



CYNTHIA ROBERTS

A PAWN FOR  
**MALICE**

"ANOTHER THRILLING SUSPENSEFUL ROMANCE"  
BY CYNTHIA ROBERTS

# UNCHAINED MELODY

Love Song Standards Series

By

Cynthia Roberts

Unchained Melody

Copyright ©2016 by Cynthia Roberts. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any way by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the author except as provided by USA copyright law.

This novel is a work of fiction. Names, descriptions, entities, and incidents included in the story are products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, events, and entities is entirely coincidental.

## My Other Books

### Historical Romance ~ Iroquois Series

Wind Warrior ~ Book 1

Captive Heart ~ Book 2

Captive Warrior ~ Book 3

### Contemporary

This Too Shall Pass

### Suspense Thriller

Keeper's Watch ~ The Wind

A Pawn for Malice ~ Coming in Summer 2016

### Contemporary – Love Song Standards Series

Unchained Melody

Strangers In The Night  
For Once In My Life  
Can't Help Falling In Love  
At Last  
Chances Are

### **Praise for Her Novels**

“If you are looking for an enthralling story with plenty of heat, humor and adventure, look no further!”

~ Romance Junkies

“Roberts’ writing is solid, flows well, her angle is thought-provoking and descriptive details keep the pages turning. Roberts’ literary contributions may be worth following.”

~ IndieReader

## *Chapter One*

Pamela's silver CLS Mercedes Coupe hugged the mountainous, snowy terrain of Route 66 like an Indianapolis 500 race car. It was an expression of her accomplishments. A little pricy perhaps, but well-deserved. Driving it was beyond scintillating.

Pamela was not all about status, but she worked hard, and at the age of thirty-one, she finally acquired the title of senior partner at the law offices of McNeil and Ryan.

Her specialty was wrongful death and she was damned good at what she did. It was beyond being driven. She was a "Joan of Arc" for those families who lost a loved one due to someone else's negligence, criminal intent, accidental liability, or stupidity. She was passionate about proving justice, above all else, winning her clients a sizable settlement and some sense of closure, so they could move forward in their lives.

Ever since she lost her parents in a freak bridge accident at the age of thirteen, she knew this was the course she wanted her life to take. She lived through the hell of loss. Her grandparents spiraled to poverty from lawyers, who sucked their life from their souls and the dollars from their bank accounts. After years of deliberations, all was lost to them. The negligence was undeniable; the evidence was all in their favor. But because of a small technicality and grave error made by her grandparents' law firm, the case was dismissed.

Pamela never forgot what that did to her family. It compelled her to excel in school and graduate at the top of her class at Harvard.

Her palm glided over the rich leather texture of her steering wheel as she reflected on her accomplishments.

"Where have the years gone," she sighed? In a couple of years, she could be a full partner. It sounded good. Was it what she really wanted though after all the long hours, sleepless nights, lonely

holidays and special occasions she spent alone; along with the loveless and empty relationships she endured?

It had been a long time, since she went on a holiday. The end of Winter was approaching. She had wanted to hit the slopes, ever since she bought herself a new pair of skis for Christmas. She wasn't an expert, but she liked a good run downhill like anyone else. This was the last chance she had before Spring arrived.

A large billboard caught her attention.

SUGAR RUN ~ ADVENTURE AND ROMANCE ON THE OPEN SLOPES!

"Been a long time for that!" She chuckled. "Maybe if I'm lucky, I'll meet a dashing stranger."

She shook her head half believing it could happen. Success truly wasn't everything, if you didn't have someone to rejoice in it with. Still, she looked forward to her skiing holiday. Romance, or no romance. A vacation was long overdue and she resolved herself to the fact delicious meals, great snow, and lots of sleep would do just fine.

Her stomach growled, reminding her she had forgotten to eat earlier. She glanced at the digital clock on the dashboard and decided there was plenty of time to make a pit stop.

The Ashbury Inn was a quaint, country eatery for the locals in the area. The moment Pamela turned into the parking lot, she knew it would be difficult finding a place to sit. The loud buzz of conversation, clattering silverware, and usual hustle of wait staff greeted her upon entering.

She huffed slightly with disappointment as the hostess confirmed her suspicions. Quickly, she scanned the occupied tables make sure there was not an oversight. When she saw, all had been taken, she nodded her thanks and turned to leave. Her attention was directed when someone tugged at her coat sleeve.

“You’re welcomed to share my table, if you’d like.” A deep, masculine voice beckoned her.

Pamela turned, drawn by the sincere tone in the stranger’s voice. Her neck kinked as she was forced to gaze up at him.

“Really,” he enforced as straight, pearly-whites shone back at her. “You’re more than welcomed to join me.”

It was hard to look away from the pair of soft, amber eyes greeting her. A moment of silence passed between them and she wondered, if he was as enamored with her as she was with him.

*This is crazy*, she dismissed the thought from her mind. She was thinking the invitation seemed a little contrived despite his charming good looks.

“That’s not necessary, but thank you,” she replied and started to zip up her ski jacket.

He reached for her hand and stopped.

“Please, I promise,” he raised his palms in defense, “this isn’t a pick up.”

His smile was enchanting and Pamela’s resolved weakened, when her attention was drawn to a prominent cleft in his strong jaw. Her eyes lifted and her stomach flipped at the alluring challenge she read in his eyes. She hesitated a moment and could not believe she heard herself responding, “Well all right.”

Gallantly, he pulled out a chair, then helped her remove her jacket. Immediately, he caught the waitress’ attention and asked that she bring another cup of coffee and an extra menu right away.

“Now, isn’t this better than leaving on an empty stomach?” He offered.

Pamela nodded.

“My heart was set on their famous Belgian waffles, before I hit the slopes.”

She thanked the waitress and warmed her hands around her coffee cup, taking in a deep breath of its brewed aroma. Slowly, she sipped the liquid and sighed with gratification.

“You on your way to Sugar Run?” He asked.

Pamela nodded and took another sip.

“I am. A long, overdue weekend, as a matter of fact.”

“Well, let me be the first to welcome you,” he extended his hand. “I’m Gavin Templeton. My family owns the resort.”

She looked up from the menu she was browsing and lifted her hand, but halted it mid-air. She knew her cheeks were blushed from his admiring gaze.

“Um, my, what a coincidence,” she replied.

She grasped the hand he offered.

“Nice to meet you, Mr. Templeton. I’ve been trying to get there the past two years, but ...” she paused. “I just don’t know how to say no to the boss.”

He chuckled and pointed her way.

“Good for you. All work and no play ... well, you know the rest.” He interjected.

Then she thought. *I’ll be damned.* She knew that name. Everyone knew the Templeton name. She was rather titillated by his attention. The Templeton’s were well known in the Northeast. Not only was Sugar Run a luxurious five-star resort, but his family had acquired over fifty acres of prime lakefront property and started developing it into one of the most eloquent gated communities, offering luxurious town homes, a 9-hole golf course, and private country club.



The cleft in his chin was more prominent, when he smiled and it pleased her to know she was the cause of the sparkle in his eyes.

“And, please, call me Gavin.”

Her voice shook a little. “Pamela Landers ... my name, that is and thank you for sharing your table.”

The waitress arrived, took both of their orders, and refilled their coffee cups.

“So, tell me Pamela, what line of work occupies your every waking moment?”

“Law,” she answered. “My niche is wrongful death.”

The look that registered on his face made her wonder, if the legal field was something he found distasteful. She did not know why, but she wanted his approval. His opinion of her somehow mattered.

*This is ridiculous! Why should I care what he thinks? She battled quietly. Because, he’s frigging drop-dead gorgeous, that’s why!*

She wondered, if they shared the same interests and decided to dig deeper into his life.

“Do you ski, Gavin?”

A giddy urge to jump with joy surfaced when he nodded in the affirmative.

“Not an Olympic hopeful mind you, but I manage to make it to the bottom without breaking my neck.”

Pamela laughed.

His cell phone went off and he excused himself, as he rose and moved from the table. He was only gone for a matter of moments. When he returned to the table and rejoined her, he asked the waitress to bring him the check right away.

Pamela tried to hide the disappointment she felt.

“Pressing business?”

Gavin’s was evident and he sighed heavily. “I’m afraid so. There’s something I must attend to in Ashbury.” He rose and handed the waitress two twenty-dollar bills and told her to keep the change.

Pamela shook her head and raised her hand to argue, but he waved it off.

“Please, it was my pleasure to meet you.” His smile was warm and genuine. “Perhaps, you’ll join me for a cocktail this evening, once you’re settled. I’ll send a note to your room.”

Pamela returned his smile. “Um, that would be nice,” she nodded, then waved her finger at him, “but, the drinks are on me, or it’s a no.”

Gavin reached for her hand and stroked it tenderly with his thumb.

“How can I refuse? Until later this evening then.” He bowed slightly and turned to exit.

Pamela felt exuberant as she watched him leave, appreciating ever-so-much how nicely his jeans fit his nicely tight butt and well-muscled thighs. Pamela relaxed and played back their meeting in her mind. Talk about fate ... it was all rather unexpected and the immediate attraction she felt for him was even more surprising. She looked down at the thick, crisp waffles on her plate and began devouring them with a hunger that was as strong as her desire to meet up with the dashing and charming owner of Sugar Run.

\*\*\*\*

Pamela brushed an inch of snow from her windshield and carefully guided her car back onto the main route. The higher she climbed in elevation, the more treacherous the roads became. She knew dangerous s-turns awaited her and she slowed her speed.

The first curve greeted her and she cautiously steered into the turn. A short distance ahead on the straight-away, she noticed a driver pulling out onto the highway from the Village of Ashbury.

Pamela slowly tapped her brakes for the traffic light she noticed beginning to change up ahead. Her car skidded on the snow encrusted pavement and she silently prayed she would not back-end the candy-apple red mustang in front of her, before coming to a complete stop. Safely, her car rolled to a halt and she breathed a sigh of relief.

As she looked ahead, Pamela gasped with surprise, recognizing the mustang's occupant from his reflection in his rear-view mirror.

She smiled joyously, when Gavin waved, recognizing her as well. It was now snowing huge, billowy, flakes and sticking to her windshield. Pamela turned on her wipers to clear her view and felt comfortable, knowing that Gavin was up ahead.

Slowly, they ascended the mountain. She listened to her favorite soft rock station to calm her jittery nerves. She hated driving on slick roads. She hummed along with the popular oldie, while she kept her focus on the road and her grip firmly on the wheel.

It was a scenic trip, despite the weather. Acres of protected woodlands were mixed with various evergreens, their branches bowed with the weight of the new virgin snow. Like welcoming arms, they extended out over the highway. When the wind gusted, or birds flitted from branch to branch, the loosened snow showered down upon them as they passed underneath.

A large timbered sign reading Babcock Lake appeared to her right. She knew Sugar Run was only another fifteen minutes ahead.

Gavin's car reduced in speed and hugged the next sharp curve ahead and; Pamela adjusted her speed accordingly.

Within an instant, an old, green Volkswagen cleared the curve ahead from the opposite direction and immediately began to slide and swerve, crossing into their lane. It lost control, veering left and right, then sideways. Stones and snow were strewn into the air and Pamela could tell the driver desperately tried to gain control.

Her eyes grew wide with fear and her body jerked backwards, as she gripped her steering wheel tightly, turning her knuckles white.

She focused her energy on the inevitable accident unfolding before her. She felt helpless and did not know how to respond, which direction to steer into to or away from, as the car took over the entire road in front of them. Her vexation grew stronger, as she witnessed the young driver heading straight towards Gavin, who had no viable course of escape.

The young driver's attempts were fruitless, as he tried to regain control and eventually crossed the double-yellow line into Gavin's path. Pamela watched in horror, while Gavin fought to avoid colliding with the young man.

"God no!" She squealed, as she managed to maneuver her car far off to the left, slamming on the brakes. Her body jolted forward and her seat belt confined her, locking into place. She rested her forehead on the steering wheel briefly, sucking cleansing breaths to calm her quaking limbs.

She felt nauseous and looked over to the right and screamed as she watched the mustang take flight.

“Dear God, no!” She bellowed,

The roof of Gavin’s car sparked as it scraped along a low-lying cable. She could see his arms raised to shield his face as the sound of screeching metal echoed through the once serene, country calm.

Pamela shuddered uncontrollably as his car disappeared over the deep decline. She could hear it breaking through the brush during its descent and knew it would crash into the frozen surface of Babcock Lake below.

Sweat beaded upon her brow and ran in rivulets between her breasts. She pounded her knees with her fists and willed them to stop their uncontrollable trembling. She unlatched her seat belt and twisted in her seat, noticing the young man exiting his car and heading her way.

Pamela opened her door and stepped outside. She was shocked to see it was only a teenager about seventeen.

“Lady, I’m sorry. I ... I just started to slide and couldn’t – “

Pamela swayed and immediately he moved forward to clasp hold of her shoulders to help steady her. She saw the worry in his misty, green eyes and her heart constricted. She noted blood was smeared on the sleeve of his jacket. She wondered how his tall, muscled frame could have possibly squeezed into the tiny confines of his car as she quickly gazed over at it.

“Are you okay? Shit, that guy –,” he pointed in the direction where Gavin went over the ledge.

She nodded, looking that way as well.

“I’m fine and you,” she grabbed hold of his chin, “look at me.” She noticed a deep gash on his forehead, wondering if he might need stitches.

The boy flinched and chewed on his lip so hard, he drew blood.

"I'm really sorry, lady. I don't know what happened. I ... I wasn't speeding. Honest! I swear!"

He stumbled, losing his footing.

Pamela tried to grab for him, but lost her grip and he went down on one knee.

"Are you dizzy? Do you feel sick?" She asked.

Tears ran from his eyes.

She opened her rear passenger door and guided him to sit and knelt in front of him.

"The roads are icy and, I almost lost control myself. You're not to blame." She patted his leg and ran her fingers through his hair in a motherly fashion.

The boy took a deep breath and wiped at his tears with the heel of his palms.

"I'm okay," he sniffled. "I'll ... I'll go for help." He rose.

Pamela stood quickly and placed her palms on his chest to halt him.

"Hold it!" She pressed him backwards. "I have a cell." When she reached inside her pocket, he stopped her, shaking his head.

"The service here is dead until you reach Sugar Run." He interjected.

She checked her phone regardless and found it to be true.

"Are you sure you can drive? You might have a concussion. It looks like you banged your head pretty hard."

The boy encircled her tiny wrist with his trembling hand. "Really, mam. I'm fine."

Pamela sighed deeply and let him rise. "Okay, if you're sure."

He nodded and Pamela walked briskly beside him to his car.

The boy stopped quickly in his tracks. "Maybe I should go with you first to check on him." His head nodded toward the ravine.

Pamela followed his gaze and shook her head in disagreement.

"I think it's more important you go for help. I'll go down and check on him." She reached out to touch his sleeve. "You better go. It'll be dark soon. Just make sure you give our location at the curve on 66 near the Babcock Lake sign."

"I won't forget. Thanks for ... not blaming me and all."

Pamela nodded. "There's no need for thanks. Just be careful and try to get them here as fast as you can. Hold on a minute." She crossed the road and walked to the edge where Gavin's car disappeared from site. She could see through the trees his car slid across the ice and broke through. "You need to let them know this is a water rescue. He's broken through the ice front end down."

The boy nodded, entered his car, buckled up and took off right away.

She watched him for a moment and quickly ran back to her car. She did not know, if the rope she took from her trunk would be helpful, but a first aid kit, flairs, and a wool blanket would. She was glad, she had listened to her father, to always be prepared for the worse and an emergency.

She crossed to the other side and looked back down the road. The boy was nowhere in sight. It just dawned on her, she forgot to get his name and license plate number. A twitch of doubt stabbed at her brain, but she shrugged it off. It was too late now. She believed he was sincere enough and confident he would do the right thing and bring back help.

Pamela moved to the edge of the ravine and froze. She looked at what she was carrying and then back at the scene before her.

*Shit! What am I doing? I don't know this guy.*

Her eyes darted over the scene, weighing the odds of her getting hurt and actually being able to help him.

*I should just wait right here. What if I fall and break a leg, my neck, my ... shit ... shit ... what should I do?*

Seconds passed. Her eyes misted with tears and she gazed out at the scene. Her heart constricted as she visualized herself trading places with the man she had just met.

*If that were me ... down, there ... I ... do it Pamela. Just do it!*

Slowly, she started her descent. She left fear and doubt behind her with the words, "You can do this", repeating over and over in her mind.

Gavin's car left a broken path in its quake. The gleam from twisted metal caught her attention against the stark-white blanket of snow. Shards of broken red tail lights and patches of black oil led a trail to the bottom.

Pamela shivered, wondering what other horrifying sights awaited her. She bent low and tried to look beyond the downed trees and trampled brush. One thing was certain, she sighed relieved, there was no visible sign of smoke, indicating the vehicle had not burst into flames on impact.

Pamela carried her rope like a bandoleer, worn over her left shoulder and across her chest. She draped the navy wool blanket over her left arm and carried the first aid kit and flairs in her right. Slowly, she descended the slope, placing one foot carefully in front of the other.



Branches scratched and stung her face. She swore as they snagged her new designer ski wear. She lost her footing, slipped and fell on her backside.

As she cleared the tree line, she was relieved to find the mustang fully intact. Frightening though, was seeing the front end submerged in the frigid water of the lake up to its windshield with its backend straight up in the air.