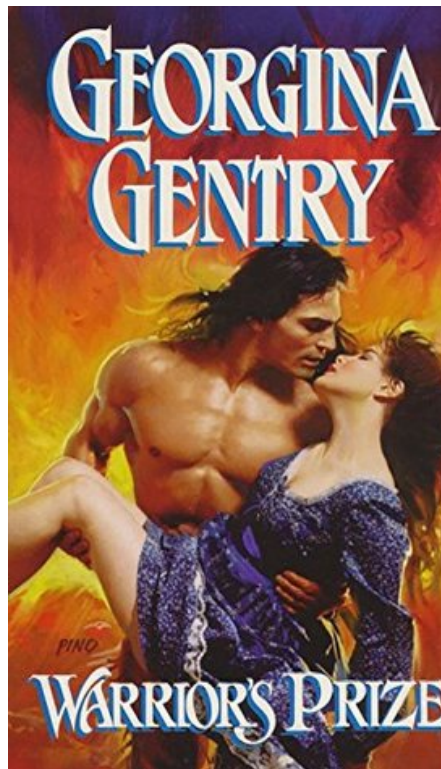




Warrior's Prize

Georgina Gentry

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A LOVE WORTH FIGHTING FOR. . .

Her Arapabo name is *Singing Wind* but no one at the Boston ladies' academy knows of Wannie's Indian ancestry. Pretending to be Spanish royalty, she has concealed her past behind fine clothes and elegant manners. Now she returns to Colorado with the fiancé, a wealthy businessman who wants to invest in land and gold.

Waiting there is Keso. Once a Denver street urchin, this full-blooded Indian has loved only one woman all his life-Singing Wind. In his pocket is the ring he bought for her; in his heart burns a passion no other man can match. And ahead lies a dangerous trek into the Colorado mountains. . .where the Ute tribe faces the last great Indian uprising. . .where nature's fury strips a man to his very soul. . .and where a woman called Singing Wind is taken hostage by the magnificent warrior who dares to battle for her body, her heart, and her precious love.

Warrior's Prize Details

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Veronica Shields says

So. I had a lot of trepidation picking up this title since Native American portrayals in romance can be pretty iffy. Romance writing can be problematic in several regards, but race seems to be an ongoing issue in this genre that has yet to be seriously addressed and on that I'm going to get out of the way early in this review. Fortunately, was pleasantly surprised to find that my fears were mostly unfounded - Gentry did a fair bit of research into the various cultures, and for the most part, she avoids a lot of the problems inherent to the genre. The Native Americans are neither dehumanized nor idealized, and Gentry does a decent job of examining prejudice from all angles whether it was white colonial racism, inter-ethnic tension, cultural clashes, and even internalized racism. While I wouldn't say the portrayal is perfect, it's still leagues above most of what's out there, and the characters at least feel human regardless of what side their own. I think a wise choice on the author's part was to have Keso and Wannie raised amidst white cultural norms because it allowed for less issues with narrative validity.

Having that cleared up, how's the actual story? By my mark - and keeping in mind I'm fairly demanding as a reader - I'd score it fair to mediocre. It's engaging but not tremendously well written. What effort was put into the setting gets lost in the dialogue and characterization. The language is blatantly anachronistic in some places and altogether not overtly organic in flow. Some of the more intimate scenes had cringe-worthy dialogue and much of it felt like script instead of realistic conversation.

Characterization is its second biggest weakness. The main cast feels more like archetypes than real people at times, and the conflict between Cleve and Keso is so dramatic and overwrought at times that it's just bizarre. Cleve is so frustrating as a character because he's a bastard and the author WANTS you to think he's a bastard that he stops being anything but THE ANTAGONIST after awhile. Meanwhile, Keso is so preternaturally noble and self-sacrificing that it's a foregone conclusion who and what Wannie should choose by the end. Wannie herself is the most human feeling of the lot, having her fair share of better and worse qualities, but her frustrating naïveté to the behavior of the men around her takes away some of her more compelling undertones. She feels more like a woman taken along for the ride than one making any active choice. IMO, Cleve would have been far more interesting as a sympathetic character out of his element but still capable, with Wannie having to examine herself what she wanted out of life, coming to terms with her heritage, and coming to a real choice that wasn't so obviously the intended one. As a result, it kills much of the romantic tension by the midway point of the novel, and the reader is just left waiting for Cleve to meet his inevitably karmatic end. It just felt like lazy writing, and the kind that fed into some ugly ideas about gender and masculinity since the author seems keen to remind us that Keso is what a man SHOULD be rather than just a product of his circumstances the way Cleveland is. Maybe that wouldn't be do problematic if it wasn't for scenes like his bizarre rape fantasy that involved him stealing Wannie away from an entourage and taking her to be his "warrior's prize." (A vision that, of course, portends a real event later in the novel, albeit thankfully less rapey in nature.) I get that casual misogyny is a thing and all, but considering Keso is the man we're supposed to want, it's a bit offputting.

Finally, I'm going to state that the foster situation with Keso and Wannie is just bizarre to me. Why complicate their relationship with an actual familial bond? Why not just have them be childhood friends? It adds a very queer dimension to the emerging romance between the two, one that's either toeing the line of incest taboo or wife husbandry, neither of which particularly compelling or necessary to the plot.

Over all, it's fine as a romance novel. It's by no means amazing, but it's racial portrayals are well above the lowball average set by previous works and it has its fair share of amusing tropes. Decent fare for genre fans but not a must-buy.

Tammy Cole says

Needs a second book do they get married and have kids

Gemma says

Well, there were some things to like about this book. This historical detail was very well done. It's obvious that the author did her homework. But while this book was rich in history, it wasn't too "textbooky", nor did the romance suffer because of it. A lot of historical romance authors try so hard to impress readers with their knowledge of their chosen time period that they neglect the most important part of the book: the relationship between the hero and heroine. Thankfully, that didn't happen here.

I also liked the hero. I felt that he was a strong man without being a domineering jerk. (Rare in historical romance these days!) He had high ideals, and I admired him. For the most part, anyway. He lost a some ground in my opinion because of his high, and undeserved, opinion of the heroine.

The heroine was what spoiled this book for me. She was so shallow! All she cared about was clothes, jewels, parties, and appearances. First off, I really didn't like that she was ashamed of her Native American heritage. But to go so far as to claim that she's Spanish royalty? That's really crossing the line. Couldn't she just say that she's Spanish? Why does it have to be royalty? Shallow!

Also, she was often embarrassed for (and by) the hero, just for being Native. This made it really hard for me to like her. It was like she fell in love with the hero in spite of the fact that he was Native. Rather insulting to Native people, I think. And again, a very shallow attitude for the heroine to have. Maybe I'm a little more sensitive on this issue than most, since, while I'm not Native, I am of mixed blood. I certainly wouldn't want to be with someone who was with me "in spite of" the fact that I'm not fully white! I would have much preferred to see a heroine who was willing to take society's scorn for loving a Native man, not one who basically agreed with the bigotry.

One last complaint, albeit a minor one: the hero's constant, continual use of the nickname "brat" for the heroine was a turn-off.

Maura says

I'm kinda torn here. On one hand it was an enjoyable read, plenty of action with a great Hero and a perfectly awful character that I love to hate - Cleveland Brewster Jr.

On the other hand, the heroine starts out a spoiled, whiny brat and one cannot fathom why perfectly wonderful Keso would even want to marry her... Then there's the incest angle. I was disturbed that throughout the first half of the book, Wannie, our heroine kept thinking of Keso as her brother. They were orphaned and raised together - so it's not biologically incestuous, but both characters kept thinking of how they were related. That disturbed me. Like when Keso, who was both father and brother to Wannie thinks, "I raised her to marry me." Blech. Or when Wannie is having all these erotic thoughts about Keso and then wonders why Cleve, her fiance is getting upset about her wanting to be close to Keso - she something along

the lines of "Why would he get upset about that? I mean you're my brother..." Then, next thing you know, they're having sex. Kinda gross actually. And how do all these Utes know that Wannie is a virgin? They came across her traveling with a man... Why would they assume she was untouched? The one Ute mentions how he will steal her virginity and listen to her scream... but how does he know? Just an irritating detail.

Also, the writing was a bit off. Lots of repetitive statements. Over and over again Wannie came to the same realization in the same phrasing, "Suddenly, in the face of survival, not knowing how to use a fingerbowl didn't seem so important." or "Abruptly, it didn't seem so important that he didn't know anything about gentlemen's fashions." And the love scenes were beyond cheesy. I'll provide some quotations (view spoiler) Made me laugh a little, which is never something that should happen in a hot love scene.

Ulrike says

The warrior's prize is a great historical romance novel. The first couple of chapters started slow but eventually built into a great storyline. I also liked the author's historical fact list on the end explaining how she used facts into fiction. I gave it 5 stars and definitely recommend reading this book.
