

USA Today Bestselling Author

TAMERA
ALEXANDER

IN
THESE
HILLS

~ A Novel ~

Praise for Tamera Alexander

In These Hills is a powerful, deeply satisfying novel of courage, forgiveness, and grace that reminds us that passion must be tempered by wisdom—and that true wisdom is forged through life, faith, and God's gentle leading. From the harrowing opening to a richly rewarding epilogue, the story brims with unforgettable characters, beautifully rendered dialect, compelling chemistry between the hero and heroine, and memorable themes that resonate deeply.

FRANCINE RIVERS, *New York Times* bestselling author

As soon as I started reading *In These Hills* I couldn't stop. Tamera Alexander has created a riveting tale, beautifully told, that shines light on the sacrifices women made for the right to vote. The story is excellently researched and peopled with endearing characters, including a fun peek into the life of Jack Daniel of whiskey fame. This is a tender romance with rich, spiritual depth. A must-read.

LYNN AUSTIN, award-winning author of *The Lumber Baron's Wife*

In These Hills is a beautiful tale of struggle and redemption, fear and faith, love and forgiveness. Real history is woven throughout, and a reader can't help but feel the love of the writer for the places as well as the characters (whether real or imagined) that people this story. . . . An absolutely wonderful novel that should not be missed!

ROBIN LEE HATCHER, Christy Award-winning author of *To Find Where She Belongs*

[*In These Hills* is] such a unique combination of history, humor, and hope! Never predictable, the tale offered numerous surprises along the way and compelled me to keep turning pages—yet feel bereft when I reached the last one. Highly recommended.

DEBORAH RANEY, author of *Playing for Keeps* and The God Who series

[*In These Hills*] captivated me. I've studied the history of this area and the distillery . . . and Tamera has brought Jack Daniel and Miss Mary Bobo to life in a way that feels true and genuine. . . . She's worked hard to get it right.

MIKE NORTHCUTT, historian and president of the Moore County Tennessee Historical and Genealogical Society

A propulsive tale of marital infidelity and a historical Southern home overrun with secrets. . . . A heartfelt commentary on faith and the redemptive power of forgiveness.

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY on *A Million Little Choices*

In *A Million Little Choices*, Alexander skillfully weaves the past with the present, bringing out long-buried secrets that captivated me and had me turning pages well past my bedtime. This hope-filled story will undoubtedly serve as a beacon of light for each and every reader.

MICHELLE SHOCKLEE, Christy Award-winning author of *The Women of Oak Ridge*

A vivid portrait of Southern life near the end of the Civil War. . . . Alexander has created an exceptional tale of faith, hope, and love based on a real-life romance.

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY starred review of *With this Pledge*

To Wager Her Heart is a poignant glimpse into our country's history and conflict after the Civil War. . . . Tamera Alexander invites readers on a remarkable journey, traveling alongside resilient characters determined to do what's right even when family and peers choose prejudice and contempt.

MELANIE DOBSON, award-winning author of *The Lost Story of Via Belle*

Strong characters, a sense of the times, and the themes of love, friendship, and the importance of loyalty and determination make this triumph.

LIBRARY JOURNAL starred review of *To Win Her Favor*

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In These Hills is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA

“Remember, Miss Dunham, you’re an intelligent, independent young woman. Don’t let them intimidate you!”

“No, of course not.” Josephine followed the head of the local American Woman Suffrage Association to the foot of the makeshift outdoor stage, her insides thrumming with anticipation—and panic. Crowds filled the street, women *and* men alike. Far more than expected for so early in the morning and—judging by the hecklers—not all of them supportive of the cause.

She still couldn’t believe they’d invited her to speak, and on the heels of Miss Susan B. Anthony herself. Even now, the venerated Miss Anthony, eighty-five years old, wearing her customary round-rimmed glasses and hair pulled back in a no-nonsense style, commanded the podium as she delivered her closing remarks.

“I wish I could live another century and see the fruition of all the work for women, including that of this next generation who joins the revolution with such unwavering enthusiasm and commitment. Like their foremothers, they have vowed to carry forth the fight for temperance, for voting rights for women, for equal pay for equal work . . .”

As Miss Anthony’s voice rose, so did the jeers.

A biting wind whistled through the alleyways between downtown brick buildings, sharpening the unseasonably cold spring air. Josephine turned up her coat collar and adjusted the *Votes for Women* sash she and her fellow suffragists wore to such gatherings.

The past week of canvassing Atlanta’s familiar streets and neighborhoods publicizing this event had made a real difference. Josephine took a deep breath. Now if only *she* could.

“Next we shall hear from Miss Josephine Dunham”—Miss Anthony motioned for Josephine to join her—“one of our young revolutionaries herself. So in conclusion, may I remind us all . . . There will *never* be complete equality until women themselves help make laws and elect lawmakers. Justice is better than chivalry—if we cannot have both!”

Triumphant cheers rose amid a wave of boos and hisses from men, and even some women, scattered throughout. “Go back home where you belong, you ol’ cow!” one man yelled. “Leave decision makin’ to men,” added another. “Y’all ain’t got the brains for it.”

Miss Anthony grasped Josephine’s hand, her gaze clear-eyed and determined. “Miss Dunham, their ignorance and chauvinism is no match for what we know to be true. God created *all* men and women to be equal. It is up to us to illuminate their minds, however narrow and dark they may be. Yes?”

“Yes,” Josephine whispered and stepped resolutely to the podium. The number of eyes staring back at her seemed to double. “Friends and fellow compatriots, I should feel exceedingly diffident to stand before you today as I am wholly unaccustomed to public speaking, but—”

“Then best learn your place and get back in the kitchen!” a young man close to the front called out. The men around him snickered, and a satisfied grin split his face.

“*But*,” Josephine continued, “I am driven by a moral sense of right and duty to speak to you today. To *all* of you, regardless of lack of decency—or intellect.” She drove a brief but well-aimed look at the young man whose grin swiftly faded. “The time is long past for the question of woman’s wrongs to be laid before the public, and women alone can understand the length and breadth of that degradation. We *must* speak for ourselves. We cannot depend on men to take up our cause. Because they have been educated to believe themselves far superior. No, we—”

“That’s because we *are* superior, you dim-witted . . .”

The derogatory name he used drew gasps, but his brazenness only emboldened her, especially as she looked into the faces of women who had become the sisters she’d never had. Sarah, especially, who stood near the front, her confident nod fueling Josephine’s determination.

“In this gathering today are women who have endured beatings by drunken fathers and husbands. Women abused by men given to heavy

drink. Property rightfully theirs by God's moral law has been stolen and squandered, while others have been left to starve, along with their children, as wages meant for sustenance are frittered away on alcohol. Some women in our midst have been burned in effigy for daring to state that a woman is equal to a man, and that she should be treated as such in the eyes of the law." She looked at Miss Anthony, thinking of all she and her compatriot, the late Elizabeth Cady Stanton, had endured. "Our motto has been and always will be: 'Men their rights and nothing more; women their rights and nothing *less*.' So together with you, we, as the next generation, firmly take hold of the baton passed to us and vow to—"

Something struck her in the chest. And splattered.

The rank odor registered first, then the rancid taste in her mouth. Wiping her lips, she looked down to see the broken eggshell. The cocky smirk of the younger man who'd earlier yelled the obscenity identified him as the instigator. But it was the little girl a few feet in front of him, no more than seven or eight years old, who drew Josephine's full attention.

The child clutched a young woman's hand and stared wide-eyed at Josephine. In a blink, the tug of childhood wounds and years spent attempting to be *enough* threatened to undermine Josephine's confidence. But she refused to give in—to such a man, and to the cruel patriarchy he represented in the majority of men she'd known.

While she'd never endured a physical beating from her father or any other man, she understood paternal authority only too well. And she still struggled to understand why some women, especially mothers with children, who suffered continual abuse from such men, didn't seek to leave at all costs. Some did and paid dearly—but in the end, they were free. Others seemed paralyzed, unable to take that next step. Why, she would never know.

Of all the men in her life, only one had truly acknowledged her worth—her equality . . . Todd.

Her brother had been her dearest friend and closest confidant. While she'd realized early on that having a twin brother was special, she hadn't known how lonely the world would be without him. Until a handful of months later when the world had shown her what lonely really was.

“As is so evident today,” she continued, drawing courage from Todd’s memory, “we cannot and must not depend upon the protection of man. Yes, some men have chosen to support our cause and for that we are most grateful. But they are few and greatly outnumbered. Instead, woman *must* be taught to protect herself. And the best way to protect women and children is not by trying to change men, but by giving women the right to participate in making the laws. And by granting them the right to *vote*!”

“Here, here!” women yelled, waving their placards high and chanting, “Votes for women! Votes for women! Votes for women!”

Resolution coursed through her. “Here we take our stand!” she shouted over the hubbub. “And here we shall remain unmoved until the time women are granted *every* right that men have so generously granted to themselves since the beginning of—”

The object registered in her peripheral vision, but she couldn’t react quickly enough. The rock struck her in the right temple, and she staggered back, dazed. Miss Anthony rushed to her side, followed by another fellow member.

“Miss Dunham, are you all right?” Miss Anthony’s arm came around her shoulder.

“I-I think so.” Josephine touched her temple and her fingers came away bloody—just as a group of men unleashed a volley of empty whiskey bottles and rotten eggs onto the stage.

Unsteady on her feet, Josephine attempted to shield Miss Anthony as they hurried from the platform. People ran screaming as glass shattered and rocks thudded against the heavy canvas backdrop. The putrid smell of rancid eggs hung in the air. Something hit Josephine in the back just as they reached the street, but her woolen coat helped soften the blow.

Her temple pounding, she ushered Miss Anthony around the corner of a building to protect her when she noticed a small cut on the woman’s jawline. “Oh, Miss Anthony, you’re hurt!”

“I’ve suffered far worse, Miss Dunham.” The older woman made a dismissive gesture. “You’re the one with the bloody temple. You, my dear, struck a nerve up there today. Well done. But you’ve never before spoken publicly?”

Josephine shook her head.

"You speak with such determination and confidence. Where did you acquire such skill?"

It was Josephine's turn to smile. "My brother and I used to debate on all sorts of issues. Our parents actually encouraged it. My father was an attorney, and Todd and I would hold court and present different sides of an argument, whether we personally agreed with it or not. My parents were considerably older when my brother and I were born. They both lived through the Civil War—or the *Rebellion*, as they often referred to it. They were abolitionists. They strongly believed that those exchanges would teach us perspective, and respect, and open-mindedness."

"Indeed." Wonder swept the woman's features. "My father, as you may know, believed women deserving of the same education as men and took my schooling upon himself. Thus the ideal was planted early. Even so, I learned much by eavesdropping on his conversations with clients and colleagues. Such opportunities for a girl to develop leadership of thought are rare."

"Well, in all candor, my parents' intent was for my brother to be the primary beneficiary of those exercises. But with us being the same age and the only two children, I was permitted to . . . eat the scraps that fell from the table, as it were."

Josephine had attempted a more nonchalant tone, but Miss Anthony's thoughtful nod encouraged her to continue.

"My father, though kind and generous in many ways—" Josephine paused, hearing another wave of angry voices and shattering of glass behind her. She felt pulled to rejoin her fellow suffragists, but this was Susan B. Anthony, the woman who had inspired them all. The opportunity to speak with her would likely not come again. "He was a very religious man and held steadfast to patriarchy. And my mother, she never once sought to challenge him. Not in word, or in deed. At least not in front of my brother or me. She taught me it was a wife's duty to love, honor, and *obey*."

Even now, the word rankled, and the shadow chasing across Miss Anthony's countenance seemed to convey agreement. Either that or concern, Josephine couldn't be sure. She so wished her mother had enjoyed greater liberty, both within her marriage and in her world. One thing Josephine knew for certain . . . She would never place herself in that kind

of subservient role to a man. She wouldn't marry until she could find a man who esteemed a woman as his equal in every way. Which meant she would never marry. And she'd accepted that.

"But . . ." Josephine continued, feeling Miss Anthony's patient attention. "Somewhere along the way—"

"The brilliant, hungry mind of a young girl," Miss Anthony interjected, "didn't let stilted patriarchy or blind tradition stop her. She feasted upon the knowledge along with her brother, who, I sincerely hope, encouraged her to learn just as he himself was encouraged."

"Oh, he did." Josephine's eyes watered. "Todd was my twin brother, and my champion in every way."

"Was?" Miss Anthony questioned softly.

Josephine hesitated. "He was killed . . . two years ago. He'd been working on behalf of freedmen to uncover corruption in the Georgia prison system. Freedmen were being jailed on minor or trumped-up charges, then indentured to companies under brutal conditions. One night, following a meeting at the jail, Todd didn't come home . . . They found his body the next morning behind a warehouse, only a few blocks from here. The officers said it was due to an attempted mugging, but . . ." Her gaze trailed toward that part of the city as memories of how he'd died—had been murdered—still haunted her. All the unanswered questions. "A handful of months later, my parents also died. As I shared, they were considerably older when Todd and I were born, and . . . I think Todd's death just—" Her voice broke and she shrugged, letting the silence finish for her.

With a frail hand beneath Josephine's chin, Miss Anthony urged her gaze back. "I am certain your brother *and* your parents—viewing this world from their current vantage point—are very, very proud of you."

Josephine's throat knotted.

"The older I get . . ." Miss Anthony searched her expression. "The greater power I seem to have to help the world. I am like a snowball . . ." She smiled. "The further I am rolled the more I gain. And I believe with all my heart that I am looking into eyes remarkably similar to those of my younger self."

Josephine blinked and a tear escaped. "Thank you, Miss Anthony. I do want to help change things, but sometimes I don't know how to do

that. Or if what I'm doing is making any difference. There's so much opposition."

"Stay the course, my dear young woman. Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing, never can bring about a reform. So forget conventionalisms, forget what the world thinks of your stepping out of your place. Think your best thoughts, speak your best words, work your best works, looking to your own conscience for approval. Trusting, of course, that your conscience is guided by God."

"Miss Anthony!" a man called out, and they both turned.

One of the handful of men Josephine recognized as attending in support of suffrage raced toward them. "Make haste, ma'am. It's not safe. The violence is escalating. We have your carriage waiting."

"Yes, yes." Miss Anthony's steady voice belied the chaos. "Miss Dunham, you are most welcome to accompany us. In fact, I would encourage it."

"Thank you, ma'am, but I want to find my friends. Make sure they're all right."

"Very well. But promise me, no matter what comes, you'll remember"—Miss Anthony gently grasped her shoulder—"we must prevail in this. Failure is impossible."

Josephine nodded. "I'll remember."

As the two hurried away, she caught the boisterous laughter of men and walked back to the corner to see a group of them pelting suffragists with rotten eggs. The seasoned cluster of women stood shoulder to shoulder, placards held high, vigorously chanting the mantra, "Votes for women! Votes for women! Votes for women!"

Josephine's resolve hardened even as her heart ached. This was not the change she'd hoped to inspire. Her parents, God rest them, had taken her and Todd to abolitionist rallies after coming of age, so she knew this kind of ignorant hostility. They'd taught her that words carried the power to change hearts, and that God Almighty could be trusted to work in his often-mysterious ways.

She still wanted to believe that, and she still knew the Scriptures instilled in her from childhood. But mysterious was one thing—seeing no sign of his hand at all was another. Had he simply turned away from

her? Was he weary of her repeated disappointments, as her earthly father had once been? If so, the feeling was mutual.

Across the street, younger compatriots huddled en masse as a half dozen men poked and prodded them with sticks as though they were cattle, laughing and making fun. A few tore off the women's sashes, the ribbons snagging their upswept hair and drawing even louder jeers.

Fuming, Josephine started toward them just as pea whistles shrilled. A horse-drawn police wagon rounded the corner. Finally. It was about time. The authorities would disperse the crowd and protect the—

"No!" she screamed as officers seized the young women instead, shoving them toward the patrol wagon. When the suffragists resisted, the policemen raised their clubs.