



# The Outlaw Takes a Bride

*Susan Page Davis*

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## **The Outlaw Takes a Bride** Susan Page Davis

Johnny Paynter flees Denver to escape being hanged for a murder he didn't commit. At his brother's ranch in Texas, where he thought he could take refuge, he finds his brother, Mark—dead. Taking advantage of his strong resemblance to his brother, Johnny assumes Mark's identity. Soon Johnny discovers that Mark had been corresponding with a widow named Sally in St. Louis, and she's en route to be a mail-order bride to Mark. Seeing no other option, Johnny makes a fateful decision to go through with the wedding, posing as his brother. But Sally has secrets she's hiding, too. How will a marriage survive with so much deception?

## **The Outlaw Takes a Bride Details**

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## **From Reader Review The Outlaw Takes a Bride for online ebook**

### **Teresa says**

I love mail order bride books and The Outlaw Takes a Bride is no exception. Johnny heads to his brothers ranch with his friend, Cam after Cam tells him he's wanted for murder. Johnny ends up assuming his brothers identity when they find Mark dead upon their arrival. If that isn't enough to deal with they then discover that Mark is expecting a mail order bride to arrive any day. The lies are piling up, much to Johnny's dismay. Cam convinces Johnny he has to marry her to keep the original lie about Mark's death.

Susan Page Davis does a great job describing Johnny/Mark and Sally's worries and concerns about their strange marriage. The hook at the end was climatic with a virtual shoot out. The story held my interest thru to the last page.

"I received a copy of this book from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review".

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### **Iola says**

I like a good mystery as much as anyone, but I like it to be a mystery. I'd pegged the villain by Chapter Two, and reading a couple more chapters only deepened my conviction. So I was naughty: I skipped to the end, found out I was right, and was left wondering why the 'hero' hadn't guessed.

I'm sorry, but I have no desire to spend four or more hours reading a whodunit when it was obvious. It didn't help that the romantic leads hadn't met each other by the time I gave up. But it seemed obvious from the 10% I did read that their early relationship was going to be defined by lies, and that didn't seem like a fun read either.

I usually like Susan Page Davis, but this failed to engage me.

Thanks to Barbour Publishing and NetGalley for providing a free ebook for review.

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### **Paula-O says**

Susan Page Davis writes "The Outlaw Takes a Bride"

I am never disappointed when I read a book by this author, great story that just wraps itself around you like a warm blanket and you don't want to leave it.

Goodreads now has a freebee on this one and you will want to check it out if you are a member there.

Sally Golding is a young widow that was so dissappointed in her first marriage and it leaves her cautious when entering into thoughts of marriage again..but..

women had little choices in making a living in the year 1885.

A pastor and his wife let her stay with them for room and board till she could get on her feet but the wife took advantage of Sally and did not make her feel welcome. Soon after writing letters to a man in Beaumont Texas, He ask her to come and be his bride. Her parents live in Texas also and it will be good to be closer to them and his letters makes Mark Paynter seem like a good christian man who has a small ranch and they could have a good life together.

Mark has a brother Johnny who heads to Texas also when he finds he might be considered a suspect in a murder at a ranch he works on. Another guy that works there, tells him to leave and even offers to go along too, Johnny and a man he considers a friend soon arrive at Mark's place and find him dead.

Many little things change as the friend talks Johnny into staying and pretending to be his brother..this all begins to ravel when Sally arrives also expecting to become a bride to Mark.

You must read and learn how the beginnings of lies can mushroom out of proportion as you continue to lie and deceive as they did.

Sally and Johnny, as Mark, are soon in Beaumont living a lie that needs to be straightened out before they can find happiness.

Thanks Susan for writing a good story with memorable characters, I hope to see Johnny and Sally again.

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### **Laura says**

This was the perfect lolly read that I needed!

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### **Karyn Niedert says**

Johnny is a cowboy fleeing the Colorado Territory with his friend Cam after being sought for a murder he didn't commit. Sally has left St. Louis to meet the man who has offered her a new life and a new chance at family.

Johnny arrives in Texas at his brother's Mark's ranch, only to discover Mark was murdered earlier in the morning. While he and Cam go through his brother's things, trying to decide what to do next, they discover that Mark was corresponding with a woman and had proposed marriage. She had accepted and was arriving on the train-tomorrow.

Sally had a hard first marriage, and hasn't fared much better during her time as a widow. She happily accepted Mark's proposal of marriage through he letters they had been sending to each other. She realizes upon her arrival and the odd way that Mark has received her, that something is amiss.

Johnny has stepped into Mark's shoes, accepting Sally as his bride and Mark's ranch as his own while struggling to figure out what to do. He knows the right thing is to go to the sheriff, but is afraid he'll end up at the business end of a noose. Carrying on with the charade of being his brother hurts his heart, and as he grows closer to Sally understands that the right thing to do is never going to be the easy thing to do.

This book took me about a day and a half to read. Davis kept things interesting, and was able to portray Johnny's character as sympathetic while doing something most people couldn't imagine. Sally was a strong and courageous woman with a good heart and tender soul. The ending was a surprise with harrowing twists and turns that will keep avid readers intrigued to the end.

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### **Maureen Timerman says**

A new twist on the Mail Order Bride packed with a bunch of lies that spiral out of control, and in the end what is the truth. We also have a western story as we are on ranches spanning from Colorado to Texas, along with gunfights.

When the book opens we see what a bleak life Sally Golding is living, she barely exists, and falls in love with a man she has never met by mail. No wonder she was willing to leave St Louis behind and head to the unknown in Texas to marry Mark Paynter.

We meet Johnny Paynter as a friend tells him he is wanted for murder, and he takes his advice. They head to Texas and end up finding his brother's body, and they bury Mark. Oh dear, we are getting deeper and deeper in lies. Johnny now takes Mark's identity when he goes to town and people call him Mark.

Of course, he can't keep on an even keel with these lies, and when he finds letters of the pending arrival of Sally, the next day. Now what? You can guess what is about to happen, or can you. What do you do with Sally?

This is a page turning read and I enjoyed the added twists of not knowing what was going to happen when the truth is revealed.

I received this book through Net Galley and the Publish Barbour, and was not required to give a positive review.

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### **Patricia says**

The first half or so of the story was not as enjoyable to me as I had hoped it would be. I wished that the whole "accidental" assumption of Mark's identity and the somewhat "accidental" marriage had come about in a more logical manner, perhaps even more honest manner. From the start, Cam's urging and logic gave off a bad odor and made Johnny seem like such a spineless sap. Cam seemed pretty idiotic, too. I don't really enjoy reading stories about two saps as the main characters. So the first half was about a two-star situation. The last part of the book was a real improvement. Johnny seemed to come into himself. (view spoiler) The last part was more like a 3.5 or 4, so averaged together this is about three stars.

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### **Brit says**

This was my first novel by Davis. I like the plot idea and though it was 100% predictable, I was hoping to encounter some lively characters.

My first complaint is that while the author gives a very descriptive glimpse of what ranch life was like in this time period, I felt that was what I was primarily reading about the woes of a ranch wife. There were so, so many descriptions of everyday house chores. While probably accurate, I wish she had done this more with

her characters as well.

(view spoiler)

Simple, predictable. It could be more developed in character arc, dialogue and chemistry. It left a lot to be desired for me.

I received a copy from the editor for my honest review from NetGalley.

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### **Nancy Steinle gummel says**

The Outlaw Takes a Bride by Susan Page Davis is a first reads win and I'm giving my honest opinion. This is the first book by this author that I have read and I really enjoyed it. John Paynter is a cowboy working on the end of the line. Cam one of his fellow cowboys came riding up hard. He told Johnny he had to get going fast. The foreman had been murdered and everyone thought John was responsible since he had argued with the foreman. Johnny said he'll just ride down and clear his name. Cam told him there was talking of a lynching. So Max took off with Cam. They left Colorado and headed for Texas. Johnny had a brother Mark who had a small spread. When they get to Marks they find him murdered. Shot in the back. Just recently killed. Johnny had a beard now and he looked like his brother Mark. He assumed Marks identity. John finds correspondence from Sally Folding a young widow. She coming by train to marry his brother. Johnny is torn and twisted. He wants to be honorable. How does Johnny handle his problems. When does he come clean with Sally?

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### **Aerykah says**

Maybe 3 1/2 stars? I give it 4, though, because I had pretty low expectations to start out with. ;)

First off, I knew the truth about Cam from the moment he appeared on the scene. I don't know how anyone could *not* know. And that did drive me a bit crazy throughout the story. However... Johnny didn't know it, so I was able to look past that and see how he might be drawn into Cam's plans and ideas.

Johnny's rather weak character was a pretty big drawback for me, but I liked seeing his struggle with the things he was doing. And I liked seeing him overcome.

Overall, this was a pretty good book.

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## **Amanda Tero says**

I'll be honest: the cover was the whole reason I bought this book. But the story in and of itself... it was captivating!

Johnny starts out as a man on the run, accused of a murder he didn't commit. He is a follower and leans to the suggestions that Cam makes for his own safety. I really liked Johnny. He wasn't your typical brawny, strong hero. He was a character who was growing, made wrong decisions, manned up to them, and strove for change.

Then there was Sally. She was a desperate widow yet one who made her choices carefully and calculated. She had some high expectations yet tried to tone it down by her circumstances. As a couple, Johnny and Sally were great. I really liked them!

And then there was the plot. I didn't wholly have things figured out—which means I liked the plot. There also wasn't a ton of cliché situations. Another bonus.

The spiritual content... Sally was a firm believer in God, read her Bible regularly and desired to attend church. There was still a bit of the confusing, "Is this character saved and just drifted away from God or did they come to God in the process of the book?" It seems like it was the former, but was vague enough to keep me guessing (not a thing I like to be guessing about).

The romance overall was sweet. Sally is a mail-order Bride, so the falling in love happened after she married. There were a lot of references to consummating the marriage, though nothing was specific. Just mainly desires mentioned. Because of that, I'd say 20+ for conservative readers.

This book had endearing characters, interesting plot, and Wild West excitement. Definitely some pluses for me!

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## **Hannah says**

First off...an absolutely gorgeous cover. I'd like to have that picture hanging on my wall.

I liked these characters from page one, with the exception of Cam...he rubbed me wrong from the very start. I loved the fix the hero found himself in! Definitely a novel one...but Johnny and Sally make a great couple. I enjoyed watching Sally heal from her past scars and watching John become a man, willing to stand up for what is right. The resolution was believable and satisfying. I have to say that I appreciate the time when Sally's parents save the day, too! Great scene.

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## **Andrea Cox says**

by Andrea Renee Cox

What do you think it would have been like to be a mail-order bride?

Susan Page Davis gave us her take on that in the entertaining novel *The Outlaw Takes a Bride*. This book was such a delight. The tension and surprises were written with excellent timing. I especially enjoyed the

play between the two lead characters. The awkwardness that came from the situations they were in was so sweet. I look forward to reading more historical books by Susan Davis. She sure knows how to spin a yarn!

In *The Outlaw Takes a Bride*, Johnny Paynter goes on the run when his foreman turns up dead and it's suspected that Johnny committed the crime... even though he's innocent. Upon arriving at his brother's ranch in Texas, he finds his brother has been killed. When he discovers a mail-order bride is on the way to marry his brother, Johnny assumes his brother's identity and takes his bride. But what happens when the truth comes out? How will Johnny and the ranch survive a drought, a posse of outlaws, and a betrayal by someone he thought trustworthy? Will he and his bride find a way to trust God to smooth out the rocky road they've found themselves on?

I received a complimentary copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for my honest review.

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## **Sophia says**

I love a strong western historical romance and trying new to me authors, but it wasn't just that. The title and blurb roped me in quick. This was mail-order bride meets false identity meets frontier life danger and excitement. Oh, saddle that bronc up, I am so there. I didn't realize it was Inspiration Fiction at the time and discovered that as I read, but not a problem. I wanted to see what happened with this whole Sword of Damocles type scenario of a guy living a lie and it was just a matter of time until the truth came out.

The story opens with Johnny Paynter working on a cattle ranch in Colorado. He's out at the distant part of the ranch and one of the other cowhands informs him that the foreman has been killed and Johnny's the big suspect. Johnny wants to go in and clear his name, but Cam lets him know that everyone's riled up and not listening to reason. They're talking a hanging. Johnny agrees to Cam's idea to put some distance between him and the angry mob for a bit, let things cool down and then try to clear his name. He decides to go to Texas to stay with his brother, Mark, who has a small ranch and he hasn't seen for a while.

Sally's life as a poor widow living under the roof of the minister and his grudging, grubbing wife is miserable so she does the unthinkable and answers an ad from a Texas rancher about a wife. They correspond several times and just in the exchange of letters, they both fall in love. Sally tells Mark Paynter all her personal thoughts, past hurts and future hopes and he does the same. She gladly accepts his written proposal and catches the train to little Beaumont, Texas.

Johnny no sooner arrives at his brother's ranch than he finds Mark shot dead and evidence that it was to steal from him since his horses, food and money are gone and the place ransacked. Johnny wants to head to the sheriff, but Cam reminds him that they are on the run and not only that, but they would probably become suspects in Mark's death. The few townspeople they meet think he is Mark because they look a lot alike. Johnny is still thinking it over when it gets more complicated. He discovers that his brother is getting set to marry and the woman is on her way even now. He reluctantly follows through with more lies and finds himself married to his brother's would be wife, the beautiful Sally. How is he ever going to untangle himself from this mess? And what about the huge lie to Sally? He knows the truth will hurt this lovely, sweet woman that he is coming to love.

Sally knows there is something off about Mark and she doesn't know what to think of his friend Cam who he never mentioned as working for him. She loves Mark even more each day and he is so gentle, considerate and kind, but why is he reluctant to share her bed as her husband and treat her in all ways as his wife? And



then there are all the little things that are different about him? Maybe she needs to give him more time, but she can't wait forever. Sally wanted a true home and family when she accepted Mark's offer. She wants all that with Mark, but she needs him to share what he is keeping from her.

As I indicated before, this is a story about a man caught up in lies and what he chooses to do about it. The lies snowball on him so that he can barely function as lies tend to do. I was fascinated and kept reading wondering what it would finally take for the truth to gush out- would he come forward or would she catch him at it? I was really pulling for him to man up and tell the truth even though the consequences are dire- his life and his marriage are at stake.

The story is narrated alternatively by both the hero and heroine. It's a slower-paced more character driven piece for most of the book with the majority of the excitement occurring at the end. A lot of background work and setting are painted in and I really enjoyed this as it depicted frontier ranch life very well. The characters are well drawn. They both have their issues. Sally's are more external with her new life and adjustment to being married that is her challenge. Johnny has that too, but he's also got some internal flaws to work out which is why I was probably more vested in his side of the story. I liked Sally well enough, but I guess I prefer my fictional characters with a few flaws so I can see them grow.

Normally, I wouldn't be impressed with a guy who kept going the easy route that the lie offered and leaning on his friend so much to guide him, but I got the impression that Johnny is pretty young and on the naive side when this story starts off. Yes, he works a man's job with all the tough, dangerous work a cowboy on the frontier faces, but he tends to take people at face value. Johnny trusted his older, more worldly-wise saddle buddy who, unlike Johnny, thinks of his own skin first and foremost and if the way to keep that intact is to run or lie, Cam is down with that. But anyway, back to Johnny. Even though he's a tad gullible, I still really liked him and saw this whole thing as his opportunity to really prove he was a man and acting like it. Which he did. From the moment he read Sally's letters to his brother, Mark, he was already starting to fall for her and feel protective of her. He works hard to make up for the loss of Mark (which he feels deeply yet can't mourn openly) even though Sally isn't aware of his motive. In the process, he realizes that he's falling in love. He wants so badly to know whether it is Mark or Johnny that Sally loves and he knows there's only one way to find out if he's willing to risk it. Loved that tension.

The inspirational thread is strong with the lying and restitution being a central theme. Sally is a strong Christian and lives it. She prays and reads her Bible a lot. Johnny grew up going to church and he easily slides right back into it all when Sally comes. Just wanted to give fair warning in case strong Christian elements aren't your bag.

So, this was a sweet romance of course set against the backdrop of daily frontier life in Texas with some exciting moments of robbers, posses and shootouts. I would recommend this definitely for Inspirational Romance fans, but also for Historical Romance fans who like their romance clean and sweet.

My thanks to Net Galley for the opportunity to read this book in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Jennifer says**

This is was an easy breezy read. Simply written and alternating between Johnny the outlaw and his bride Sally's point of view, the author gives you a glimpse of what ranch life was like in the good ole Wild West. Old customs and everyday house chores were brought to a clear picture-- the dusty roads and hills, the dry

heat, and the pounding of horses hooves came to life in my head. That I enjoyed.

The plot held some promise to it, but overall, it was predictable and I even found myself being annoyed by the characters. The dialogue and moral compass of the main characters are well written. I kept reading, hoping for a breakthrough between Sally & Johnny. But the epiphany of love just never reached out to me in this story.

What was frustrating for me was that the foreshadowing in the first few chapters completely gave away the ending. When Johnny gives thought about the ways Cam has been a good friend and could be trusted, I knew right then that he was the guilty one. Why else would he be so eager to flee CO and lay low in TX with Johnny and push his friend into a web of lies? The main characters seemed gullible and weak. Sally was always in a position of damsel in distress, crying about something or another. I thought she would prevail as a heroine at the end, hoping she'd blast some outlaws and stick it to Cam, but instead she's helpless in a well trying to save her Pa, but not without help from the guys. In addition, I felt the love story that is supposedly fully blossomed by the end of the book was underdeveloped and impalpable. I was hoping for a little more chemistry and passion. A little too conservative of a read for me.

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