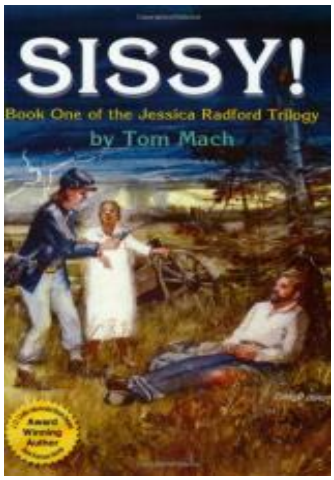
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Sissy!

by Tom Mach



About the Book

Tom Mach's award-winning and critically-acclaimed novel **Sissy!** is a sensitive novel about a young woman torn by the heat of compassion and forgiveness during an incredible era of hatred and violence. In **Sissy!** "Bleeding" Kansas comes alive and Jessica Radford experiences the horrible events that culminate in the infamous Quantrill raid--a 19th century terrorist attack that killed almost 200 innocent men and children in Lawrence, Kansas. This unusually well-researched Civil War novel shows how young Jessica, disguised as a male solider, braves death as she attempts to avenge the murder of her parents by border ruffians. Delusional and about to kill the wrong man on a Tennessee battlefield, she believes she sees an angel, who stops her from making a tragic mistake.

Sissy! opens in 1857 with an Underground Railroad rescue of a slave girl and ends with the 1863 Quantrill raid. The novel contains touching scenes, such as the death of a young ex-slave named Lazarus in the arms of a prostitute and Jessica's inner struggle over a tumultuous love affair. It talks about unknown heroes who worked through the Underground Railroad...brave women who disguised themselves in order to fight alongside men ...and men like William Quantrill who thought nothing of committing terrorism, killing innocent civilians in a defenseless town. After reading about the heartbreak and tenacity of the men and the courage and sacrifice of these remarkable women in that bygone era, the reader of **Sissy!** will experience a deeper appreciation of this emotionally-charged era in our nation's history.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss Jessica Radford's fear of the Colt .44 weapon she owned. Is this compatible with her characterization as a free-thinking, independent woman who was not afraid of doing chores men would normally do?

2. How do you think Jessica felt about Matt Lightfoot when she returned home from college? Did that feeling change later, and if so, how?

3. Did you feel the slave girl Nellie showed signs of unusual insight into human character? Explain.

4. Who was Sissy before she became an angel and what lesson did she want to impart to Jessica?

5. How did the experience of the war change Jessica? How did it change Matt?

6. What did you find unusual about the character of Roger Toby? What were the similarities and differences with his twin brother Sam?

7. What event was the singular turning point in Jessica's life? Why?

8. Tinker, Ishmael, Lazarus, and Devin were all black soldiers. Were they essentially the same or quite different from one another? For which of these four did you feel the greatest sympathy? Which one surprised you the most?

9. Of all the characters mentioned in the book, which one did you admire the most, and why?

10. Name two scenes in the book where you were surprised by the sense of compassion a character emoted. Why were you surprised?

Author Bio

Currently living in Lawrence, Kansas, Tom Mach has held editorial positions for one regional and two national magazines, was a stringer for a chain of newspapers, wrote poetry, and taught copywriting at San Jose State University and writing for publication courses in workshops and community colleges. Tom has written extensively for regional and national magazines, such as *Writers Digest*, where his feature article was published, and in*Stamp World*, where his short story appears. In addition, he has received numerous writing awards for his poetry, short stories, and articles. Tom authored **Sissy!**--his debut novel--because he has always been immensely fascinated by the Civil War. With **Sissy!** he won the J. Donald Coffin Memorial Award for the best Kansas novel.

Tom is currently at work on, **All Parts Together**, the second novel of his trilogy of Jessica Radford, a fascinating woman from the 1860s who was ahead of her time.

Critical Praise

"This novel contains every piece of a good story - romances, victories, defeats, heroes, and villains."

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