PDF | High Plains Tango: A Novel

by Robert James Waller
With over 10 million copies sold, bestselling author Robert James Waller returns with the haunting, evocative story of a small town, a beautiful and mysterious woman, and the man forever changed by both.

The wild places are where no one is looking anymore. Out there on the high plains, among the Sioux reservations and the silent buttes, among the small towns dying and the people with them, you can hear the wind. And on the back of the wind is the sound of an old accordion—tangos—mingling with the lonely thump of a single drum in the nighttime and a far-off warrior’s cry. On the back of the wind is the smell of worn saddle leather and sawdust, of sandalwood, and smoke from ancient ceremonial fires. To this, to a town called Salamander, comes Carlisle McMillan, a traveler and master carpenter seeking a place of quiet amid the grinding roar of progress. Near Wolf Butte, a strange and apparently haunted monolith, he finds his quiet, or so he believes, and begins rebuilding a decrepit house as a tribute to the gruff old man who taught him a carpenter’s skills, rebuilding his life at the same time.

He finds two very different, independent women: Gally Deveraux, who works at a diner in Salamander and longs for something more than she is, and Susanna Benteen, beautiful and enigmatic, who was drawn to Salamander for mysterious reasons of her own, a woman the town has labeled a witch. The women and his carpenter’s trade and an old Indian known as Flute Player bring Carlisle a sense of contentment for a while. But his quiet is shattered as bulldozer treads begin to turn and the Yerkes County War commences. Run or stand your ground, that is Carlisle’s dilemma, Gally on one side, Susanna on the other.
Robert James Waller’s fully imagined characters become people we know and care for deeply.

*High Plains Tango* is the hauntingly lyrical story of a small town in the middle of nowhere, a town that forever changed—and was forever changed by—one man.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

**Amazon.com Review**

In an Author’s Note at the end of *High Plains Tango*, Robert James Waller says: "Though this book stands by itself, it is a continuation of two of my other books: *The Bridges of Madison County* and, especially, *A Thousand Country Roads*. *A Thousand Country Roads* details Carlisle McMillan’s search for his father, Robert Kincaid, who played a central role in *The Bridges of Madison County*.

Waller just can’t, try as he might, get back to Madison County. Even though there are those who love to trash Bridges as sentimental twaddle, there are legions more who celebrate it as a romantic tour de force. Whichever side you favor, let it be said that the book delivers exactly what it promises. Not quite true of this book. What promises to be a romance of Waller-like proportions turns into an environmental crusade which turns down the heat, and then switches back to romance and do-goodery.

Carlisle McMillan, Stanford graduate (which comes in handy later on) and wanderer, floats into the town of Salamander, South Dakota, one afternoon and decides to stay. It is far enough away from anything that smacks of “city” to be appealing. He buys property with a derelict house on it and rebuilds it in honor of his mentor, Cody Marx. Cody taught him everything he knows about fine carpentry, and about doing it right, even when it doesn’t show. Cody’s Way is a metaphor for house building and character building, and Carlisle has learned his lessons well.

There are two women in this tale: Gally Devereaux, married to a big jerk who has the good grace to die, and Susanna Benteen, the auburn-haired beauty who dances naked in the firelight. Does anybody but Waller know women like this? Things are perking along just fine until the long arm of Progress reaches all the way to Salamander, deciding to build a highway, and spoils everything.

There is a lyrical last chapter reminiscent of some of the best-remembered of Waller’s prose, and a toast offered by Carlisle’s mother, Wynn: “To ancient evenings and distant music.” Sound familiar? — *Valerie Ryan*

**Product Description**

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