her head came up. "Once I had a Venetian count try to tear my clothes off."

"You found that exciting?" William asked coldly.

"It was, when you consider that we were flying at about ten thousand feet and he was crawling across the plane toward me. A few sideslips and he got back in his seat. But he was crying that an airplane was the only place where he hadn't yet made love to a woman."

William laughed. "Tell me more. I like hearing about your life. It beats mine."

"I'm not sure that's true. I once made a dead-stick landing -- that's with a dead engine -- in a plane with no wheels and only one and a half wings. That was more excitement than I wanted."

"Which countries did you like best?"

"All of them. No, I'm serious. Each country has something to recommend it, and I try to overlook the bad parts."

William was silent for a few minutes, staring into the fire. "Charley was a very lucky man to share so many years with you. I envy him."

She turned her head up to look at him, frowning in concentration. "You sound as though you've been carrying a torch."

"For you? Yes, I have. I used to adore you from afar."

"How flattering. But back then you could have told me you loved me and offered me a few Montgomery millions and I still wouldn't have stayed in Chandler."

They sat together, his arm slipping about her shoulders as they watched the fire. "What do you need to open your freight business?" he asked.

"Seriously?"

"Very seriously."

She took a moment before she answered. She may have just had a bump on the head, but her brains were still intact. Charley had drummed into her that a pilot without any money must always be on the lookout for an airplane-lover who did have money. "Now, that's a marriage made in heaven," he used to say. She wouldn't want to take advantage of this man, but if he was bored and had pots of money, maybe they could find something that would help him occupy his time.

She took a deep breath, trying to banish her feelings of guilt. If he wanted to do something for her, it was because he believed her to be an American heroine. But if Jackie took money from him, it would have to do with something much less altruistic, something much more primitive, such as putting bread on the table and maybe a few really nice dresses on her back. "A couple of good, light planes. A full-time mechanic, hangars, a few old planes I can cannibalize for parts, money for salaries until I can pay the pilots."

"Anything else you need? A partner perhaps?"

Right away she knew that he was suggesting himself. Now was not the time to make such a decision. Her head was still seeping blood, and her thinking was fuzzy. However, it was delicious to think of this man as her partner. Smiling, she looked up at him, trying to place him. "Who are your parents?"

"Jace and Nellie."

"Ah, that explains it. Half the town is parented by those two."

William smiled. All his life he'd heard jokes about the number of children in his family. "Twelve in all." He was emptying the big picnic basket that seemed to hold enough food for half a dozen loggers. Without saying a word, he began making her a sandwich. Jackie watched in astonishment as he made it just the way she would have made it for herself: chipped beef piled high, lots and lots of mustard, tomatoes; then he sliced a sweet pickle and placed the slices on top of the tomato, using two leaves of lettuce to protect the bread so it wouldn't get soggy. Watching his face, she could see that he wasn't paying any attention to what he was doing, that he was concentrating totally on whatever was running through his mind. But it was odd that he would make her a sandwich that was just what she would have made, especially since her sandwiches were, well, unique.

"Look what I've done," William said. "I was going to make you a sandwich first and now I..." He looked at her. "What do you want?"

"Just like the one you made for yourself"

His handsome face showed a moment's consternation before he smiled. "Honest? Everyone hates my sandwiches."

"Mine too," she said, reaching out her hand. "How about halves and I'll make the second one? I cut up olives instead of pickles."

"And then everyone complains that the olives fall off."

"The idiots don't know how to hold the bread."

They looked at each other across the sandwich and smiled. "Do you think we'll be able to sandwich this friendship together?" Jackie asked and they both laughed.

"What do you think of ketchup?"

"Hate the stuff."

"Onions?"

"Overpowering. All you can taste is onions. Popcorn?"

"I could eat my weight in it. You?"

"Same here." Leaning back on his elbows, he looked into the fire, and she could tell that he was getting ready to say something important. "If I came up with the money for a few planes and the other things, would you consider me as your partner?"

"Ever flown before?" It didn't matter if he had, but the question gave her time to think. Even if he weren't a Montgomery and endowed with all that that name meant, she was good at judging people and this man was salt of the earth, rock solid. Sometimes things around an airport could get hectic, maybe even frightening when there was a crash, but she doubted if this man would panic if caught in a volcano. The problem was that she knew she was ripe for involvement with a man. It had been two years since Charley's death and over a year since she'd returned to Chandler, and she was lonely. She was tired of eating alone, sleeping alone, tired of sitting alone in the evenings with no one to talk to. And this man was very, very attractive, both in

looks and in disposition.

"I have been taking lessons for two years," he said softly, looking at her with eyes that were almost pleading.

"All right," she said just as softly, and when she did, she could feel little chills on her body. She liked this man, liked him very much. She liked the way he took responsibility, liked what he talked about, liked the way he moved, the way he ate, what he ate. She liked the way he kissed her, the way he made her feel when he kissed her. In all her life she didn't remember ever just plain old-fashioned *liking* a man as much as she did him. She'd been attracted to men before -- she'd be a liar if she didn't admit that -- but there was a difference between being sexually attracted to a man and wanting to cuddle up with him and eat popcorn and tell each other secrets.

Years ago there had been a gorgeous pilot whom Charley had hired to work with them. He was so divinely handsome that she could hardly speak to him; the first time she saw him she dropped a wrench straight through the engine and almost hit Charley on the head. For days she had been tongue-tied when she was near him. But after a few weeks she'd begun to grow used to his looks and soon found out that he liked his own looks even better than she did. After spending six months near him she couldn't remember that she'd ever thought he was handsome. She'd learned in her long, happy marriage with Charley that what was important between a man and a woman was friendship.

"All right," she said, holding out her hand to shake his. "But on one condition."

He took her hand and held it firmly. "Anything. Anything at all."

"You have to tell me what *your* deepest darkest secret is. And I want the truth, no telling me about contracts that are a matter of public record."

William groaned. "You are a fierce bargainer, Jackie O'Neill."

She wouldn't release his hand. "Tell me or we don't work together."

"All right," he said, with a slow grin. "You make me an olive sandwich sometime and I'll tell you the truth about Mexico."

"Oh?" she said, raising an eyebrow.

There are times in a person's life that are magic, and that night was one of them. Later, Jackie thought the night was perfect, perfect in every way, from the storybook rescue, to a romantic cut on her forehead, to a handsome man taking care of her. And take care of her he did. He made sure she was fed and warm and comfortable. More than that, he made her feel good. He flattered her by knowing every aerobatic stunt she'd performed, every record she'd set, every accident she'd had. It was almost as though he'd been in love with her for years.

They talked as though they were old friends -- friends, not lovers. Jackie often got tired of men whose only interest was in trying to get a woman into bed, who directed their every word, every gesture toward that end. They bragged about themselves, told how much money they had, how much land they owned, how they were better than other men. But William was as comfortable as a woman friend.

Somewhere during the evening, he had her stretch out on his pallet of blankets and put her head on his firm

thigh. Leaning back against a tree, he stroked her hair and encouraged her to talk about herself. Within seconds she found herself telling him about Charley, about her years with him, of the frustrations and hardships, of the triumphs and the failures.

In return he told her about his life of perfection -- or at least that was how he described what to Jackie seemed like an ideal situation. He had never had anyone be cruel to him, never had anyone take an instant dislike to him, never had to struggle for anything.

"My life makes me wonder about myself. If I were tested, would I hold up?" he asked, frowning into the fire. "Would I be able to do something without my father's money and the support of the Montgomery name?"

"Sure you would," Jackie answered. "You'd be surprised at what you can do when you have to."

"Like land a plane that's just had the propeller knocked off by an eagle?"

"Is that what that was?"

"You brought that plane down as easily as someone stepping off a chair. Were you frightened?"

"I had too much to do to be frightened. Hey!" She looked up at him in the soft light. "Why haven't you married? Why hasn't some woman snatched you up already?"

"I haven't met a woman I wanted. I like a woman to have a head on her shoulders."

"A beautiful head, no doubt," Jackie said sarcastically.

"That's of less importance than what's inside the head."

"You know, I *like* you. I really do."

"And I have always liked you."

She was silent for a moment. "I wish I could remember you."

"Time enough. Are you cold? Hungry? Thirsty?"

"No, nothing. I'm perfect."

"That you are."

Jackie was embarrassed by his compliment but pleased by it, too. "When do you want to start...ah, our partnership?" When do you want to start spending enormous amounts of time together? was what she wanted to ask him.

"Tomorrow I have to go to Denver for a few days, and I'll get money from the bank there. I'll return on Saturday. How about if I come to your place in the afternoon? Can you give me a list of what you need so I can pick it up in Denver?"

She laughed at that. "How about some new planes for a start?"

"What type would you like?"

He was as serious as she was being lighthearted, and Jackie was suddenly serious too. "How about a couple of Wacos for a start?" And, she thought, maybe later something heavy that can carry a dozen rich passengers in style.

"All right, I'll see what I can do."

"Just like that?" she said. "I snap my fingers and two new planes show up?"

"They're not free. *I* come with them. You have to take me with the planes."

That didn't seem like much of a punishment. "I guess beggars can't be choosers." Stretching, she yawned, snuggling her head on his leg.

"I think it would be all right if you went to sleep now," he said, tucking the blanket around her.

"What about you?" she asked dreamily. "You need to sleep too."

"No, I'll stay awake and watch the fire."

"And protect me," she murmured as she closed her eyes. No, she didn't think there was going to be any problem with this man's reliability. Smiling, she dozed off, feeling as safe as though she were home in her own bed, not in the open with coyotes howling in the distance.

Copyright © 1994 by Deveraux Inc.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Heather Roberts:

Here thing why that Moonfire are different and dependable to be yours. First of all reading a book is good nevertheless it depends in the content than it which is the content is as delightful as food or not. Moonfire giving you information deeper since different ways, you can find any publication out there but there is no publication that similar with Moonfire. It gives you thrill studying journey, its open up your own personal eyes about the thing this happened in the world which is probably can be happened around you. You can easily bring everywhere like in recreation area, café, or even in your technique home by train. When you are having difficulties in bringing the branded book maybe the form of Moonfire in e-book can be your choice.

Maria Ives:

The reserve with title Moonfire has lot of information that you can understand it. You can get a lot of advantage after read this book. This book exist new know-how the information that exist in this book represented the condition of the world right now. That is important to yo7u to learn how the improvement of the world. This particular book will bring you within new era of the internationalization. You can read the e-book on your smart phone, so you can read that anywhere you want.

Clarine Davidson:

Beside this specific Moonfire in your phone, it could possibly give you a way to get nearer to the new knowledge or info. The information and the knowledge you might got here is fresh from oven so don't end up being worry if you feel like an previous people live in narrow small town. It is good thing to have Moonfire because this book offers for you readable information. Do you sometimes have book but you don't get what it's interesting features of. Oh come on, that would not happen if you have this inside your hand. The Enjoyable blend here cannot be questionable, including treasuring beautiful island. Techniques you still want to miss the idea? Find this book and also read it from right now!

Sean Owens:

As we know that book is vital thing to add our understanding for everything. By a book we can know everything we wish. A book is a set of written, printed, illustrated or perhaps blank sheet. Every year had been exactly added. This reserve Moonfire was filled with regards to science. Spend your spare time to add your knowledge about your science competence. Some people has diverse feel when they reading some sort of book. If you know how big good thing about a book, you can really feel enjoy to read a book. In the modern era like today, many ways to get book that you wanted.

**Download and Read Online Moonfire By Linda Lael Miller
#BCK08HL49VX**

Read Moonfire By Linda Lael Miller for online ebook

Moonfire By Linda Lael Miller Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read Moonfire By Linda Lael Miller books to read online.

Online Moonfire By Linda Lael Miller ebook PDF download

Moonfire By Linda Lael Miller Doc

Moonfire By Linda Lael Miller Mobipocket

Moonfire By Linda Lael Miller EPub

BCK08HL49VX: Moonfire By Linda Lael Miller