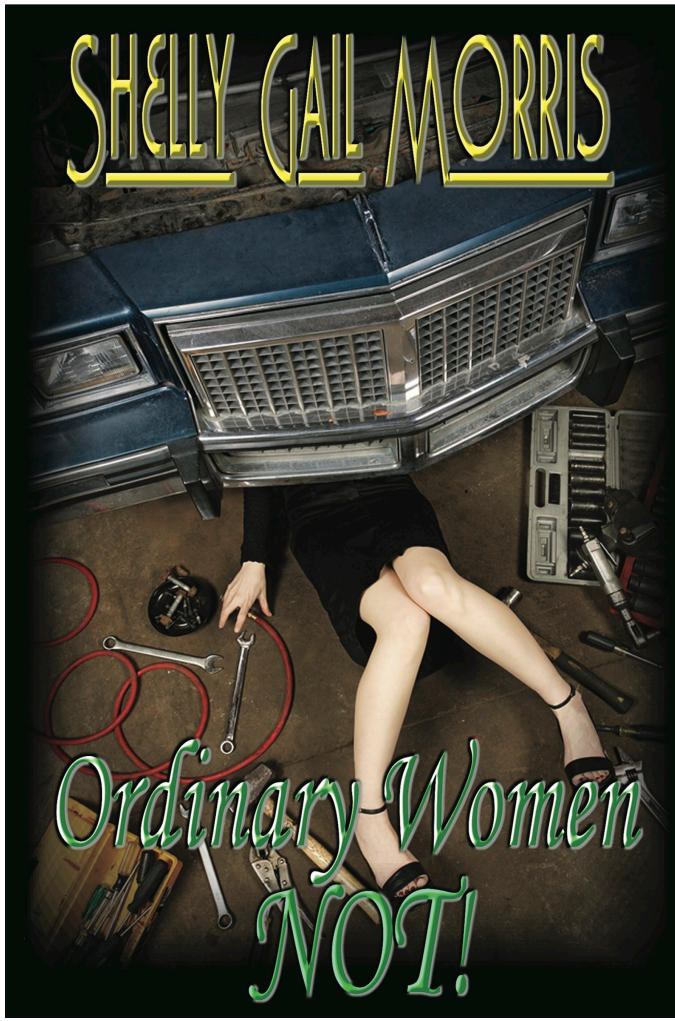


SHELLY GAIL MORRIS

Ordinary Women
NOT!



After thirty minutes of serene card playing, a loud thud against the door caused everyone to jolt in their seats. The sound of tires squealing pierced the air, and the hum of an engine drew farther and farther away.

Sara Simcox stood up. "A seventy-five Mustang..." She paused. "...with glass packs."

Before Magnolia could comprehend the situation, Lena Jo tore the door open. "Oh, my God," she screamed.

All the ladies dashed to the doorway, except Magnolia. She squeezed her cards, unable to rise and behold whatever awful disgrace lurked on her doorstep. Somehow, she knew it would be horrible. She could hear Beatrice's voice.

"He's alive, isn't he?"

"Yes, but he's been shot," Lena Jo announced.

ALSO BY SHELLY GAIL MORRIS

Saving Dandy James (2009)

**ORDINARY WOMEN—
NOT!**

by

SHELLY GAIL MORRIS

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

ORDINARY WOMEN–NOT!
© 2003, 2009 Shelly Gail Morris
ISBN: 978-1-934841-28-0

Cover art and design © Debi DeSantis

All rights reserved. Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilization of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, is forbidden without the written permission of the publisher.

First Edition Zumaya Publications 2003
Zumaya Embraces Edition 2009

“Zumaya Embraces” and the dove colophon are trademarks of Zumaya Publications LLC, Austin TX.

Look for us online at <http://www.zumayapublications.com>

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Morris, Shelly Gail, 1963–
Ordinary women-not! / by Shelly Gail Morris. -- Zumaya Embraces ed.
p. cm.
ISBN 978-1-934841-28-0 (alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-1-934135-19-8
(electronic)
1. Women--Southern States--Fiction. I. Title.
PS3613.O7757O73 2009
813'.6--dc22

2009029900

DEDICATION

I dedicate these stories to all the amazing gals who inspire me every day; and to David, for not squashing my dreams.

Table of Contents

Part 1 Getting a Grip

The Faces in the Locket	1
Magnolia Bellwood	5
The Wishing Star	17
Flower Power	31
The Spirit of Saydie	47

Part 2 Getting It On

Tarzan and Jane	61
Techno Mo-jo	73
Esmerelda	91
Busting Out	103

Part 3 Getting Real

Opportunity Knocks	109
Divine Intervention	127
Peaches, Peanuts and the Painting	143
Two of a Kind	157
Barbie & Ken	167

Part 4 Getting Over It

Salem's Sisters	179
The Gideon Antebellum Plantation	195
The Reunion	211

GETTING A GRIP

THE FACES IN THE LOCKET



Ruby charged out of the California courthouse and watched her newly ex-husband rush into the arms of his girlfriend. The girl embraced him, grinned at Ruby and held up her fingers in the shape of an L while mouthing “loser.” Ruby smirked. The poor, unsuspecting chick had the loser all right. She turned on her heel and strutted to her car.

She loved the feel of her Great-grandmother Jewel’s nineteen sixty-three Cadillac convertible. She’d walked away from the divorce penniless, but she had been able to keep this splendid machine. That awful thing called her marriage was finally over. She laughed triumphantly, thrilled to be free.

Quickly, she shifted into first gear and screeched away from her old, pathetic life. She was headed—well, she didn’t know where she was going, only that she wanted to begin her adventure in Las Vegas. She might as well try her luck at living a little.

She turned on the radio as the wind coursed through her long brown hair. The warm breeze was intoxicating and awakened her intuitive senses. Turning off the six-lane highway onto a smaller four-lane road, she saw the desert ahead and looked forward to driving through the peaceful, desolate area. She would gather her thoughts, ponder her future and maybe come up with some idea of what she was going to do with herself after she’d unwound in Vegas.

SHELLY GAIL MORRIS

Chuckling, she considered the unusual parting gift her great-grandmother had given her, which lay in the passenger seat. Jewel was a bit confused at this stage in her life, but she'd always possessed incredibly clairvoyant ideas, even calling Ruby an old soul. Ruby respected and loved her. The present was a baggie filled with cereal, buttons and old ribbon. As she glanced at it, she saw something sparkle. Placing the baggie in her lap, she opened it, dug around and felt something unusual. Pulling it out, she was astonished to find a dainty gold locket. It appeared extremely old, but she needed to take a closer look. As the road changed to two lanes, she pulled into a gas station and stopped.

As she was examining the locket closely, it suddenly fell open. There were pictures inside. On the left was a photograph of a woman with a contented smile on her face. She wore a high-necked dress with a black cameo at the base of her throat. On the other side was a photograph of a handsome man. His face held a unique expression of adoration. Were these relatives of hers? Maybe it was Jewel in her younger years—but something made her doubt that. It just didn't look like Jewel.

The couple seemed to belong together. She sighed, realizing she would probably never know who these young lovers were.

The heavenly blue sky had begun to take on a garnet glow as she hung the locket from the rearview mirror and pulled back onto the deserted two-lane highway.

As the miles passed beneath the wheels of her automobile, the faces in the locket haunted her. The sky began to fade into an enchanting amethyst, and a spark of loneliness rose inside her. Suddenly, she noticed a man kneeling on the side of the road next to a dusty motorcycle. She was not about to pick him up, but as she neared him, her heart began pounding fiercely in her chest. Blood raced through her veins and the air left her lungs. The desert spun around her. She stomped on the brake, and the car screeched to a stop. She closed her eyes and placed her head on the steering wheel, struggling to regain her composure.

"Miss? Miss, are you alright?" a masculine voice asked.

Ruby slowly opened her eyes. "What happened?"

"I believe you lost control of your car."

She looked up to see an incredibly handsome man leaning over her with a genuinely worried expression. There was something charmingly familiar about him. She grabbed the locket and urgently opened it. Astonishment crept through her as she realized that the man who stood

THE FACES IN THE LOCKET

smiling before her looked exactly like the one in the locket. She turned closer attention to the picture of the woman. It was her!

“I sure am lucky you happened by,” he said. “My motorcycle started making this puttering sound and completely stopped.”

Ruby met his gaze. Memories of him seemed to linger in the depths of her mind.

He pointed to the motorcycle. “I don’t have much money, but if you’d let me throw her in your trunk, and give us a lift to the next gas station, I could give you this.”

He dug into his pocket and produced a stunning black cameo.

“My Great-grandmother Jade gave it to me. She predicted I’d need it soon, and I guess I need it now.”

Ruby felt her face melt into a smile. “Sure. Hop in.”

MAGNOLIA BELLWOOD



Magnolia inhaled deeply, determination etched on her brow. The Cinnamon Creek Women's Bridge Club would have a splendid evening at her home, even if she had to get them drunker than virgins on prom night. She would sink to practically any level to ensure her clever reputation with the most obnoxious, big-mouthed, busybody women in town.

Hurrying through the worn trailer, securely perched on an array of ill-gotten cement blocks, she placed two Mason jars, each containing one of her most stunning white roses, in the middle of each teal card table. She set bowls of chocolate-covered almonds at the corners near her Winston's Flea Market playing cards. Votive candles were placed throughout the tiny space, providing a pleasant aroma.

She nervously crossed the room to the kitchen. A pink, plastic punch bowl sat on the counter top, brimming with a mixture of orange juice, ginger ale and Tuckers All-occasion Champagne.

Her lips tightened, and her insides fluttered. The gals would be here any minute, and they hadn't been to her home in eight months. Their last visit had been a complete disaster. While Tyree was repairing a leak in the roof, the ceiling gave way and he fell through, directly on Lena Jo, sending her cards flying in all directions. If Magnolia lived to be a hundred, she'd never live down the gossip from that horrendous evening. She shook her head, refusing to dwell on the incident. Tonight was going to be a classy, upstanding event.

Her insides felt jittery. She opened the champagne and added more to the punch. She glanced at the bottle and quickly took a large gulp,

savoring the cool, tingly brew. Her nerves finally calmed. She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and returned the champagne to the fridge.

She cheerfully sauntered to a tiny mirror in the hallway, and fluffed her hair. She had gotten a perm and a trim from Lucile at The Beauty Boutique just that afternoon. Her hair sat high on her head, styled to Southern perfection and held together with at least half a can of hair spray. Although she was sixty-seven, she knew that she didn't look a day over fifty. No woman in Cinnamon Creek looked better. Her lilac dress glowed like an egg dyed at Easter, and practically matched her hair.

The door to the bedroom opened and her husband Tyree stepped into the hallway. He wore his usual attire: white boxer shorts and an old white T-shirt. This particular one had a large hole in the left shoulder.

Magnolia crossed her arms. "What do you want now?"

"The reception on the set stinks back here," he whined.

She glared at him, raising one eyebrow and lowering the other. "You had all day to move it into the bedroom and fiddle with the antenna. It's not my fault you waited until six-thirty. You are not going on the roof right now." She raised a skinny finger and pointed it at him. "You are not going on the roof under any circumstances. The ladies will be here any minute."

"Ladies," he repeated sarcastically.

"Tyree, I asked you to be scarce. What does it take?" she asked, exhaling to emphasize her irritation.

"A beer'll do."

"Well, move your butt, get two and don't come back." She located her purse and took out her lipstick. Boy! Had her mama been right about him. Somewhere in heaven she was laughing her ass off.

Magnolia stomped back to the mirror and stared at her reflection. She had to be the dumbest woman in the entire Bible Belt. Tyree sat around and drew unemployment checks while she worked all day at the diner.

If it weren't for Duane, she would have moved on long ago, although he was the spitting image of his dad. He had followed directly in his soulless shoe steps, and was slacker than a hog in slop. In truth, he wasn't a young boy anymore. He was thirty-three, and had gotten into every kind of trouble a man could find. If only he'd attended college, like she'd begged him to do. But Duane wasn't interested. Things just never seemed to work out the way she wanted.

SHELLY GAIL MORRIS

She pressed her lips together. Her life was practically over; and her silly dream of touring castles in England, Paris and France were as good as gone with the wind. It was never going to happen, and she was forced to accept it. She was stuck in Cinnamon Creek supporting two good-for-nothin' beer guzzlers. It wasn't fair. Life had thrown eggs in her face and she was supposed to make quiche.

As she applied Ruby-red to her thin lips, some of her earlier excitement seemed to have vanished. Tyree passed her, clutching his beers as he made his way back to the bedroom. The smell of body odor and alcohol accosted her nose.

"Oh, God," she bellowed. Hurrying to the cleaning cabinet, she grabbed cranberry mist aerosol spray and began spraying it in all directions until the entire room was foggier than Vernon's Pond after a morning rain.

Suddenly, a knock sounded at the door. A wave of terror flooded through her. She threw the aerosol can across the room. It hit the top of the plastic-covered couch and bounced behind it.

"Perfect," she commented, taking a deep breath and smoothing out her lavender dress. She calmly opened the door. When she saw Sara Simcox, she forced herself to smile wider than the Peanut Queen in the Labor Day parade.

Sara's eyes blazed with impatience as she extended a white lace-gloved hand. "Dear, thank you so much for having me."

Magnolia knew her too well. She was pooped from working all day. She shook her hand lightly and moved for her to enter the room. Why the heck did Sara have to be first? And didn't she know those gloves weren't fooling anyone? After changing oil and repairing carburetors for so many years, there was black oil beneath her fingernails that would never, ever wash off. Every person with a uterus knew it. She watched as Sara sniffed the room and crinkled up her nose in disapproval.

"Good Lord, Nolia, did your burn somethin'?" I believe there's smoke in here," she openly observed, as she waved her hands around.

"Oh, no. I just wanted the place to be welcomingly fragrant."

"Hi, gals." Lena Jo leaned in the doorway. Magnolia rushed to greet her and held the door open.

"Come on in, luv. How on earth have you been?" she asked, inspecting Lena Jo's awful lime-colored pantsuit.

"Just divine, darlin'. Your lovely home hasn't changed a bit."

“Why, thank you, thank you,” Magnolia blushed. “And as God is my witness, Tyree will not be on the roof tonight.”

Lena Jo laughed uncomfortably. “I do hope not.”

When a knock sounded she turned and held the door open. Amelia Longmore stomped inside.

“I’m here. You can stop talking about me,” she groaned. She was dressed in black, her custom for the past seventeen years since her husband had passed on.

Magnolia hurried to her. Amelia could take the fun out of a pie-eating contest. She said what she thought and meant what she said. Most of the time, Magnolia just wanted to slap her; instead she patted Amelia’s slumped shoulders.

“Oh, Amelia, don’t talk that way. You know we love you.”

“Hello.” Michele Bennett entered. “I thought I’d never get away from all my screaming grandkids,” she said with a cigarette perched in the side of her mouth.

Magnolia laughed, knowing the sincerity of that comment. The poor woman had five grandchildren living under her roof. Everyone in town pitied Mama Michele.

Lucile Hayes strolled inside, her eyes bloodshot and her steps unstable.

“Good evening,” she purred, her body swaying. “I presume everyone is well?”

“Look what the cat’s drug in,” Amelia said, wrapping her black shawl around her skinny neck.

Magnolia cringed. She sympathized with Lucile; her husband was as useless as Tyree, and she worked her fanny off at the boutique. Not a day went by when her truck was not parked out front.

“Lucile, sugar, your dress is as lovely as a flower garden in spring-time. And you did a terrific job on my hair today.” She patted her new do, placed a hand on her hip and struck a pose. “She is the master of the perm. Don’t y’all think she’s a genius?”

“I can smell it from here,” Amelia remarked.

“Anybody home?” Beatrice Elliot said cheerfully as she peeked in the doorway, a pink floppy hat on her head.

Magnolia rushed to her. “Oh, do come in.” She grabbed the door and held it as Beatrice wobbled through. Poor Beatrice had lost twenty pounds, and her skin was sickly pale.

Lena Jo glared at her.

SHELLY GAIL MORRIS

Sara Wilcox's mouth opened wide as she clasped her gloved hands together.

Magnolia's heart ceased to beat as she silently prayed that grumpy old Amelia would keep her big trap shut.

Beatrice lifted her chin, straightened her shoulders, and bravely adjusted her worn hat. "Chemotherapy is worse than Wild Turkey during a hoedown," she admitted in a fragile voice.

Magnolia's heart ached. She quickly scampered to the kitchen. "Punch, ladies?"

"Yes," they all shrieked in unison.

As they awaited Reverend Billy's wife, Page, they all downed several cups of the tainted brew. The room was lighter. Beatrice's condition had put everything into perspective. And for a brief moment, Magnolia marveled at how much all the ladies really enjoyed each other's company. Even if they were a bit judgmental, there was nothing in the world like true friends.

When a tiny knock sounded on the door, Magnolia rushed to let Page inside.

"Hello, sunshine," she drawled eagerly. "I declare you look prettier than whipped cream on a sundae. "

Page blushed. "Why, Magnolia, you're a gem. I'm so sorry I'm tardy, ladies. I was delivering sweet potatoes to the Newman's."

"Can't those people do anything for themselves?" Amelia commented.

Page crossed her arms and shrugged matter-of-factly. "Not everyone can be as lucky as us, Amelia, dear."

Magnolia could feel her smile widen. Page was no shrinking violet. She always knew how to stand her ground. She was the most honest, caring woman in all Cinnamon Creek, and Magnolia longed to be close to her.

Magnolia ground her teeth together, vowing that no matter what she had to do, she would most definitely get Page as her partner.

The women drew straws, paired up and settled in at the teal card tables for a few hands of bridge. Magnolia could feel herself beaming as she got comfortable and cleared her throat.

“Good luck, everyone,” she cooed, smiling at Page across the table from her. For the first time all evening, she relaxed. It was time for a little fun. She peered around the room. These gals really weren’t so bad.

After thirty minutes of serene card playing, a loud thud against the door caused everyone to jolt in their seats. The sound of tires squealing pierced the air, and the hum of an engine drew farther and farther away.

Sara Simcox stood up. “A seventy-five Mustang...” She paused. “... with glass packs.”

Before Magnolia could comprehend the situation, Lena Jo tore the door open. “Oh, my God,” she screamed.

All the ladies dashed to the doorway, except Magnolia. She squeezed her cards, unable to rise and behold whatever awful disgrace lurked on her doorstep. Somehow, she knew it would be horrible. She could hear Beatrice’s voice.

“He’s alive, isn’t he?”

“Yes, but he’s been shot,” Lena Jo announced.

Page hurried to Magnolia, and placed her hands on her shoulders. “Nolia, poor Duane’s been shot in the right shoulder.”

Magnolia slowly rose, dropping her cards to the floor.

“Tyree, someone get Tyree,” she mumbled as the ladies parted for her to pass. She saw Duane, his head in Lena Jo’s lap. His blond hair was matted to his forehead, his eyes closed. His face was badly bruised and blood seeped from the wound in his shoulder.

Lena Jo attentively caressed his forehead as his blood covered her lime pantsuit. Magnolia could feel her chin quivering as she knelt down beside him.

“Oh, Duane, sugar pie. What have you gotten into now?”

“He’ll live,” Beatrice insisted. “But he needs a doctor pronto.”

The sound of Lucile’s footsteps distracted everyone.

“Damn!” she hissed. “Tyree’s been partying with Jack Daniels and he’s visiting slumber town. There’s no waking him.”

“Ignorant child,” Michele reflected.

A shriek sounded, and Magnolia was unaware that it had come from her. Page yanked her to a standing position and took hold of her shoulders.

“Look at me, Nolia. Duane needs you. We can carry him to your car, but you’ve got to get hold of yourself, and get him to the hospital.”

Magnolia began to sob. “All your lovely dresses will be ruined.”

“Quit your whining,” Amelia stated. “We don’t give a rat’s ass about our cheap garments. You gotta tend to your boy. Okay, ladies, everyone

SHELLY GAIL MORRIS

pick a limb. Magnolia, get your keys and open the back of that ridiculous automobile.”

Magnolia fetched her purse and located the keys. She stepped over Duane and hurried to the gravel drive. With shaking hands, she opened the hatchback of the car and watched in awe as her amazing friends carried her injured son. They carefully placed him in the back, adjusting his arms and legs into comfortable positions.

Her entire body trembled as she closed the door. She faced all the women and was shocked to see sincere compassion in their eyes.

“I don’t know what I would have done if y’all hadn’t been here. God knows, I can’t lift Duane. I’m ever so sorry about our card game. I wanted it to be perfect. But nothing in my life is ever perfect.”

She turned her gaze downward. “You gals are the best thing in my life. Actually, y’all are the only thing I’m truly grateful for.” She wiped her face with the collar of her dress. “I love you, each and every one of you,” she sobbed.

Beatrice moaned loudly as the sadness of the moment consumed her.

Lena Jo began crying.

Page placed her palms together and said a silent prayer.

Amelia stomped her foot. “Good Lord, this ain’t no time to get sentimental. Get moving before someone drops a house on all of us.”

Magnolia blew them a kiss, suddenly revived by their friendship. She dashed into the car, started the engine and rolled the window down.

“Don’t worry about me and Duane. I’ll take care of everything.” She put the car into drive and screeched away.

She immediately wondered which hospital she should go to. They didn’t have any insurance. Would they be turned away? She recalled Duane’s parole officer’s warning: any more offenses would land Duane in jail for a minimum of twenty-four months. She chewed on her lower lip and slowed the vehicle. The hospital had to report gunshot wounds.

“Shoot,” she muttered. Her son was not going to jail. Not while she had a breath in her body.

What had Duane been doing? Why was he so wild and uncontrollable? Probably because he was a loser, just like his father. She had tried to lead him down the right path, but he was thirty-three years old now and shrugged off every single word she said. She adjusted the rearview mirror. He was still unconscious. What should she do? This was a grave

situation. She had to be smart. Her body began to perspire, and she could feel her foot trembling on the gas pedal.

The traffic light in front of her turned red; and she stopped her car, thankful for a moment to deliberate her options, which were none. On her right she noticed the interior light on inside Benny Webster's Veterinary Clinic. Benny had been one of her closest friends in high school. He had taken her out for ice cream on several occasions. They had been quite close. But when she met Tyree her functioning brain cells seemed to have taken a trip to a land far, far away, and her relationship with Benny ended.

The last time she had seen him was about eighteen years ago when Duane had come home with a puppy. They had brought the puppy into the veterinary clinic several times. Benny had always been kind and considerate. She even recalled that he had never charged her for the office visits, just the shots. He was totally devoted to his hospital, which explained why he had never married and was still here well past dinnertime. Although she hadn't seen him in forever, she knew he would remember her. Benny was a peach. She swerved into the parking lot, ran from the car and pounded her fist on the door.



Benny was just placing a blanket over Celia, a dachshund he had spayed that afternoon, when he heard the loud banging. He went through the lobby, turned on the outside lights and peered out the window. His mouth opened in astonishment. It was Magnolia Bellwood. His heart skipped a beat. He adjusted his glasses. Yep, it was her, in all her rambunctious glory. No woman on Earth made his heart flutter like Magnolia. She was one fine hoochy mama—a bit intimidating, but prettier than azaleas in springtime. He had always fancied her.

She pounded on the door again. What was she so upset about at this time of night? He went to the door unarmed the alarm, unchained the lock, turned the deadbolt, straightened his hair and opened the door.



Magnolia tried to speak; but she was so grateful to see Benny's adoring smile that all she could do was point to her car.

"Nolia, honey. What's the matter?" he said, gently taking her hand in his.

"My...my..." She swallowed. "Duane's been hurt, and I have no where else to turn." She squeezed his hand. "Help me, please Benny. I'll do anything."

SHELLY GAIL MORRIS

His eyebrows rose.

She went to her car and opened the back. Benny followed, glanced at Duane and gasped. He charged back into the hospital, turned off the outside lights and came back to the car.

“You hold the door open, and I’ll get him inside.”

She gladly followed his orders. She felt a moment of panic as she saw sixty-seven-year-old Benny lifting her one hundred-and-eighty-pound son. But he seemed fit as a fiddle as he carried him through the doorway. Magnolia went back to the car, shut the hatchback, hurried back inside the hospital, closed the door, bolted the lock and prayed the authorities had not seen Benny carrying Duane.

She glanced upward. “God, please give me a bit of luck, just this once. I’ll be a good girl.”

She turned off the lobby lights and went into the back. She saw Duane stretched out on an aluminum table. His legs hung over the end from the knees down. Benny was cutting his shirt off and applying pressure to the bleeding area. Magnolia felt her knees buckle and her body begin to sway.

Benny looked up. “By golly, get hold of yourself, Magnolia. I can’t tend to both of you. I need your assistance. I need you to hold this while I get some anesthesia.”

Magnolia clenched her hands into fists. “Okay, Benny,” she said meekly.

His tender emerald eyes met hers. “Forgive me, doll. I can see that you’ve had a trying evening. I can mend Duane, but I’m going to need a tiny bit of help from you,” he said in a soft voice. “I know you—you’re stronger than steel-belted radials. We’ll be done shortly, I promise. We can do this together.”

The calm tone of his voice soothed her nerves. She pushed her sleeves up and approached the table. “I’m ready.”



Magnolia could see the ruby sunlight beginning to filter through the shades. She pulled the sterile blanket up to her chin. Thank God, the night was over.

Benny had saved her son. The corners of her mouth tipped slightly. She had even helped. Who knew she could do more than serve meatloaf? They were a good team. She recalled the way Benny had retrieved the

bullet, sanitized the area and slowly stitched him up. Never before had she been so impressed by a man—by anyone, for that matter.

Benny was truly amazing. But most astonishingly was the fact that he treated her like a lady, and spoke sweetly to her, with respect. She felt like a young girl again when he looked at her. Strangely, his balding head, round tummy and short fingers attracted her, almost made her giddy. No doubt, he was a genius.

“Well, good morning, beautiful.”

She gazed up to see Benny, his tired face smiling cheerfully. “Benny, my dear, you are incredible.”

His entire head turned scarlet. “Aw, it was nothing.” He tucked his hands in his pockets. “I’d do anything for you.”

She patted the area on the couch beside her. “Come and sit. You’ve got to be exhausted.”

He sat beside her. “Duane’s going to be just fine.”

“Benny, you saved his life. He’d be dead or in jail. Those were his options.”

“You made a good decision in coming here.”

She grinned. “Yeah, I did.” Wrapping her arms around her waist, she squeezed her tired body. “Tyree was passed out, as usual,” she whispered. “I’ve been thinking about my mixed up life. I’m leaving them, the both of them. I’ll move in with my sister until I can afford my own place. They’ll have to get jobs and support themselves. I’m done. I’m sixty-seven and I refuse to take care of them one more day. I’m too old for this shit. Pardon my French.”

“Sounds like you’ve seen the light.”

“Nothing like a complete emergency and total humiliation to bring an old woman to her senses.” She tapped her heels on the floor. “I’m divorcing Tyree.”

Benny placed his hand on her knee.

Magnolia felt the air leave her lungs. She couldn’t move or speak.

“Remember last night,” he said, “you said you’d do anything if I helped you?”

She flashed him a sideways glance, shocked by his suggestion, but open to consider the possibilities. “Yes, I do believe I said that.” She squared her shoulders. “And I am a woman of my word.”

He took both of her hands in his and looked into her eyes. “Let’s get away. Let’s go someplace exotic, just me and you.”

“For real?” she cooed.

“Anywhere you want. Just name it.”

SHELLY GAIL MORRIS

She looked to the left and then to the right. “You serious?”

“Absolutely. Today. Let’s go. I haven’t taken a vacation in six years. My cousin will be here shortly, and he can watch after Duane. We’ll call Tyree from the airport.”

“I don’t have any clothes.”

“We can stop on the way and get one outfit and buy the rest when we arrive at our destination. Will you be needing bikinis or fur coats?”

Magnolia rubbed her chin and chuckled. “Bikinis? I think not.” She met Benny’s affectionate smile. “I have always yearned to see Europe.”

“Europe it is.” He stood up.

Magnolia rose. “I’ve never been so excited in my entire pathetic life. Hallelujah,” she exclaimed and gave him a quick peck on the cheek.

Benny grinned, bent down on one knee and took hold of her hands. “Magnolia Bellwood, I intend to show you the time of your life. You’re a good woman, and you deserve the finer things in life. And after we get back from our adventure, and you divorce that loser, I hope you will consider doing me the honor of being my wife.”

Magnolia mustered a serious expression and gave his hands a gentle squeeze. “Benny Webster, my good man, that is a distinct possibility.”

TITLE: *Ordinary Women - Not!*

SERIES:

VOLUME:

AUTHOR: Shelly Gail Morris

GENRE: Romance/Short Stories

PUBLISHER: Zumaya Publications LLC

PUBLISHER WEBSITE: <http://www.zumayapublications.com>

IMPRINT: Embraces

RELEASE DATE: December 2009

ISBN: Paperback: 978-1-934841-28-0; ebook: 978-1-936144-56-3

FORMAT: Trade paperback, perfect bound; \$14.99; 368 pp.; 6x9;
ebook, \$6.99

For review; publicity@zumayapublications.com