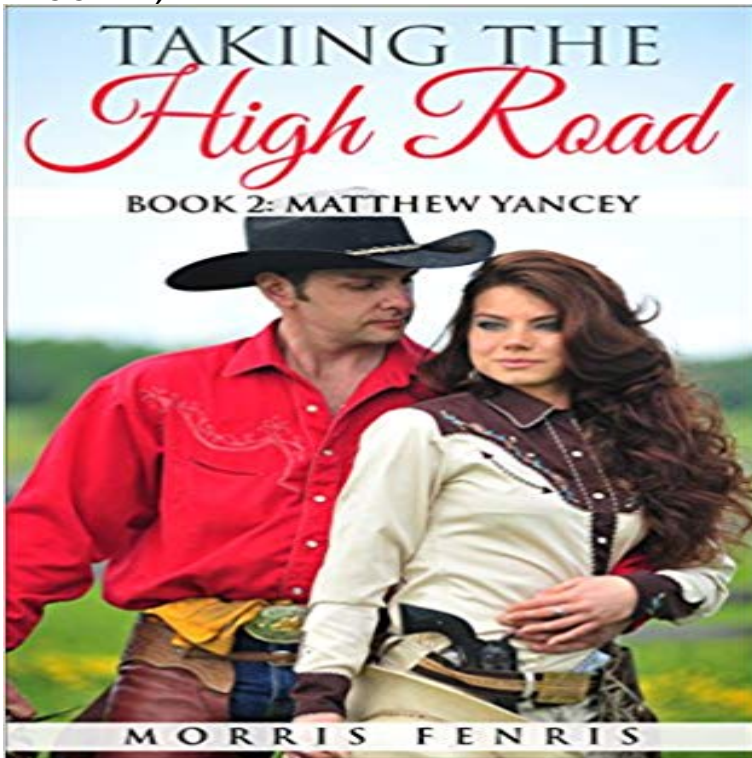


Matthew Yancey: Taking the High Road (Taking the High Road series Book 2)



As the child of a Mexican father and a Cherokee mother, Goldenstar Mendoza has known the stigma of being called Half-breed since childhood. As an adult, selling her parents stock of homemade commodities in 1861 San Francisco, she has dealt with being shunned by women; and with being intimidated and harassed by men. This is very apparent with Franklin Bower, a wealthy rancher who has set his sights on installing Star at his Condor Ranch. He wants her, and he doesn't care how he gets her. While Star has detractors, she also has defenders: close friend Frances Goddard, and her brother, William, sheriff of San Francisco. Also a new friend, Sarah Coleman, governess for five-year-old Rob Yancey and housekeeper for his widowed father, Matthew. Recently, Texas Ranger Matt and his son had arrived in San Francisco to attend the wedding of his brother, John, and stayed on at the request of Sheriff Goddard. Matt can't help being attracted to beautiful Star, and she to him. Their dinner together with the Goddards and a walk home afterward results in a setback to their fledgling relationship, however, when Matt overplays his hand. A quick good-night kiss turns into serious lovemaking. Stunned by her own response, agitated by his advances as if, given her background, she were just one more floozy to be taken advantage of she flees inside and refuses to hear his apologies. Eventually, defeated, frustrated, he heads for home. Tomorrow, when both have cooled down, he will try again. Tomorrow sets up a whole different mix of problems. At mid-morning, Franklin Bower arrives. By revealing that he holds a secret about Adsila Mendoza, Star's mother, and will use it to have her jailed, he blackmails the girl into leaving with him for the Condor. There, he forces his former bedmate, Raquel, to tend his new lady. Despite the servants' resentment, she and Star bond when she eventually reveals that she, too,

has been blackmailed; her brother, Benito, was taken as a slave to work in Bowers silver mine. Star allows him to drag her back to the bedroom. Just as he is ready for his seduction, she whips the hunting knife out and slashes him, twice. Roaring, bleeding, he starts toward her, only to collapse on the floor: Raquel has cracked him over the head. While they are able to escape, Bower comes back to life far sooner than they had expected; he and his cowboys hunt them down. No more messing around. This time, Star will be sold to Suarez, a bandito leader. Meanwhile, Matt and Frances, all unknowing of the danger Star is in, have paid a visit to her mother, finding out the facts of Adsilas past and Stars disappearance. Back in town, Matt loads up his horse and heads south, tracking the bandito leader to his lair. He is able to rescue Star, and they flee, but the gang follows. The pair is forced to hole up in a shack and battle it out, guns blazing. During one quiet interim, Matt admits his love for her, and she for him. In the middle of another barrage, help arrives: Sheriff Goddard and his posse. Loose ends are tied up on the scene; others later on, with a side trip to the Condor to rescue Raquel and find that Bower had been killed by his outlaw compatriot. Another longer trip, with more lawmen, to the Sierra Nevada silver mine, frees the slaves and reunites Benito with his sister. Matt returns wounded, but not too badly to wed his bride a few weeks later, in a ceremony for which all the Yancey brothers have gathered.

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