
John Galavan

Cheating Twain

A Little Bird'N B&B Adventure

Volume 8 in Series

Dedication

A little bird has no skills, no defenses, no intuition. Nothing except to have faith and a few days is all they ever have. This book is dedicated to these m

Prolog

He turned his head to see below. It was more than a hundred feet to the forest floor. He could see the smallest pebble. But he saw nothing. Not another. He raised his head a hundredth time this early morning and this time to swivel slowly looking into the forest across every small limb and nothing. No one. He sighed a thin string of breath into the morning air.

This was his second year which made it his second migration from the Aleutians Islands. The first time to winter here on the north Oregon coast in the rainforest. He began his journey with twelve others. All family. Well, except for an unrelated pair who would decide to mate later when they arrived.

He wondered where have they all gone. He awoke yesterday and found himself alone in the top of the old cedar up the mountain slope across from the marsh. Where had they all gone? They had to have left during the night. How had he not heard? He had no idea.

As upset as he was yesterday and as he was this morning, he really had very little to actually fear. His group wasn't the first to arrive and wouldn't be the last. This was a popular area for the Marbled Murrelets. But to a second year juvenile it was upsetting to find himself all alone.

Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8)

Not very loud. Not loud enough to be heard from the ground, he called, Keer, keer, keer. Then again, Keer, keer, keer. And one final heart shattering long call, Ke...er.

No response.

The Murrelet was about the size of a chubby robin. He wore his winter plumage of blue and white. Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) had a dark blue stripe that ran down his back across his shoulders and rump and tail feathers that contrasted with the white on Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) his breast and the underside of his long tail feathers. Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) his breast and the underside of his long tail feathers beautifully marbled sea bird use to fishing, floating, diving. Use to the rig. Strangely, he spends the night high in trees and would nest there when old enough and interested enough to mate. A secretive bird. No one knew he was here inland south of this old cedar. And, the others were here- somewhere around here.

Dawn would come after this false light of gray fades back into inky black. An hour later and as if by magic, a long finger of pale yellow would touch the very top of the mountain above his cedar. It would remain a pale yellow on the very top for a full minute and then change magically into a white that would be so white that he would blink and then it happened. The brightest white finger would travel down the slope across to his cedar tree and as it traveled it would grow wider and still brighter and then it was suddenly morning.

In the false dawn he sat back on his perch and rocked up to straightened himself and then he fluffed. Thirty-two hundred feathers stiffened in much less than a second and parted enough to let the night stale air escape. He held himself like this for ten, eleven¹³³; fifteen seconds and with a shake so slight that it would be missed, each feather was gathered, pulled inward, flattened and he was again sleek and shinny. From adorably chubby to diving wet sleek and all business.

He leaned forward and released his partially webbed feet from the old limb. He fell slowly from his perch and as he lifted his head he slowly, casually opened his wings causing his fall to change into a fast glide. He would not think to flap his wings until he was near the ground and then it would be a Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) small thing to engage in causal flapping to propel himself low across the marsh looking for a small fish or a lazy frog.

With the cold morning air passing across his face, he was feeling sad. This was the second day of being alone fishing all day after a day of the same and night in the tree all alone. He was thinking that he didn't like being in this place. It felt wrong.

He was over the marsh, low and his speed had decreased and he was about to begin flapping slowly seaward when a small fish rose to the surface. The trailing ends of his mid-wings lifted abruptly and this sent him into a crashing dive into the water. This Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) little fish had risen to the surface to catch the Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) first insect to skate on the surface of the marsh on the lonely north Oregon coast.

December 1st

Sunday

It was 4:12 in the morning and Anne was on her back with Alice breathing warm shoulder. Anne was wide, wide- wide awake. Too excited to sleep. Before bed she had confirmed plans for the swap date on Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) the fourth. After months and months of planning. Three more.

Sleep's impossible! concluded Anne. Oh my God, I'm so excited! A morning in San Francisco. New scenery. All those city sounds and cable cars and restaurants on the Streets of San Francisco, a young Michael Douglas and Tony Bennett. Tony Bennett on Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) Anne and Jack were about to swap their bed and breakfast for two weeks with the Sycamore Street Inn Bed and Breakfast which actually faced the Golden Gate Park looking right at it!

With so many hours before morning, she couldn't help but replay the events of this. First, she had to propose the idea to Jack and then do it again and again until the blue he had finally agreed. Amazing, she smiled up to the ceiling congratulating herself. Amazing! In this early morning in that secret moment of the false dawn on the morning recalling every word, and again and again and again!

"Honey, listen to this one! Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) Hey, set that aside and pay attention to me," growled Anne that afternoon months ago. Jack heard her and looked up and saw her face and set the paper down. She began, "now listen to their advertisement: 'Experienced Keepers looking for a B&B with another couple during a slow winter month. References given and required by May 10th with letter describing your B&B and we will respond in kind.' Isn't this just perfect! What Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) do you think?"

And, she was now recalling in detail how much she gushed when she had finally met the owners of the other B&B. She gushed! Really, Anne recalled looking up to the ceiling her pillow in the dark, I just gushed. My God! Well, that was then. Now I'm on Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) Plans confirmed. Three more days. Three!

She smiled recalling that it wasn't easy in the beginning. Jack had started so familiar, "Huh. Well, how will we ever know that they won't ruin our place? How will our regular Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) ruin our place? How will our regular

they steal us blind? Huh?"

Anne quickly threw that to the curb with, "What if we do the same to them? Huh? Your paranoia is sometimes simply too much." But that was one of many conversations that went the same. He stated something else stupid or silly and she had dashed to the door. Dashed. Dashed. Dashed. Point! Set! Game!

Now, with her cat Alice breathing into her shoulder under her Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) cheek, she Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) was visualizing Jack's face as he had the lovely old English Spode tea cup, tipping it, swirling the remaining tea and then looked up into her face and agreed! "Okay, okay. See what they have to offer inns."

And then in the next breath he added so tenderly, "You've wanted a vacation. This winter would be wonderful, honey. Ask about a week or two before Christmas closed here and maybe slow there."

Just now at this moment, the first dim light was about to enter their bedroom facing the marsh. Wide, wide awake, she was. What's a woman to do? Anne would be expected. She rolled to her Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) side leaving her cat to breathe into her back. Her hand, hidden under the comforter and flannel sheet, slid unseen onto his hip and then around to his back and wiggled herself against his back. There was a time Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) when this would have instantly woken her. Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) was back during his hideous days of menopause when he had to build defenses and one of Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) which was to sleep soundly.

Anne had not only the impending big swap on her mind but something else that would mean much more to Jack. And so she wanted this next bit of news to be his surprise but he needed to be prepared- her hormones were beginning to Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) reassert themselves! Drum Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) roll, please. She had plans for their first night in their San Francisco B&B. She could simply surprise him then. Or, she could hint at it, let him fantasize, let him think about it. Anticipation- wasn't the old saying true?- was as good as the event and often even better. Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) Let him anticipate!

Now, however, she changed her mind and was content to be very close to him. She whispered in his ear, "Honey, are you awake?"

Sound asleep. Anne had noted on many, many occasions that it took enormous noise or a calamitous earthquake to wake him. A whisper had absolutely no chance.

Still, she began thinking that the drone of her voice would Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed &

Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) gradually awaken her husband. She continued, "This morning, I think we should have a big waffle breakfast with bacon in the batter like your aunt used to make. Plenty of coffee. And we go over the list of things the new Keepers will have to do. Order-in some staples to see them through the first couple days. Then, honey, let's go into Meriwether and walk around."

There was no response. She was concentrating too much to notice his change in breathing and wasn't in position to see if his eyes were closed and plus, he hadn't moved. He was turned away from her and he was smiling, he rather liked her whispering in his ear. What she couldn't know was that he loved Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) fantasizing and would have dearly loved to hear her say that she may soon be back in that old lovin' mood.

As she continued whispering he recalled the days before the final decision was made to swap inns. Anne asked in her most coy voice, "You won't believe Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) the e-mail I just got from the owners of the San Francisco B&B. Listen to this." She looked up from the computer to him sitting in the chair next to their office desk and then back to the screen reading, "Hello, Little Bird Inn. Our Sycamore Street Inn operates with four rooms and a fifth if we need. So, we're about the same size. Weeks before Christmas is a fabulous time to swap! Richard and I are standing toasting your wonderful suggestion! Yes, we are in the city, in fact, we are facing the Golden Gate Park. You will agree that this is a marvelous location. We just received your information and the area looks fabulous also! I have attached our Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) banking and customer references as promised; thanks for yours. Tootles! Pat and Richard Holt."

By now Anne's hot breath was all but soaking his ear and that was re-engaging his fantasy causing Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) a familiar reaction. A pre-menopausal reaction. In one slow movement Jack slid away and turned pulling himself directly into her. Their stomachs pressed snugly as his arm was sneaking under her side to caress the small of her back where she liked and

Ring, ring, ring! Ring, ring, ring! Ring, ring, ring!

Jack turned his head up to the ceiling and groaned, "The door? We're closed. No guests. It's how early is this anyway?"

Anne turned her head slightly to the dimly illuminated bureau clock and announced, "5:07."

Ring, ring, ring! Ring, ring, ring! Ring, ring, ring!

He was patiently standing on the front porch pressing and pausing and pressing and pausing his finger. It was too dark to see his face clearly. The front porch light was not on because the Little Bird'N was closed for Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) the season. No one's expected. He couldn't know that. Besides, nothing was ever really closed to him.

* * *

"Pat, honey," horse, tired.

"Yes?" less a whisper, more insistent.

"Come back to bed it's too early," now Richard sighed.

When have I ever disappointed Richard, thought Pat well into a reflective mood. I'd never heard a deep voice like his. The first time I never saw him, I just heard that voice that was so like an instrument. Cheating Twain (Little Bird'N Bed & Breakfast Adventure Series. Book 8) Like an ever-so-deep bass;

"Pat?" now he's insisting.

This interrupted Pat who turned and cooed, "Richie, Richie, Richie. Learn to of patience." The clock was barely illuminated on their bureau.

Pat was watching the very dim reflection in their full length bathroom mirror facing their bed. Pat was as tired as Richard but much more anxious and exceedingly more depressed. Silly, that's surface. Underneath and not that far, Pat was terribly, wonderfully excited. "Come on, Richard. We need to plan."

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