THE HARVEY GIRL



DANA STABENOW

HEAD of ZEUS

An Aries Book

First published in the UK in 2026 by Head of Zeus,
part of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

Copyright © Dana Stabenow, 2026

The moral right of Dana Stabenow to be identified
as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with
the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be: i) reproduced
or transmitted in any form, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying,
recording or by means of any information storage or retrieval system without prior
permission in writing from the publishers; or ii) used or reproduced in any way for
the training, development or operation of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies,
including generative AI technologies. The rights holders expressly reserve this
publication from the text and data mining exception as per Article 4(3)
of the Digital Single Market Directive (EU) 2019/790.

This is a work of fiction. All characters, organizations, and events portrayed in this
novel are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

9 7 5 3 1 2 4 6 8

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN (HB): 9781035916665
ISBN (eBook): 9781035916610

Cover design: Jessie Price | Head of Zeus
Map design (on cover): Mapping Solutions

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.



Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
Bloomsbury Publishing Ireland Limited,
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, D02 AY28, Ireland

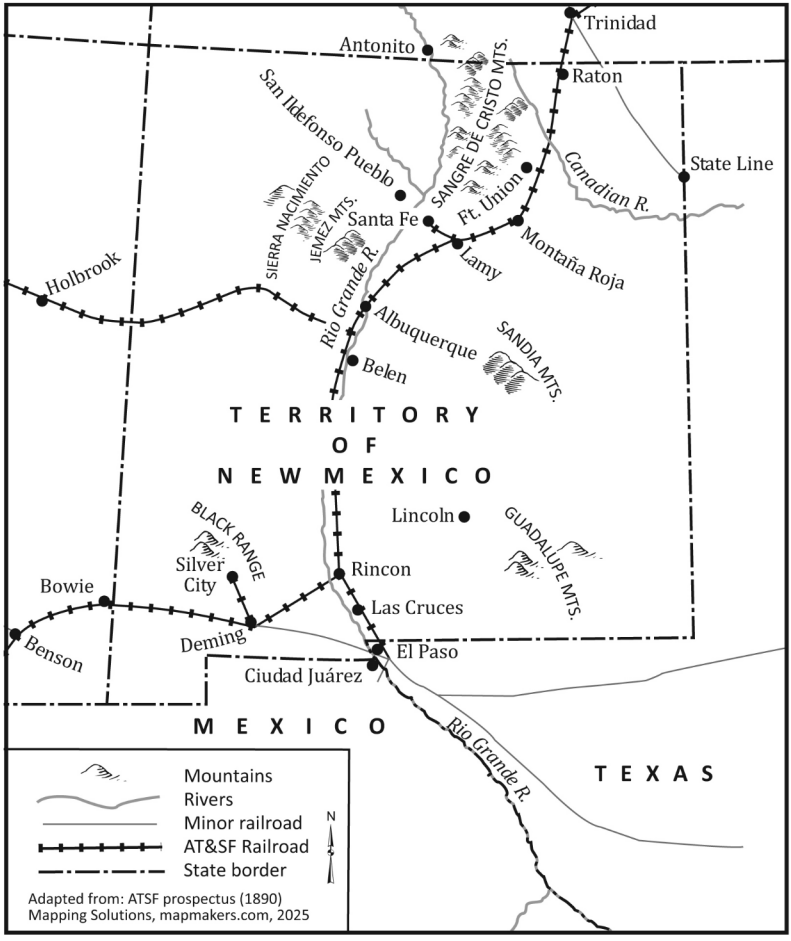
HEAD OF ZEUS LTD
5–8 Hardwick Street
London, EC1R 4RG

To find out more about our authors and books
visit www.headofzeus.com
For product safety-related questions contact productsafety@bloomsbury.com

For honorary niece Dawn Peppinger,
the best research road trip sherpa ever.

A railroad is like a lie – you have to keep building to it to make it stand. A railroad is a ravenous destroyer of towns, unless those towns are put at the end of it and a sea beyond, so that you can't go further and find another terminus. And it is shaky trusting them, even then, for there is no telling what may be done with trestle-work.

Mark Twain


Trinidad
Antonito
Raton
San Ildefonso Pueblo
SANGRE DE CRISTO MTS.
State Line
Canadian R.
SIERRA NACIMIENTO
JEMEZ MTS.
Santa Fe
Ft. Union
Holbrook
Lamy
Montaña Roja
Río Grande R.
Albuquerque
SANDIA MTS.
Belen
TERRITORY
OF
NEW MEXICO
Lincoln
BLACK RANGE
GUADALUPE MTS.
Silver City
Rincon
Bowie
Las Cruces
Deming
El Paso
Benson
Ciudad Juárez
MEXICO
Río Grande R.
TEXAS
Mountains
Rivers
Minor railroad
AT&SF Railroad
State border
N
Adapted from: ATSF prospectus (1890)
Mapping Solutions, mapmakers.com, 2025

Cast of Characters

Abernathy, Louis	Manager of the Montaña Roja Harvey House
Benteen, Algernon, Lt. Col.	CO of 6th Cavalry, Fort Union, New Mexico Territory
Berkman, Benjamin	Pinkerton agent
Calhoun, Andrew Jackson	Vice-president of Bienville Bank and Trust, Bienville, Mississippi
Calhoun, Mary Simpson	Wife of Andrew Jackson Calhoun
Clemens, Samuel L.	Author, pen name Mark Twain
Dabney, Walter	Indian agent for the New Mexico Territory
Doster, Eugene	An agent for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad
Funston, Harry	Conductor or "ramrod" of the Red Mountain Express from Chicago to New Mexico Territory

Funston, Mabel	Wife of Harry Funston, sister of Florence Sellers
Gowan, G.W.	George Washington "Wash" Gowan, businessman, made his fortune in barbed wire (Great Western Fence), expanded into oil (Great Western Oil), railroads (Great Western Freight and Transport), and cattle (Gowan Cattle Company)
Harvey, Fred	Entrepreneur, restaurateur
Higgins, Elizabeth	Harvey Girl, stationed at Montaña Roja
Horn, Tom	Pinkerton agent
Irwin, Luther	Doctor in Montaña Roja
Major, Henrietta	Harvey Girl, stationed at Montaña Roja
Masterson, Bartholomew	Pinkerton agent
Parker, Bob	Foreman, Gowan Cattle Company
Parker, Fred	Sheriff of Montaña Roja
Pinkerton, Robert	Co-head of Pinkerton Agency with brother William

Platt, Dudley	Banker and Montaña Roja magistrate
Rubio y Castelló, Gabriel Romero	Mexican grandee
Sellers, Florence	Harvey Girl, stationed at Montaña Roja
Sterling, Ida	Harvey Girl, stationed at Montaña Roja
Tate, Aloysius	Pinkerton agent
Wright, Clare	Pinkerton agent

Prologue

January 28, 1868

It was less than three years since Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox.

It was less than that since the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. He had had five days to enjoy the end of what would prove to be the bloodiest conflict in American history.

In February, the U.S. House of Representatives would impeach President Andrew Johnson, Lincoln's vice-president and successor.

In May, another group of Mercer Girls would arrive in Seattle, coming from Massachusetts to marry lumbermen and fishermen in the Pacific Northwest. Most of them did.

Also in May, Kit Carson, soldier and dime novel hero, would die of an aortic aneurysm.

In July, the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution would be adopted, guaranteeing freed male

slaves full U.S. citizenship and all citizens the right to due process of law.

In September, Louisa May Alcott would publish the first part of *Little Women*.

Also in September in Opelousas, Louisiana, more than 250 black Americans would be killed by white vigilantes.

In October, the 6.7 Hayward Earthquake would cause significant damage and many deaths in California.

In October, Robert E. Lee would enjoy his third anniversary as president of Washington University. He continued in that office until his death in 1870.

In November, Ulysses S. Grant would be elected president of the United States.

In November, George Armstrong Custer would attack the Cheyenne at Washita River, killing 103 of them including Chief Black Kettle, and taking fifty of the women as sexual slaves for himself and his officers.

In December, President Johnson would grant unconditional pardons to all Civil War rebels.

Arkansas, Louisiana, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Alabama would be admitted back into the union with no penalties for seceding in the first place.

It was not a peaceful year or a peaceful country into which to bring a child.



The mother of this child was thirty-five years old and in perfect health. The child was eight months and three weeks along. The doctor, whose hands and apron were covered with

the evidence of the five other babies he had already delivered that morning, parted the mother's legs and stuck his head between them. Fingers probed in a manner rough but not prurient to assess how rapidly the birth was progressing. He stood up without bothering to pull the sheet back over the mother's knees. "Everything looks normal, I don't see any problems. Another six hours, perhaps." He shrugged. "Maybe twelve."

The woman pulled the sheet back down over her legs and glared at him but was soon too busy to waste time on anger.

An hour later a healthy baby girl made her appearance in a slick of blood and effluvia. The doctor sniffed at it and exchanged a significant look with the nurse, who put her hand on the woman's forehead for a moment, and nodded at him.

The nurse took the baby from her mother's breast to clean her up and wrap her securely in a soft blanket.

The mother died of childbed fever three hours later.



The child lay in her father's arms, red of face, eyes scrunched tight, rosebud mouth pursed.

"Why not take her home?" William said. Both his sons were there at his request and neither of them was comfortable.

He shook his head. "Your mother would hate her and everything she represented, and the girls would follow their mother's lead. Better she be raised an orphan than that."

He bent his head to kiss the baby's cheek. "You shall not want," he whispered in her ear. "You shall never be hungry

or homeless or without support or guidance. I shall be watching over you your whole life long. This I swear to you, and to the spirit of your mother."

He kissed her once more and placed her into the arms of the wet nurse.

"Call her Clare," he said.

1

"The engine crew had their hands up
before we even boarded."

On board the Red Mountain Express
en route to Montaña Roja, New Mexico Territory

February 5, 1890

Wednesday

"Where are we?" A woman's face, eyes heavy, crowned with a tumble of flattened graying curls. The upper bunk's curtains were at present clutched tightly around her face, omitting any possibility of seeing more, not that he was interested, having seen everything he needed to when she boarded in Chicago. Her daughter, on the other hand, had a figure that would turn Lily Langtry pea green with envy, or would when her stomach settled down from the ride over the Rockies into Raton. He'd had to clean the convenience at the end of the car three times this trip and despite his best efforts the smell lingered.

Ramrodding the Red Mountain Express was not all joy.

The carriage rocked and Harry put one hand on the brass bar running the length of the car. With the other he pulled his watch free and snapped open the case. "We've left the Rockies, Mrs. Perry, and are now rolling out onto the high desert."

"How long until we get to Montaña Roja?" She heard how whiny she sounded and made an attempt at a smile, which almost came off.

His was a wide white slash of genial goodwill. "It's pronounced Moan-tan-ya Ro-hah, ma'am. A little over two hours now." Plus another thirty minutes, he thought, but that shouldn't bother you. He tried to look through the curtains without being obvious about it. "Is there anything I can get for you or your daughter?"

"I can't see anything outside my window." This said fretfully, as befitted an entitled matron going west to join her equally entitled husband, a mine and mill owner and one of Montaña Roja's founders and city fathers. Harry was always on his best behavior with such influential people.

"No, ma'am." He smiled again. "But you are on the correct side of the train to watch the light illuminate the Sangre de Cristo Mountains as the sun rises. I promise you, it is a glorious sight that never fails to please all who see it for the first time."

It was a practiced line that usually inspired something more than a yawn. The curtain across the bunk below twitched aside to reveal the glare of a balding, middle-aged face, a Carnegie man from New York if Harry remembered correctly, which he always did. The Carnegie man said nothing but he didn't

have to to make his feelings known. Harry raised his hands in an apologetic shrug, one man to another.

"Mama?" a sleepy voice said from behind the woman. The face vanished with a perfunctory "Thank you, conductor." There was a rustle of blankets and a murmur of voices. He waited hopefully. Alas, the curtain remained firmly closed. Ah well. At least the Carnegie man had vanished, too.

"You're welcome, ma'am." He didn't mean it; all her queries had done was slow him down on the way to the caboose, where a much-needed mug of hot coffee waited for him, but he looked forward as much to the tips at the end of the twenty-four-hour trip as he did the end of the journey itself. Waking people up in the middle of the night did not dispose them toward generosity when deboarding the train.

He made his way through a half dozen more cars unmolested and ended up in the caboose, where a corner had been carved out for a bunk, a table with a bench, and a small pot-bellied stove. The coals were still hot and he threw more on top of them and put the kettle on to boil before sitting down to leaf through the bills of lading on the omnipresent clipboard. A shipment of fresh, canned, and dry goods loaded in Kansas City bound for Fred Harvey Houses from Raton to Montaña Roja to the Fred Harvey warehouse in Lamy and beyond. There was another, much larger shipment bound for Fort Union, although it traveled under seal and the bill of lading didn't specify which goods or how many.

Which told its own tale, he thought, one corner of his mouth curling up with a satisfied smirk.

For the rest there were cars of canned and dried foods and bolts of cloth and leather in varying thicknesses and finishes

and hand tools and plows and harrows and threshers and seed and one entire car full of rolls and rolls of barbed wire to be sold by the pound. All were items essential to the farmers and ranchers and miners and the rest of the citizens filling up the burgeoning communities of Santa Fe and Albuquerque and Montaña Roja and other as yet unnamed but soon to be heard from points west.

With another load just like this one coming down the tracks from Chicago tomorrow and every day after that. The American West's maw was empty and bottomless. Its only limit was the Pacific Ocean. The Santa Fe Railroad was on its way there, and Harry Funston was along for the ride as far as it would take him.

The kettle boiled and he added grounds and poured a cup. It was black as oil and tasted like tar. He made a face over his first mouthful but swallowed anyway. His wife, a farm girl, now there was a woman who knew how to make coffee. He'd never bothered learning how. What was the point? There was always a woman willing to take on the care and feeding of a man with money in his pocket, as witness his easy conquest of sweet little Mabel and their burgeoning family of brats. His mother had always said he couldn't have been born so handsome for no reason and he'd always agreed with her.

He checked his watch. They would be coming up on the spur to Colmore shortly. He drained his cup, reached for his cap, settled it to what he knew after serious time spent before his mirror was its most attractive angle. He left the caboose and went forward again, walking steadily but not swiftly as he wouldn't want to arrive too soon. There was a nicety to timing these things.

By the time he reached the sleeping cars the change in the tempo of the rods and wheels had roused a few passengers. A few heads popped out from behind curtains, some yawning, some annoyed that their sleep had been disturbed. "Nothing to worry about," he said in a low voice with a reassuring smile. "Just slowing down for a crossing." From experience he knew he could have said anything, they were slowing down for another train on a cross track, a herd of buffalo, a wildfire, and still they would have done what they did do, which was twitch their curtains closed and go back to sleep.

When he reached the freight car with the correct number, the bell rang the alert, clanging and urgent. The hoghead. Always an alarmist. Sometimes he thought temperamental was in the job description for all train engineers. He only hoped it wasn't loud enough to be heard in the sleeping cars. Changing out the bunks for seats was complicated enough without everyone milling around and getting in his way.

The train shuddered to a halt. He waited until he heard the knock, three long, one short, two long, one short. He grinned. The Army had been good for something other than getting shot at by Indians after all.

He slid the door to one side, having unlocked it on his previous passage down the length of the train. The moon was full up in the sky and flooded the desert plain with light, bleaching the man outside into a ghost wearing a thick jacket, worn jeans, boots without spurs, and a handkerchief tied over his face. His eyes were invisible in the shadow beneath the brim of his hat. He wore a pistol in a holster on his right, opposite a Bowie knife in a leather sheath on the other side.

Funston nodded. "All well?"

A voice muffled by the kerchief. "The engine crew had their hands up before we even boarded."

Funston grinned and jumped down from the car. "You stopped us at the crossing?"

"Just like before, just like always. Ain't our first time."

Didn't he know it. He walked back to the coupler that held the freight car to the car ahead of it and pulled the pin, both clearly illuminated in the moonlight. "Tell them to pull forward."

A whispered command, followed by quick footsteps on gravel. He stood back when the engine pulled the front half of the train forward, past the switch that controlled the second track coming in from the right. He walked back one car, two, three, and pulled another pin.

Sound carried easily in the night, why he didn't know and didn't care, but the second engine approaching from the east was clearly audible. A smaller engine, without the impatient, full-throated growl of their own, no question to anyone who knew trains. He walked forward again and threw the switch so it could move onto the main track. He walked back to the first coupling, where he guided the approaching bolt into the stationary slot. It connected with a satisfying click, and he dropped in the pin. Easy as pie.

He turned. "They're on the hook. Good to go."

Another whispered order and again footsteps. The smaller engine strained and began to move, the three freighters following obediently.

"Like ducklings after their momma," he said with a chuckle.

"Quiet."

He rolled his eyes but did as he was told. They were paying him enough to.

When the third freighter trundled past the switch, heading back the way it came, he walked to the switch stand and returned it to its previous setting.

He fidgeted a little, waiting. He had to get up to the engine to let the hoghead know it was safe to back up and reconnect the train. He pulled his watch and held it up to the moonlight to read the time. Four o'clock in the morning. The whole operation had taken barely twenty minutes and no passengers had appeared to demand what was going on. He should be home in time for breakfast.

A lot of people complained about the new time zones, even seven years later. Not him. He stifled another chuckle. Timing really was everything in a successful robbery and this one had gone off like, well, like clockwork.

There was a crunch of gravel behind him. It startled him into turning quickly.

Too quickly, as he found the man in the act of pulling up his kerchief, but not soon enough to hide his identify.

There was a long moment of silence, followed by a sigh. "You dumb bastard. What did you have to go and do that for?"

"I—I—"

The sound of metal on leather. He backed up, stumbling a little.

"No, I didn't see you, I didn't see anything!" His protesting voice rose to a shout.

"Goddammit. I'm sorry." The other man reached out, spun him around, cupped his chin to pull it up and out of the way, and cut his throat.

Harry's last words were an awful, extended gurgle. He heard it with his own disbelieving ears. What on earth was that sound and what did it mean? A warmth flooded down the front of his chest and the last thing he heard was the other man cursing again.

He was dropped to the ground and left to listen to footsteps crunching on gravel, moving quickly away from him.

His last sight was of the sky, a dense scatter of bright white lights against a black background, the white globe of the full moon, and the faintest hint of a line of light against the eastern horizon of the high desert of the New Mexico Territory.

The last thing he heard was the second engine steaming away.



It was a good fifteen minutes before the engine crew, arms down now that a masked man wasn't pointing the business end of a Colt Peacemaker at them, came back to see what had happened. They found Harry Funston's body sprawled awkwardly across the left-hand track, his spine showing white through the slash across his neck.

"Well, shit," one of them said. He took a quick step to the left and vomited with neatness and dispatch.

His companion, the hoghead and chief engineer, waited for him to be done. "All right, then. Let's load him up so we can get the hell out of here."

They put the conductor in the next freight car down, in two pieces as his head was too heavy for his half-severed spine to bear. When it fell off with an audible tear of skin and crack of bone the first man vomited again. As a testament to his self-control he then picked up the head and put it next to the body.

The hoghead, gifted with even more sangfroid, picked it up and put it in the crook of one of Funston's arms. "It'll roll around otherwise and I don't want to have to chase it up for the sheriff in Montaña Roja." He spat. "Not that that boozer will be of any use whatever in tracking down who did this."

The image of Funston's head rolling around the inside of the freight car made the first man heave a little but he managed not to throw up a third time.

The two of them stood looking at Harry's remains for a moment longer. The moon's light was merciless in illuminating every detail.

"He looks so surprised," the second man said.

"Wouldn't you be?"

"You think he was in on it?"

"Don't you?" He spat again. "On all of them. Pretty slick operation, no flies on these guys. It wouldn't have run as smoothly as it did without at least one of the ramrods in league with the robbers. Recruiting him was probably the first thing they did."

"Then why'd they kill him?"

"I don't know. Maybe he got greedy." The hoghead slid the door closed and they both heard the latch click. "Not our problem."

The first man took a long, deep breath and let it out, and felt a welcome sensation of the world becoming steadier beneath his feet. His was a good job that paid well and he was mostly interested in keeping it. His biggest ambition was to have the hoghead's job one day and given the rapid rate at which the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe was laying track that goal was within his reach, and sooner rather than later. Sudden, violent death was a daily occurrence in the American West. Harry Funston's wasn't the first dead body he'd ever seen and wouldn't be the last, but it was the first that had belonged to a person he'd known, even if only on the job. It took some getting used to.

The band of light on the eastern horizon was increasing in height, width, and brilliance, bleaching out the stars but not the moon. The Sangre de Cristo Mountains coalesced out of the dark, at present nothing more than granite ghosts against the still-star-spangled western horizon. But when sunrise happened in the West it happened quickly; by the time the two men returned to the engine the mountains had solidified and begun to take on the deep red color that gave them their name. The only star left in the sky was the morning star, set like a jewel among the mountain peaks.

"Kind of the color of Harry's blood," the hoghead said, engaging the engine.

The other man swallowed hard and looked east, at the sun engulfing the high desert in a great golden flood, lighting the way west for everyone from the robber barons building the railroads to the men and women who would build the communities in their wake.

A much more cheerful prospect.