



True Blue

By Diana Palmer

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The eagerly awaited new installment in the Long, Tall Texans series

New York Times and USA TODAY bestselling author Diana Palmer continues her beloved Long, Tall Texans series by delving deep into the heart of one of San Antonio's top detectives, Rick Marquez. He never met a case he couldn't solve or a woman he couldn't charm. But this smooth-talking Texan is about to meet the one woman who'll lasso him—body and soul!

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Editorial Review

About the Author

The prolific author of more than one hundred books, Diana Palmer got her start as a newspaper reporter. A New York Times bestselling author and voted one of the top ten romance writers in America, she has a gift for telling the most sensual tales with charm and humor. Diana lives with her family in Cornelia, Georgia.

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"We could lose the case," San Antonio Detective Sergeant Rick Marquez muttered as he glared at one of the newest detectives on his squad.

"I'm really sorry," Gwendolyn Cassaway said, wincing. "I tripped. It was an accident."

He stared at her through narrowed dark eyes, his sensual lips compressed. "You tripped because you're nearsighted and you won't wear glasses." Personally, he didn't think the lack of them did anything for her, if vanity was the issue. She had a pleasant face, and an exquisite complexion, but she was no raving beauty. Her finest feature was her wealth of thick platinum-blond hair that she wore in a high bun on top of her head. She never wore it down.

"Glasses get in my way and I can't ever get them clean enough," she muttered. "That coating just causes smears unless you use the proper cleaning materials. And I can't ever find them," she said defensively.

He drew in a long, exasperated breath and perched on the edge of the desk in his office. In the posture, his .45 Colt ACP in its distinctive leather holster was displayed next to his badge on his belt. So were his powerful legs, and to their best advantage. He was tall and muscular, without it being obvious. He had a light olive complexion and thick long black hair that he wore in a ponytail. He was very attractive, but he couldn't ever seem to wind up with a serious girlfriend. Women found him useful as a sympathetic shoulder to cry on over their true loves. One woman refused to date him when she realized that he wore his pistol even off duty. He'd tried to explain that it was a necessary thing, but it hadn't given him any points with her. He went to the opera, which he loved, all alone. He went everywhere alone. He was almost thirty-one, and lonelier than ever. It made him irritable.

And here was Gwen making it all worse, messing up his crime scene, threatening the delicate chain of evidence that could lead to a conviction in a complex murder.

A college freshman, pretty and blonde, had been brutally assaulted and killed. They had no suspects and trace evidence was very sketchy already. Gwen had almost contaminated the scene by stepping too close to a blood smear.

He was not in a good mood. He was hungry. He was going to be late for lunch, because he had to chew her out. If he didn't, the lieutenant surely would, and Cal Hollister was even meaner than Marquez.

"You could also lose your job," Marquez pointed out. "You're new in the department."

She grimaced. "I know." She shrugged. "I guess I could go back to the Atlanta P.D. if I had to," she said with grim resignation. She looked at him with pale green eyes that were almost translucent. He'd never seen eyes that color.

"You just have to be more careful, Cassaway," he cautioned.

"Yes, sir. I'll do my best."

He tried not to look at the T-shirt she was wearing under a lightweight denim jacket with her jeans. It was unseasonably warm for November but a jacket felt good against the morning chill.

On her T-shirt was a picture of a little green alien, the sort sold in novelty shops, with a legend that read, Have You Seen My Spaceship? He averted his eyes and tried not to grin.

She tugged her jacket closer. "Sorry. But they don't have any regulations against T-shirts here, do they?"

"If the lieutenant sees that one, you'll find out," he said.

She sighed. "I'll try to conform. It's just that I come from a very weird family. My mother worked for the FBI. My father was, uh, in the military. My brother is..." She hesitated and swallowed. "My brother *was* in military intelligence." He frowned. "Deceased?"

She nodded. She still couldn't talk about it. The pain was too fresh.

"Sorry," he said stiffly.

She shifted. "Larry died very bravely during a covert ops mission in the Middle East. But he was my only sibling. It's hard to talk about."

"I can understand that." He stood up, glancing at the military watch he wore on his left wrist. "Time for lunch."

"Oh, I have other plans.. " she began quickly.

He glared at her. "It was a remark, not an invitation. I don't date colleagues," he said very curtly.

She blushed all the way down to her throat. She swallowed and stood taller. "Sorry. I was...I meant...that is."

He waved the excuses away. "We'll talk about this some more later. Meanwhile, please do something about your vision. You can't investigate a crime scene you can't see!"

She nodded. "Yes, sir. Absolutely."

He opened the door and let her go out first, noticing absently that her head only came up to his shoulder and that she smelled like spring roses, the pink ones that grew in his mother's garden down in Jacobsville. It was an elusive, very faint fragrance. He approved. Some women who worked in the office seemed to bathe in perfume and always had headaches and allergies and never seemed to think about the connection. Once, a fellow detective had had an almost-fatal asthma attack after a clerical worker stood near him wearing what smelled like an entire bottle of perfume.

Gwendolyn stopped suddenly and he plowed into her, his hands sweeping out to grasp her shoulders and steady her before she fell from his momentum.

"Oh, sorry!" she exclaimed, and felt a thrill of pleasure at the warm strength of the big hands holding her so gently.

He removed them at once. "What is it?"

She had to force her mind to work. Detective Sergeant Marquez was very sexy and she'd been drawn to him since her first sight of him several weeks before. "I meant to ask if you wanted me to check with Alice Fowler over at the crime lab about the digital camera we found in the murdered woman's apartment. By now, she might have something on the trace evidence."

"Good idea. You do that."

"I'll swing past there on my way back to the office after lunch," she promised, and beamed, because it was a big case and he was letting her contribute to solving it. "Thanks."

He nodded, his mind already on the wonderful beef Stroganoff he was going to order at the nearby cafe where he usually had lunch. He'd been looking forward to it all week. It was Friday and he could splurge.

Tomorrow was his day off. He was going to spend it helping his mother, Barbara, process and can a bushel of hothouse tomatoes she'd been given by an organic gardener with a greenhouse. She owned Barbara's Cafe in Jacobsville, and she liked to use her organic vegetables and herbs in the meals she prepared for her clients. They would add to the store of canned summer tomatoes that she'd already processed earlier in the year.

He owed her a lot. He'd been orphaned in junior high school and Barbara Ferguson, who'd just lost her husband in an accident, and suffered a miscarriage, had taken him in. His mother had once worked for Barbara at the cafe just briefly. Then his parents—well, his mother and stepfather—had died in a wreck, leaving a single, lonely child all on his own. Rick had been a terrible teen, always in trouble, bad-tempered and moody. He'd been afraid when he lost his mother. He had no other living relatives of whom he was aware, and no place to go. Barbara had stepped in and given him a home. He loved her no less than he'd loved his real mother, and he was quite protective of her. He never spoke of his stepfather. He tried not to remember him at all.

Barbara wanted him to marry and settle down and have a family. She harped on it all the time. She even introduced him to single women. Nothing helped. He seemed to be an eternally on-sale item in the matrimonial market that everybody bypassed for the fancier merchandise. He laughed shortly to himself at the thought.

Gwen watched him leave and wondered why he'd laughed. She was embarrassed that she'd thought he was asking her to lunch. He didn't seem to have a girlfriend and everybody joked about his nonexistent love life. But he wasn't attracted to Gwen in that way. It didn't matter. No man had ever liked her, really. She was everybody's confidante, the good girl who could give advice about how to please other women with small gifts and entertainments. But she was never asked out for herself.

She knew she wasn't pretty. She was always passed over for the flashy women, the assertive women, the powerful women. The women who didn't think sex before marriage was a sin. She'd had a man double over laughing when she'd told him that, after he expected a night in bed in return for a nice meal and the theater. Then he'd become angry, having spent so much money on her with nothing to show for it. The experience had soured her.

"Don Quixote," she murmured to herself. "I'm Don Quixote."

"Wrong sex," Detective Sergeant Gail Rogers said as she paused beside the newcomer. Rogers was the mother of some very wealthy ranchers in Comanche Wells, but she kept her job and her own income. She was an amazing peace officer. Gwen admired her tremendously. "And what's that all about?" she asked.

Gwen sighed, glancing around to make sure they weren't being overheard. "I won't give out on dates," she whispered. "So men think I'm insane." She shrugged. "I'm Don Quixote, trying to restore morality and idealism to a decadent world."

Rogers didn't laugh. She smiled, very kindly. "He was noble, in his way. An idealist with a dream."

"He was nutty as a fruitcake." Gwen sighed.

"Yes, but he made everyone around him feel of worth, like the prostitute whom he idealized as a great lady for whom he quested," came the surprising reply. "He gave dreams to people who had given them up for harsh reality. He was adored by them."

Gwen laughed. "Yes, I suppose he wasn't so bad at that."

"People should have ideals, even if they ...

Users Review

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As people who live in the particular modest era should be change about what going on or details even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era that is certainly always change and advance. Some of you maybe will probably update themselves by examining books. It is a good choice for you but the problems coming to a person is you don't know what type you should start with. This True Blue is our recommendation to cause you to keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and want in this era.

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