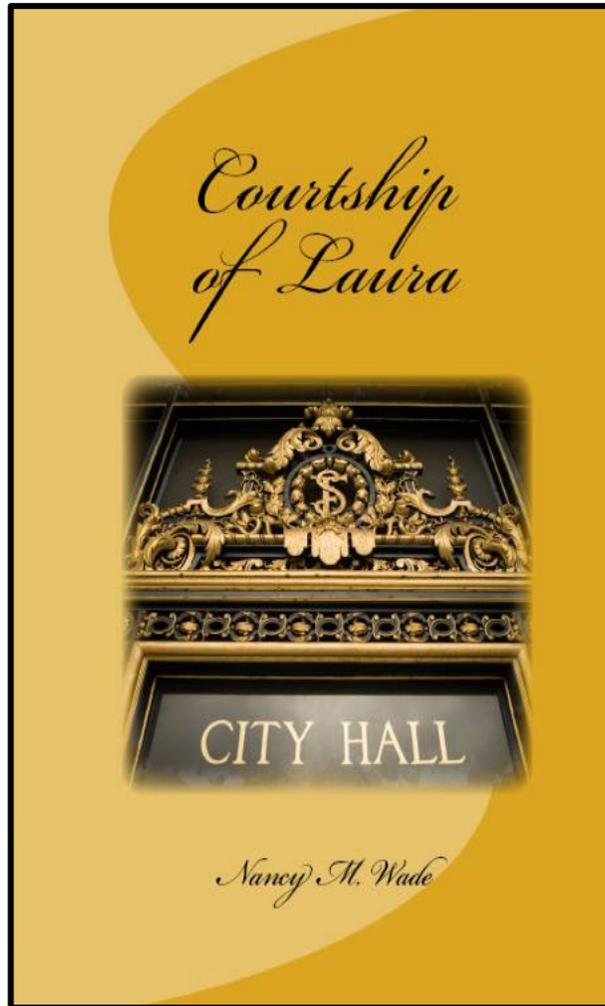


# *Courtship of Laura*



# PREVIEW

## CHAPTER 1

The wind blew her tawny blond hair into disarray as the sleek silver-gray Porsche convertible maneuvered effortlessly through the heavy traffic of the interstate. A brilliant blue colored the sky with only a few fluffy white clouds to dot the horizon on the hot Ohioan summer day. Tall skyscrapers of mirrored glass angled their way upwards, filling her view ahead of downtown Columbus.

Laura Ann Wilson handled the aging sports car with loving hands. It was a luxury she had rewarded herself upon completing college and passing her bar exams; a trophy to represent her hard work and accomplishments. Although the expensive toy was now nearing ten years old, Laura would not dream of driving any other vehicle. She liked the feeling of power as she accelerated to even faster speeds in mere seconds and the purr of the engine when she expertly shifted through the gears. Moving into the right outside lane, Laura looked for the street name on the road signs flashing by her as she glanced down to the sheet of paper containing her directions. Suddenly she was upon the exit number and ramp that she needed and swerved quickly to make the turn. She down shifted with her right hand while braking to slow the speeding car, rapidly approaching the end of the lane where a vintage red Mustang sat at a stop sign.

Laura could see the driver of the Mustang glance in his rear-view mirror as he watched her recklessly hurling toward him. The Porsche came to an abrupt stop barely inches away from the chrome bumper of the Ford. The driver pushed open his door and got out, angrily striding to the side of the sports car. He sneered at the foreign car with its customized license plates reading LAW; what a mockery he thought. His glaring blue eyes took in the blonde behind the wheel and noted her flushed face as he began to berate her driving technique.

"Lady, do the police of this city allow you to drive that thing on public roads? Do you even pay any attention to road signs? The speed limit on this exit ramp is thirty-five miles per hour, not seventy-five. This car is a classic and it better not have one damn scratch on it or you will be paying through the nose." His voice fairly growled as he spoke through clenched teeth, then he turned and walked back to the rear of his car to inspect for any damages. Crouching down, he ran his hand over the smooth fender and bumper area, running up the edge of the trunk lid and around. Satisfied that there was no harm, he visibly tried to relax and took a deep calming breath.

Laura hated to admit to this arrogant stranger that she was rather shaken by the near accident and watched his thorough inspection of the vehicle. Even from this distance and still sitting within the Porsche, Laura could tell that the Mustang had layers of paint to create the deep glossy surface and the metal flaked appearance of the candy apple red color. She guessed that the car dated back to either 1965 or 1966; that qualified it for the historic license plates that she was just noticing. The owner seemed to think that they were tying up traffic long enough as he returned to her and leaning down slightly, rested his arms on her car door.

"Well, looks like no damage was done, so I suppose there is no need to exchange names or insurance policy numbers; but I would advise you to be more careful in the future. The next time you may not be as fortunate."

"Look, I didn't hit your car and you did check and didn't see any damage. Can't you just accept my apology? I really am sorry. I'm not usually so reckless. All I can say as my excuse was that I was checking some directions and didn't realize this was my exit until the last minute. Sorry. Now, if you'll pull forward, we can let traffic get by. I have an appointment to keep too." Laura extended her hand as a means of a peace offering but the man had already turned on his heel and was climbing back into his car. Gunning the engine loudly, he sped off.