

Media Kit for Love on Willow Creek by Casey Dawes

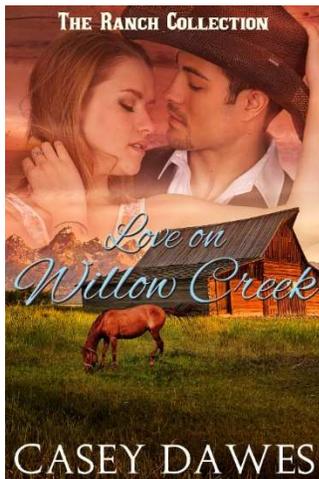
Title: Love on Willow Creek

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Book Blurb

Spurned by the boy she loved in high school, Bridget Lawson fled Willow Creek the day after graduation to search for fame on the rodeo circuit. She won purse after purse, but used whisky and casual sex to deaden the pain in her heart. Eight years later, she's a recovering alcoholic and returns to Willow Creek to try to rebuild her life. She buys a small ranch, determined to open a barrel racing school. All she needs is a loan to build an arena to attract the wealthier residents with their small ranchettes and young, horse-crazy daughters.

Recently divorced from Lucy Savoy, Tom Browdy has delayed his dream of raising world-class quarter horses to run his father's bank. When Bridget walks into his small-town bank to ask for a loan, her spark re-lights his passion for his vision—and for the woman he once loved and betrayed. Will she be able to forgive him for being young and stupid?

Bridget resists when Tom begins to court her, afraid he'll find out about her past. Lucy hasn't given up on Tom, and will do whatever it takes to get him back. Will they be overcome the pain of their past to create a future in a small Montana town on the edge of the Rocky Mountains? Or will Lucy's plot to get Tom back ruin Bridget's business and her chance to reunite with her high school love?

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Excerpt

Bridget Lawson glared at bank's lobby clock. The minute hand hadn't moved in at least, well, a minute. She'd been waiting ten of them already. Her roiling stomach clenched a little more.

A few bank employees busy at scattered desks, and two tellers chatting with each other dotted the cavernous space. Offices lined one wall like a rich person's privacy fence.

A placard on one door announced, "Loan Officer." A round woman with curly gray hair sat at a desk nearby. Through the sliver of window next to the office door, Bridget glimpsed a brightly dressed, bottle blonde gesturing at the person hidden behind the office's wooden door.

Probably know her. Bridget had lived in this town most of her whole life, except for eight years on the rodeo circuit.

The door opened and the blonde flounced out. Her name pricked at the back of Bridget's mind.

"Don't forget. Sunday after church. It's the least you can do," the woman called back to whoever was in the office. . Without acknowledging Bridget, she waved to the tellers and left.

Now maybe I can get this meeting over with.

Bridget stood and looked toward the office. A man, presumably the loan officer, stood in the door staring after the blonde. She recognized him and stiffened. Tom Browdy had crushed her heart in high school, sending her on her madcap adventure of bad men and worse times.

She glanced at the bank's outside doors. The vein in neck throbbed. The woman who'd left in such a hurry was her old nemesis, Lucy Savoy.

By the time she turned back, the loan officer's door was closed. She stood and walked toward it. The woman at the desk stopped her with a chill question. "Can I help you?"

Bridget glanced at the name tag on the desk. Abigail Bennett. Bennett. She knew a Bennett. Ah, Melody Bennett. Same class in high school. A quiet, shy girl. "Are you related to Melody?"

The woman beamed. "Her aunt."

Bridget smiled. "I knew her in high school. I'm Bridget Lawson."

"What can I do for your Bridget?" The ice had melted from the woman's voice.

"I've been waiting to see your loan officer. I saw that his last visitor just left, and I was wondering if I could see him now." Bridget let her voice linger on the word "visitor," for an extra second.

"Oh, that was Lucy Browdy. Not really a visitor, if you know what I mean." Abigail picked up the phone. "A customer to see you, Mr. Browdy."

The loan officer's door opened.

Her stomach gave one more twist.

When he caught sight of Bridget, Tom's eyes widened. "Bridget Lawson?"

She stilled her emotions and slipped on the poise of a rodeo queen. "Hello, Tom. The teller said I needed to talk to a loan officer. I guess that's you."

"Um. Sure. Come in."

She took a seat in one of the chairs facing his desk and placed her folder of papers on the surface.

"Good to see you again, Bridget. I heard you were back in town. What's it been? Eight years?"

“Almost.” Exactly seven years, eleven months and three days since she’d fled Willow Creek, the day after she graduated high school.

“You look great. How are your parents?”

“They’re good. Still working the ranch.” Sometimes small town rituals set her teeth on edge. When could she ask for what she needed and get out of there?

“You staying with them?” He shuffled some papers on his desk.

“No. I have my own place. I’m applying for a loan to build an arena.” She gestured to the outer office. “They said I had to see you.”

He stopped shuffling and looked at her. His chocolate-brown eyes reminded her of the kisses they’d shared in high school.

He probably didn’t remember their kisses with the same intensity she did. He’d been too focused on Floozy Lucy.

“Oh. I see. I hoped? This might be a social call.”

“I don’t have time for social calls.” *And you’d be the last person I’d see.* “I’m building a school—barrel racing. I need money to put up an arena. I filled out all the necessary forms. You’ll find them in there.” She pointed to the folder on his desk.

“I heard you did well in the rodeo.”

Good enough to buy a place with her winnings. The house was outdated with a leaky roof, but the barn was solid and so were the corral fences. She’d hired Jessica Brannon, a friend from school, to work on the cattle fencing so she could run a few head. All she was missing was a covered arena. Once she had that, could entice the ex-Californians with their pretend ranches to send their daughters to her school, even in the winter.

Tom opened the folder and scanned the papers, his long fingers mesmerizing her as they had when he’d been quarterback. The way his shirt lay, she could tell he’d stayed in shape, without the flabby belly that too many of the towns ex-jocks flaunted.

Wraiths of feelings she’d thought she’d buried slipped out of their graves.

No. She was over Tom Browdy, no matter how much his thick brown hair tempted her fingers.

She reasserted her will over her memories. Her visit her was business. Strictly business. “Well?”

He looked up and his gaze pierced her defenses. . He put the folder down. “Look, Bridget, I owe you an apology for what happened.”

“No need to apologize, Tom. I’m over it.” She gestured in the direction of the Lucy’s exit. “From what I’ve heard, sounds like you did, too.”

“That was a mistake.”

“What? The marriage?”

He closed the folder. “The prom. The marriage. Everything. I know I can’t ever make it up to you, but I’d like to try.”

“You’re right, Tom. You can’t ever make it up to me, but you can help me get the loan I need.

”I’ll see what I can do,” he said.

“Good.” She stood.

“Can I at least take you to dinner so we can catch up on the last eight years?”

“I’m here for a loan, not dinner.”

He cleared his throat. “I know. It’s going to take me a while to run the numbers, but you’re a prospective client. It’d be perfectly fine to take a client out to dinner.”

“Not in Willow Creek, it isn’t. Not with our history.”

The tips of his earlobes reddened.

Good.

He stood and came around the desk.

Too close.

She backed up and the back of her knees hit the chair. She almost stumbled, but years of riding helped her keep her balance.

He put his hand on her arm.

Not appropriate banker behavior.

How should she react? And what happened to all the air in the office?

“I was an idiot,” he said. “My only excuse was I was a dumbass eighteen-year-old with a big head. I made a mistake. I’m sorry.”

She shook off his hand, edged around the chair, and made it to the door. “Don’t be silly. It was only a prom.” *Only my senior prom.* She swallowed. “When do you think you’ll have the numbers done?”

He had the same expression he’d worn in high school after he’d thrown an incomplete pass. “Should take me a few days. I could bring them out to your place?”

“No need. I’m in town at least once a week. See you, Tom.”

If she was going to stay in Willow Creek, she was going to have to a better job of burying the past.



Author Bio

Casey Dawes has lived a varied life--some by choice, some by circumstance. Her master's degree in theater didn't prepare her for anything practical, so she's been a teacher, stage hand, secretary, database guru, manager in Corporate America, business coach, and writer.

With a few marriages, two sons, and three step-children, her personal life was a challenge when she met and married her current husband who has proved to be the love of her life. They reside in Montana where she quilts, writes, and coaches on the banks of the Clark Fork River. The couple has been adopted by two gently used cats.

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