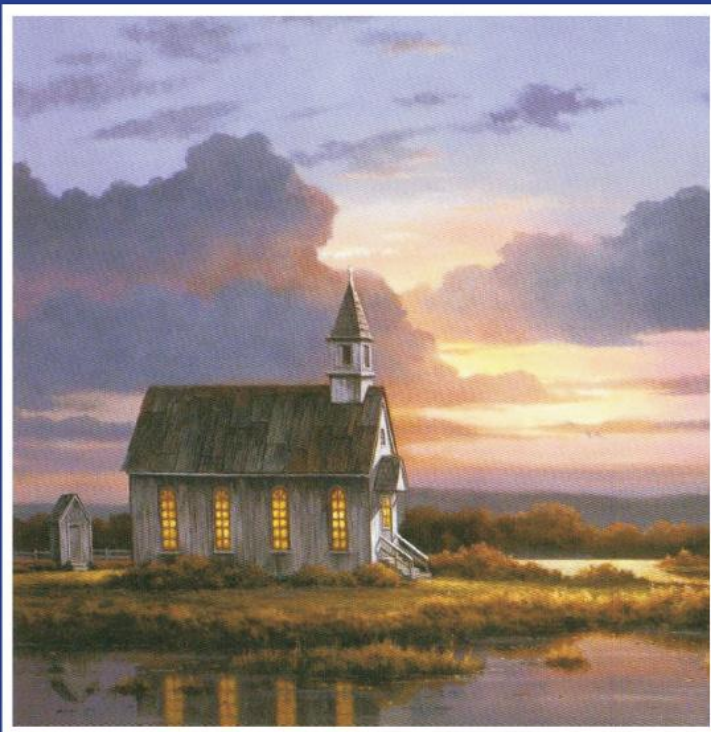


# Return to Whittakerville



Shirley A. Roe

The Martha Whittaker Story finale!

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*Shirley A. Roe*

The Whittaker Saga continues....

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The Whittaker Family Reunion

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## Mothers and Daughters

*“What I would like to give my daughter is freedom. And this is something that must be given by example, not by exhortation. Freedom is a loose leash, a license to be different from your mother and still be loved . . . . Freedom is . . . not insisting that your daughter share your limitations. Freedom also means letting your daughter reject you when she needs to and come back when she needs to. Freedom is unconditional love.” Erica Jong*

### *Dedication:*

*This book is dedicated to three very important women. My mother, Pearl who was always there to help and support me, no matter how crazy or outlandish the idea. Now our roles are reversed, I am taking care of you.*

*My daughter Laura, a beautiful woman both physically and spiritually who is not afraid to live her dreams and make them a reality. I hope I was instrumental in bringing that into your life. I am proud to be your mother. Live, laugh and love my lovely daughter, for the world is yours for the asking.*

*My granddaughter, Haley who makes me burst with pride at the intelligent, loving and beautiful woman she has become. At sixteen, your journey into womanhood is just beginning, decide what you want and then go after it with everything you have. Live your passion; life is to be lived to the fullest, every minute of every day.*

*I love all of you, you make me who I am and I thank you.*

*Dedicated to Mothers and Daughters everywhere.*



St. Louis 1882

*Chapter One**Anna*

“I’ll be right back.” The pert young woman started down the aisle of the moving train. She steadied herself by clutching the seatbacks.

“Where do you think you’re going?” He grabbed her arm roughly.

She wrenched her arm away from his grip, repeating sternly, “I said, I’ll be right back.” He glared at her with eyes as black as night. Ignoring his warning glare, she moved toward the businessman in the front of the train car, reading a copy of the St. Louis Post Dispatch. Approaching silently from behind, she casually dropped her handkerchief. As she stooped to retrieve it, her eyes scanned the headline: St. Louis Businessman escapes death at hand of kidnapper, child still missing.

The businessman turned, sensing her presence. He took in her soft chestnut hair and her deep green eyes, losing himself for a moment in her beauty; he could not ignore her great interest in the newspaper. “Would you like to read this? I am finished with it. I also have a copy of the St. Louis Daily Globe, if you would like it.” She smiled up at him from her crouched position and quickly but elegantly regained her posture. From the rear of the car, dark eyes watched with great interest, his body ready to spring into action.

“Why yes, I would be very pleased to read them, if you are finished. I lived in St. Louis for sometime and I am always interested in what is happening there.” She fluttered her dark lashes, taking the newspapers from his extended hand. “Thank you kindly.”

Retreating quickly back to the anxious young man, she sank into the seat beside him. He clenched his teeth, “Don’t push me too far, Anna.”

“Or what? You’ll stab me like you stabbed my father? You are just lucky he is alive, according to this paper or I would have to kill you, myself.” Her voice was quiet but assertive. She sounded like she meant it.

“You, a feeble woman would kill me. Ha, don’t make me laugh. I would like to know how.” He turned toward her keeping his voice menacingly low, challenging her.

“Oh, I can kill you very easily. Just don’t fall asleep.” She sneered, glaring back at him, matching his evil stare. He hesitated, considering her statement, and then started to laugh.

“You would, wouldn’t you? Anna, you are a woman after my own heart.” The tension was broken. She joined in his laughter just as the businessman walked by.

“Newlyweds?”

“None of your....” Anna pressed her lips to Jeb’s to quiet him.

She smiled up at the gentleman, “Yes, just married, thank you.”

Jeb clenched his teeth, remaining silent until they were alone. “What did you do that for?” He leaned closer to be sure no one could hear them.

“ Mainly because a young woman can not travel alone unless chaperoned or married. According to this paper, the police are looking for some crazy Indian that kidnapped the child of a wealthy St. Louis businessman, after stabbing him with intent to kill. There is a reward.” She looked at him carefully, fixing his cravat. “You look very handsome and very civilized in my brother Ezekiel’s clothes and we don’t want to raise any suspicions. Newlyweds are much more acceptable than a ‘crazy Indian and a child’, don’t you think?”

“Alright, you are right, but why on earth is the press referring to you as a ‘child’? You are seventeen, for heaven’s sake.” The use of the word ‘child’ confused him, but he was relieved that Jeremy Whittaker was alive. He had stabbed him in a fit of rage. It was never his intention to kill anyone; he just wanted what was rightfully his.

“It is better that these people think we are newlyweds. They will ignore us. If you must know, I lied to you in New York. I am only fifteen. But I will be sixteen in two months and I am hardly a ‘child’ as you can attest to.” She squeezed his arm, wanting to return to the boisterous mood of a few moments ago. She was enjoying this grown up interaction.

“Fifteen! What have I done?” He ran his hands through his newly-cut black hair, it felt strange. He was used to wearing it much longer. He had to admit, she was clever. He thought back to the church, where he had threatened her family. He had stabbed her father and obtained a letter that would secure his future. He was shocked when Anna offered to go away with him. After leaving the scene, she convinced him to stop at her parents’ mansion to get some traveling clothes. She also opened her father’s safe and secured a large sum of money, which had allowed them to board this train for Wyoming. Once on the train, she cut his hair, dressed him in her brother’s fine clothes and he did look very different. He still could not believe she had come willingly. She was definitely an asset, but fifteen! He had not touched her sexually since they had left St. Louis. But, there had been that trip to New York when they first met, months ago. Jeb was still convinced she was too drunk to remember exactly what happened and he intended to keep it that way. His head was in his hands, his face filled with dread.

“Oh, stop being so dramatic. People always call me Sarah Bernhardt, but you are being much more melodramatic than I ever was. Now sit up and act like

we're newlyweds. She moved into his lap. He tensed; his whole body was on edge under her touch. His skin burned, his desire was growing stronger. She snuggled her head under his chin. *Oh Lord, help me stay strong*, was all he could think of.

"I would rather hear what that newspaper has to say. Read it to me." He gently but firmly nudged her off of his knee, much to his own relief.

"Oh, fine but you are getting to be a bore. That's why I left St. Louis. My family was so boring." She pouted as she picked up the newspaper and began to read. "Wealthy business owner, Jeremy Whittaker is recovering from stab wounds. Mr. Whittaker and his family were attending the marriage of their son, Abraham Whittaker to Miss Vivienne LaRue, when a crazed Indian savagely attacked Mr. Whittaker. Before the suspect left the scene, their child was taken captive. The man was last seen riding out of St. Louis with Anna, the daughter of Jeremy and Martha Whittaker. Martha Whittaker is the owner of St. Louis Haute Couture. Mr. Whittaker is expected to survive, however he will be convalescing for some time. Mr. Austin Wells, the general manager, has taken charge of the St. Louis Import/Export business. The Whittakers have offered a large reward for information leading to the location and safe return of Anna."

"So I am a crazed Indian? No mention of the fact that I am the son of Jeremy Whittaker's dead brother? No mention of why I was there? Just a crazy Indian who stabs him for no reason and then steals a child? What kind of bull is this?" He snatched the paper from her hands. Not being able to read himself, Jeb had to trust her to tell him the truth. He was furious. He threw the papers to the floor and stomped out of the railcar. She watched him go, making sure she smiled at the other passengers. Luckily they were seated some distance away and had not heard the conversation.

“Lover’s spat,” she announced to no one in particular. Anna calmly picked up the papers, Jeb’s bowler hat and followed him. Sympathetic, understanding nods from the other passengers greeted her as she passed. Anna’s fine clothes and sophistication made her appear much older than fifteen. She raised no suspicion.

Back in their sleeper, Jeb fumed. He paced back and forth in the tiny space. She opened the door. Having grown used to his temper in the short time they had been together, she remained silent. He punched the bed hard with his fist; his whole body shook. “I will never be anything more than a crazy Indian. You can dress me up and call me by my white man’s name, but no one will ever respect me.” Anna knew that Jeb had a very bad temper, she let him vent for a few minutes. Slowly she moved toward him, she pulled him into her arms and held him. At first his body was stiff, but soon, uncharacteristically, he began to tremble. His arms gripped her tightly; his body shook as he struggled to regain control. They remained like that for several minutes.

“I want you to sit down and listen to me, Jeb. Newspaper reporters love to use words that will tantalize the reader. They often leave out details to make the story more interesting and exciting. That said, I want to talk about us. No, don’t interrupt me.” She put her hand on his shoulder to comfort him. It also quieted him, allowing her to continue. “You are the son of a man that had a town named after him, granted he was a bastard, but he was still famous. I know you hate him and hold my family responsible for your life of poverty and cruelty. But, my family honestly did not know you existed.” He started to interrupt her, “That is another story, Jeb. Now back to your father and the town that is his namesake. We can use that to our advantage. You and I are going to travel as man and wife to Whittakerville, Wyoming; where you will claim the money that represents your inheritance. Money has power. Trust me, I have lived in the lap of luxury all of my life and

I know what kind of power money holds. You look suave and sophisticated in Zeke's European designer clothes. By the time we get to Whittakerville, I will teach you to sign your name and to read a little."

"By the time we get there! I can't read or write at all, it will take longer than that. Besides, I agree with you; money is power but respect is what I want." He was about to stand and exit the car. She held on to him, applying just the slightest pressure to his arm as he stood up.

"Listen to me, I am not finished. I don't know why, but I care for you. I really do. I have always been attracted to you and I see you as my ticket out of St. Louis and on to bigger and better things. I want to be free, Jeb. You and I can be free. We will have money; we will make you into a man who everyone will respect. Your Indian halfbreed past will disappear and you will be the white son of Jebediah Whittaker, founder of Whittakerville. Your father was a bastard who beat his family. He even beat your mother." He bristled at the mention of his mother, who was the unwilling squaw mistress of Jebediah Whittaker. Anna continued, "He still had the respect of everyone in the town. He was the beloved pastor of the church. No one knew who he really was. You can do this, Red. You can do this." He looked at her with such wanting in his eyes. He wanted to believe her. He wanted to be the man she described. Insecurity made him wonder, *Is it possible? Can I do this?*

"Careful, you just called me Red; it's Jeb from now on, remember?" He took a deep breath and tried to calm himself. "That was quite a speech. Next thing you'll be telling me you 'love' me." He challenged her sarcastically, but held his breath waiting for her answer. *Do I want you to love me, Anna?*

"No." She almost shouted. "Let's get this straight. I 'love' no one. Love makes you weak. Love makes people do things they don't want to do. People say they love you

but they never prove it. I will never be weak. I will never 'love' anyone but myself. I said I care for you." She stopped to take a breath. He stared at her. She was a curiosity. Anna stared at the floor composing herself. He was amazed at how quickly she could control her emotions and take on a completely different persona.

"Now are you ready to start learning to write your name? No time like the present. You are my challenge and I'm ready to make you into Jeb Whittaker, gentleman." She took paper and pencil from her bag and motioned for him to sit beside her. She wrote large letters on the page. Disappointed in her answer, he took the pencil from her hand. He didn't understand how she could calm him the way she did. She had a power over him that no human being had ever had. The clickety-clack of the rails and the sound of the train whistle disappeared into the background as Red Fox, put pencil to paper and shakily printed, J E B, for the first time in his life.

*End of Sample*

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Note from the author:

The Whittaker family has become an integral part of my life. Although this trilogy is now complete, I am going to continue writing about the Whittakers. I shall take individuals and their families and spin more tales of the Whittaker family. I would like to think that my readers would be pleased to continue following their particular favorites.

My next novel, Snow Eagle will be released shortly. We begin another family tale, however this time we are in northern B.C, Alaska and the Yukon with the Tlingit-(First Nations-Native Americans), the time is late 1700's and we meet many new and exciting characters. Watch for Snow Eagle, coming soon.

I love to hear from fans, feel free to contact me through my websites:

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