



Copper Sunrise

By Carol Cox

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CHAPTER ONE

Phoenix, Arizona Territory

October 25, 1911

The portly man paced the length of the platform along the front of the Odd Fellow's Hall. A red flush suffused his ample cheeks, and his jowls quivered as he spoke to the assembled crowd. "And I say Taft has no right to impose his will upon us, president or not."

Loud applause greeted this pronouncement.

The speaker continued. "Ten months ago, the good people of this territory ratified the state constitution our delegates labored over so diligently. Two months ago, Congress passed a resolution for statehood. It is the God-given right of Arizonans to proceed to this next step in our destiny. We believe it, and the members of Congress believe it. If that rascal, Billy Taft-

Loud boos burst forth from the audience and he paused to let the interruption die down before he went on. "If that rascal, Billy Taft, hadn't vetoed that precious document, we might even now see the flag of the great state of Arizona fluttering in the breeze below the Stars and Stripes on the staff that stands before this very building."

Shouts of agreement mingled with huzzahs and loud cries of "Amen!"

In the back of the crowded room, Mitch Brewer scribbled in his notebook, anxious to capture every detail of this meeting for his readers back East. He scanned the assembly, writing brief descriptions of those present, everyone from laborers to well-dressed businessmen. Every strata of Arizona's residents seemed to be represented here. A voice calling for quiet drew his attention back to the platform.

A slender, mustachioed man stood beside the previous speaker. Mitch recognized him as Nathan Showalter, a prominent Phoenix businessman. Showalter smiled at the audience with a practiced air. "Mr. Chilton makes some interesting points, and I must say I agree with him on a number of them." He paused, letting that point sink in.

"It's true that Arizonans voted to ratify the state constitution back in February. It's also true that Congress passed a resolution for statehood—a resolution subsequently vetoed by President Taft because of its provision for the recall of judges." He held up his hand to quell the boos that emanated at the mention of the president's name.

"I'm no happier than any of you at the idea of Arizona statehood being delayed one moment longer than necessary. After all, we've already waited nearly fifty years to see that day arrive. But I differ with Mr. Chilton as to what should happen next."

He stepped closer to the audience, positioning himself dead center at the edge of the stage, and waited. A hush fell over the crowd as the listeners waited for what would come next.

Mitch found himself as riveted as anyone there. The man was indeed a gifted speaker, he thought. He had to remind himself to look away from that piercing gaze long enough to continue his notes.

"Governor Sloan cautioned us after the ratification last February about this very possibility. He was sure the provision for the recall of judges would bring about the president's disapproval, and time has proven him right. But let us not forget that the president also signed the Flood-Smith resolution in August, which promises Arizona its rightful place in these United States. . .providing that provision is removed from the constitution by a vote of the people."

More boos followed. Chilton stepped forward as if to protest.

Showalter raised his hand, stopping Chilton in his tracks and quelling the crowd's rumbling in the same smooth motion. His tone sharpened. "Which is more important? To remain stiff-necked about keeping the constitution as it is. . .or for Arizona to become the forty-seventh star on the flag of this great land?"

A five-piece band near the front struck up a rousing rendition of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and the crowd went wild. Mitch could see Chilton's mouth opening and closing, but the man never stood a chance from that point on.

Mitch found his own heart racing in time with the martial air. Showalter had it right: Arizona had waited long enough for her day in the sun. The time had come to see her achieve statehood, and he would do anything within his power to bring that day to fulfillment.

He glanced back to the platform, where well-wishers had mounted the stage and were pumping the hands of both speakers. Assuring himself that the meeting was about to break up, he slipped outside the hall and hurried back toward the small house he rented to write up his latest article.

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Lonesome Valley, Arizona Territory
October 27, 1911

"What do you mean you're moving to Phoenix?" Dan O'Roarke planted his fists on his hips and stared at his daughter in dismay. "That's eighty miles away. What would make you want to pack up and put that kind of distance between you and your family?"

Catherine O'Roarke looked past her father and outside the wide front windows to the rolling hills that encircled the T Bar Ranch. For a brief moment she wished she could be out there, riding her mare down the length of Lonesome Valley and enjoying the peace outdoors rather than facing the tension that crackled here in the living room.

She stood with her back to the flagstone fireplace and considered her family's reaction to the announcement she had just made. Her mother's stricken expression came as no surprise. Neither did her grandmother's approving nod from the rocking chair in the corner of the living room. She'd known from the first that Grandma would agree.

Her father's reaction, though. . . She hadn't expected that kind of response from him. The disbelief in his tone made her bristle.

"Do you think I'm incompetent?"

The abrupt question cut off whatever her father might have been about to say. His jaw sagged and he gaped at her. "No. Not at all."

"You think I'm incapable? Didn't you teach me to take care of myself?"

"Of course, but-"

A quiet chuckle interrupted him. Catherine's father swung around to face the diminutive figure in the rocking chair. "Do you see something funny in this, Mother?"

Fine lines webbed Elizabeth O'Roarke's cheeks when she smiled at her son. "Not in the sense you mean, dear. It's just that this whole scene brings back a flood of memories."

"Do these memories have any bearing on the fact that my only daughter has apparently taken leave of her senses?"

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