

CRIPPLE CREEK
SERIES

Book Club Kit



A Novel by
Sara R. Turnquist

About Sara R. Turquist

Sara is a coffee lovin', word slinging, clean Historical Romance author whose super power is converting caffeine into novels. She loves those odd little tidbits of history that are stranger than fiction. That's what inspires her. Well, that and a good love story.



But of all the love stories she knows, hers is her favorite. She lives happily with her own Prince Charming and their gaggle of minions. Three to be exact. They sure know how to distract a writer! But, alas, the stories must be written, even if it must happen in the wee hours of the morning.

Sara is an avid reader and also enjoys reading clean Historical Romance when she's not traveling. Her books range from the Czech lands to the American Wild West and from ancient Egypt to the early 1900s. Some of her titles include *The Lady Bornekova*, *Hope in Cripple Creek*, *The General's Wife*, *Trail of Fears*, and the Convenient Risk Series.

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Q&A With Sara Turnquist

- **Why did you choose to write these two stories in Novella form?**
 - The first one was because it was a prequel and something I planned to give away for free. It didn't feel like it merited a full novel length. However, after getting into it...I think it could have been expanded. And maybe someday I will.
 - For *Leaving Stoneybrook*, it, too, seemed like we knew the "world" of the story setting, so it just needed to be short and sweet and tell David and Mary's story.
- **How did you choose the name for each of these books and what significance do they hold?**
 - In *Hope in Cripple Creek*, I mentioned that Katherine's parents came from Tennessee (my home state). So, I decided to set the book near my hometown in a small town called Waverly, TN. That way it felt kind of local. Also, the name Waverly seemed to fit. And the story was about their romance and why they left Waverly. So, "Leaving Waverly" seemed to fit well.
 - Since the main books in the series have similar titles, I wanted the prequels to have similar titles. Just as *Leaving Waverly* is about Katherine's parents leaving their hometowns, I felt that David and Mary's story was also about David departing Stoneybrook Ranch.

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- **Are there any themes or messages you consciously set out to explore in either or both of these stories?**
 - For *Leaving Waverly*, I wanted to explore a Southern Belle that wasn't the typical stereotype, and one that would leave her life of luxury to follow her heart. As well, the idea of loss in Lauren and Tom's situations. Her of a childhood friend and him of his cousin Otis. Then a forced proximity and difference in station. I wanted to explore what it would be like for someone of limited means to dream beyond their societal expectations. And find a way to make that dream come true.
 - For *Leaving Stoneybrook*, I had to discuss why David would leave the stability of the ranch life to almost go backwards in society and work as a miner. Almost opposite of his father's move West, yet for that same heart - wanting independence.
- **How do you approach world-building in your writing?**
 - I have watched documentaries and shows/movies set in these areas (Southwestern US - Colorado and Arizona mostly). And I have visited these places. It's always great to be able to put feet on the ground and take in the smells, sounds, sights...that the characters would be experiencing as the normal background makeup of their days/nights.
 - I am world-building, but in a different way than a Speculative Fiction (Sci-fi or fantasy) writer would be. I'm building this world inside a real place and time. So there is research as well as imagining. It's a blend.

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- **Are there any characters in the book that you relate to on a personal level?**
 - I relate to Lauren with her family and society's expectations thrust on her. Maybe for Lauren it's more real and overbearing. But this feeling that I have to meet expectations of me/my life that I wasn't sure were part of my own desire for my life. That can be stifling.
 - I also relate to David in *Leaving Stoneybrook* and the desire to strike out and find out who I am and what I'm capable of on my own. What does God have for me? What is his plan for me apart from the comforts of home and family?

- **What was the most rewarding moment you experienced during the writing process?**
 - I recently put *Leaving Waverly* through a revision edit. I've never been super excited about the way the book ends (I liked the ending, just not all of the events leading up to the end - especially in the last chapters). So, being able to go in to a character's arc and dig deeper so many years after the fact, was intriguing, difficult, and very rewarding. The book is much stronger now, no doubt.

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- **How do you approach writing dialogue, and do you have any tips for crafting authentic conversations?**
 - Fiction is stylized dialogue...it's the way people talk but without the tons of vocal distractions and pauses that we make. The "um's" and "uh's" are not there unless they are being used for a purpose...to show the character delaying speaking or being hesitant. It's also intended to flow better. So, I want the characters to sound authentic and authentic to who they are (education level, regional accents, etc), but also remain true to the story and moving the plot onward. My advice? Become a people watcher and an eavesdropper at the airport, coffee shop, wherever. Study how real people talk and interact. Then try to mimic that without the extra stuff.
- **Can you share a behind-the-scenes anecdote or interesting fact about the creation of these books?**
 - Hope in Cripple Creek was originally published through a traditional-style publisher. And, as with most publishers, the contract stated that they had first right of refusal for any books written with the same characters. But I wanted to use the novella primarily as a giveaway, to introduce readers to my writing and to thank people for joining my newsletter. So, I didn't want it to be published and, thereby, make those things impossible. So, I originally changed the names of Tom and Lauren to Henry and Claire to prevent that connection to Hope in Cripple Creek. Once I regained my rights to Hope in Cripple Creek, I changed the names back and made it the prequel it was intended to be.

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- **How do you handle writer's block or moments of creative doubt?**

- It helps me if I can switch writing mediums. If I am writing on my laptop/computer (as I usually am), if I will switch to pen and paper, it can break through a block. If I am staring at a blank screen, often if I will do a writing prompt or review the previous day's scenes, it "primes the pump" on the creative well and then the ideas flow better.

- **From which authors do you draw inspiration?**

- I love, love, love Tamara Leigh's books - the stories and the depth of the historical interwoven in the novel.
- I love Jody Hedlund's romances that are clean, but sizzle.
- I admire how Karen Witemeyer layers in a strong spiritual thread.
- And I love the ease of Melanie Dickerson's writing... and the way she really pulls us into the character's skin.

Discussion Questions

Read these questions in your book club and talk about your answers.

- Did you like or dislike the characters and why? Did it influence how much you enjoyed the book?
- Which character's actions or decisions had the biggest impact on the plot, and how did it change the story?
- Who was your favorite character in each novella? Why?
- How did the author effectively build tension and suspense throughout these stories?
- What were the most memorable moments or scenes in the book and why did they stand out to you?
- Did the title of the book or the design of the book cover mean more to you after you had finished reading it?
- If you enjoyed the book and wanted to read something similar, what would you recommend reading next?
- Would you have given the book a different title? If yes, what would your title be?
- Were the characters clearly drawn and depicted?
- Were you rooting for the couples to get together all along? Why or why not?

Dear Reader

Thank you for coming along on another journey with me through Tom and Lauren, and then David and Mary's romances and as they stretch their wings and make big changes in their lives. Some for the better, some creating challenges. But adventures in life all the same.

I hope you found something you can relate to and connect with the characters on some level. These books were unique because I was writing backstories for already-established characters. So, taking what was already known...and adding context.

In as much, the depth of character and richness of how life moves us into different places played out. Our part in God's story is something we live out through our decisions and actions. In some, we are actively pursuing Him and His will, and in others, we are working out His plan even though we may not realize it. Just as is true of these stories.

Tom and David serve as foils and mirrors of each other. Foils because they are pursuing very different things and that difference is heightened by the fact that they are juxtaposed against each other. And they mirror each other in that, at their core, they want the same thing - independence and the freedom to make their own way in life.

I pray that you will be blessed as you discuss and process these stories. And that you will see God's hand at work in the lives of the characters on a fictionalized scale...and know that it is a picture of how He is working out His plan in us for our good.

Blessings,

Sara

Thank you so much for reading
Hope in Cripple Creek

Would you like for Sara to visit
your book club? She can visit
in person or virtually. If you
are interested please
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