

Wildly in the Rockies

Chapter four

Bungling

"Damn that debt!" Koyl swore as he went over the list. Some things fell into place so easily, but the debt seemed an impossible obstacle. Still, he had muddled through a maze of obstacles that disappeared one by one when he tackled them. He wasn't going to give up yet.

The king-sized water bed in the master bedroom adjacent to the office cradled Koyl's half-dressed body with lavish comfort but it radiated no contentment to his anxious body. Koyl twisted tensely as he spoke crisply into the light brown portable phone.

"That's all I can do for now. Thanks for your help, Wayne." Koyl laid back against his pillow and ran his fingers through his hair. He pinned the phone against his shoulder. On a note pad he checked off a final item.

"So you talked to the Land Preservation Society and they're willing to negotiate with you?" Wayne asked.

Koyl readjusted the phone to a more comfortable position. He closed one eye and squinted at his big toe. He absently lined the toe between his eye and a lone ponderosa pine on the hill beyond the broad uncurtained window across the room. The triangulation on the big tree steadied his thoughts.

"It isn't going to be simple," he said as he relaxed his toe and brought his attention back to the conversation, "I've got to get the ranch out of debt," Koyl scratched at his beard and then stroked it with his right hand.

"That damned debt! Except for the debt, everything could be in place by the end of next year," Koyl clutched the phone in his left hand and swung his feet on the floor. He sat straight up in indignation.

Except for the debt! He had little hope of getting that under control.

"What does Lynne have to say about the big house? Will it make a viable hotel?" Wayne fervently hoped it would.

"Yes, she's preparing a list of minor changes. And getting things in order in the big house doesn't look difficult but it will waste my valuable time. Then I have to get some guests here and keep them happy. There's so much to be done and," Koyl felt boxed in, "I have so little time."

"But the bird sanctuary is worth the extra effort," Wayne reminded him, "it isn't as if you don't have something to start with--all those square miles of

land that still, in theory, belong to you."

"I know, but I don't have time to waste on management of a dude hotel. You know that."

Wayne recognized the fine line that his friend was treading. Too much diversion from his bird studies and he would toss it all away with his signature on a bill of sale.

"I understand how you feel, but won't the advance funds from the Land Preservation Society take care of the bank note until you find a manager?"

"No, the deadline is pretty tight. I won't have time to meet their requirements if I'm tied up here at the ranch house."

"What kind of requirements? Maybe I can help." Wayne was patiently pressing for solutions that would help his friend.

"I have to map the plants, trees and lowland habitat, besides making an inventory of the plants and animals."

"I'm sending graduate students to help with that," Wayne reminded him.

"That takes care of the inventory but I just don't know, Wayne, it's the debt. The whole thing will go down the drain if the dude ranch doesn't work out."

Wayne had a final inspiration, "You owe it to your birds to work something out."

That caught Koyl exactly on target. Of course he owed it to his birds. More accurately, he owed it to his own research and his professional reputation. How valuable his control of the study area would be to his own research!

Wayne felt his hesitation and suggested a final solution.

"You have Lynne Redding there already," Wayne replied, "Have you considered her for the management job?"

Wayne sensed Koyl's hesitation so he continued, "Talk to her about it. She may be of more help than you think. You know the university does give students some practical knowledge in problem solving. And besides that, Joan says Lynne has a very sensible head on her shoulders." In Wayne's mind, Joan's endorsement was the coup de gras.

Koyl hesitated but he slowly answered, "I'll have to think about that." He placed the phone in its cradle and looked out the window. The restfulness of the spreading hills reduced some of the hopeless turmoil in his troubled mind.

The knotty pine walls were dark and ominous in comparison to the outdoors. This room could use some cheering up. Koyl's thoughts flew like the flocking birds. He must move quickly if he wanted any paying guests this summer. He lay back on the bed and turned over on his stomach, staring off into the knots of the pine wall paneling.

He needed a hotel manager. Lynne was the immediate answer to a

desperate situation. He raked his fingers through his hair. He brushed at his beard and murmured to himself.

"I'd better hire her before she goes off on another job. She's the only hope I've got." He quickly donned his jeans and boots.

Koyl covered the distance between the ranch house and dining hall in long easy strides.

Jim called as Koyl stepped inside, "I was just wondering how you were coming with those plans of yours."

"Well, I'm not batting five hundred, but I'm making some progress." Koyl answered as he walked into the hall and looked around the empty room.

Jim watched his boss with concerned curiosity, "Want to join me? Or are you headed some place in particular?"

"I was looking for Miss Redding. Is she around?"

"She was talking with Maria and Louise in the kitchen a few minutes ago."

"I'll have a look," and Koyl walked into the kitchen.

Maria wiped her hands on her apron and smiled broadly at Koyl when he pushed through the swinging door.

"Jim has the coffee pot, if it's coffee you're after," Maria nodded toward the dining hall.

"Yes, I know, but I want to talk to Miss Redding."

"She went with Louise to have a look around the ranch. If I know Louise, they'll go for a horseback ride, too," Maria's gaze went to the door but her eyes shielded some foreboding.

"Miss Lynne is real curious about what goes on around a big ranch." Her voice was edged with apprehension and mistrust.

"Is something wrong?" He wondered at the unfriendly tone of her voice.

"Mr. Koyl, Miss Lynne might be a nice lady but I don't like her putting wrong ideas into my Louise's head."

Koyl stared at Maria, studying her statement. He couldn't imagine what she meant. If Lynne Redding had a dark side he wanted to know about it.

"What kind of ideas?" he asked, leaning both hands on the center island counter across from Maria.

"Louise is seventeen. She wants a career and Lynne is encouraging her." Maria stirred the chopped jalapeno peppers into the simmering sauce.

Koyl stifled a chuckle so as not to offend Maria but his beard broke open into a relieved smile, "What's wrong with that?"

"Mr. Koyl, you don't know my Louise. She's sensitive. She stutters. People always make fun of her. I don't want her to be hurt." Maria knocked the sauce off the wooden stirring spoon and laid it on the spoon holder.

Koyl tightened his smile. "I don't want her to be hurt either, Maria." He

walked around the island counter and put his hand on hers.

"Limiting her future might hurt her more," Koyl said, kindly as he looked down into Maria's face, "but I'll speak to Miss Redding about it. Any idea where I can find her?"

Maria shook her head, "No, she asked Louise to show her the horses and they left a few minutes ago." Maria looked up at Koyl and cocked her head. Her eyes narrowed a bit and she asked, "Is Miss Lynne staying on?"

"I'm not sure, Maria. That's what I want to talk to her about. I need a manager and she's my only hope." Koyl picked up a cup and looked around. "Any chance of getting some hot chocolate? I'm not a coffee drinker."

"I should have known that wouldn't change. Go sit down with Jim, I'll have it ready in a minute."

Koyl went back through the swinging door to discover that Jim was gone. He sat down alone, drumming his fingers on the table. The overall plan needed to meet the land preservation requirements was falling neatly into place. Finishing items needed for the guest rooms on Lynne's list were minor.

Impatiently he drank the chocolate Maria brought to him. Rooms must be decorated and rented quickly. Somehow guests had to be found. The big house had to start paying for itself. He just didn't have time to work out the details.

He stepped outside, looking toward the outbuildings for signs of Lynne. She must take the job. He headed back to the ranch house and entered by the side door.

"Did you find her?" Jim asked.

Koyl dropped into the soft leather chair that faced the big oak desk. He hung one leg over the arm and lounged back with his arms widespread.

"No, but I left a note on her door. She'll come here when she gets back."

"This hardware she wants, I can get that in town at the hardware store and the paint, too," Jim checked off listed items.

"Doesn't look like it will take much to make a hotel out of that mansion, does it?" Koyl laid his head back, relaxing fully against the supple aromatic leather. "Turned out to be easier than I thought."

"Yes, but it might be that you picked the right person for the job. She makes the job look downright easy," Jim said.

"Getting it decorated and put together will take some doing. Did Miss Redding say how long it would take?" Koyl inquired, lifting his head and gazing intently at Jim.

"Less than a month, depending on furniture deliveries. Of course, that's if Stefano and ranch hands do most of the work."

Footsteps echoed in the hall.

Koyl suddenly became alert. He quickly put both feet on the floor and

straightened up in the chair. He stood and looked expectantly at the door. His eyes showed some agitation.

The sound of solid heels came clicking down the hall. Jim was curious at Koyl's sudden reaction. He studied Koyl's face as the footsteps stopped.

Lynne stood in the doorway.

"You want to see me, Mr. Chapman?"

"Sit down," he commanded. With one eyebrow arched upward he stood in front of Lynne, his intense blue eyes pinning her amazed gray ones with a hard penetrating stare.

Almost at once he dropped his gaze and stroked his beard. Lynne couldn't identify the expressions that fled across his eyes as he looked beyond her in lost thought that seemed to go on forever.

His beard hid the telltale set of his facial muscles but his gaze returned to her and slowly swept from the top of her head down her face, across her breast, and down to her hands which lay calmly in her lap.

Lynne's calmness was limited to her outward manner. Inside she was filled with indignant turmoil. She held her breath.

"I'll have Jim order the materials," Koyl said slowly, "He knows more about where they're available than I do. We must move on this quickly."

"Will you stay and see that the work gets done?" Koyl's voice was strained but the words were clear and measured.

Lynne looked at him, faintly seeing his uneasiness. The meaning of his words took a little time to sink in past the tingling sensation brought on by the sound of his voice. Her hesitancy hung heavy in the room.

"I know--you just came to analyze the situation," Koyl looked at Lynne, seeing surprise make round opaque pools of her eyes.

"But we have to move quickly...to make it pay..." Koyl said and he pinned her eyes with a hard stare.

Lynne tried to pull her gaze away. The suntanned folds of Koyl's eyelids enhanced the depth of his blue eyes. She lowered her eyes and took a deep breath. She slowly raised her lashes and her gaze flew to Jim searching for answers for which she could not voice the questions.

Jim watched with quiet interest. Then he said, "If you see that the decorating is completed, Koyl will be free to take care of the wildlife sanctuary part."

"I'll see to that. It won't take much work. But I have to get on with the business of getting a job." Lynne said. She was not going to build a career on favors. Her body straightened and she leaned forward with her determination showing in the way she held her chin.

"That's what I mean. It's more than the decorating." Koyl put his palms together and studied his hands. He rubbed his thumbs together as he slowly

measured his next words.

"I need a manager to handle the hotel and guests," he went on. "I have to get a cash return soon or nothing gets off the ground. It's a full season's job."

Lynne was stunned. She collapsed against the leather. Her gaze leaped from Koyl's eyes to his mouth to Jim and dozens of other points around the room. She heard desperation in Koyl's voice. Her eyes darted continuously as if they were computers processing valuable bytes of information.

She already decided this was a perfect ranch. But she had to make decisions with her head and not with her heart. This job wouldn't give her the experience she needed to move on to better employment. Room assignments, meal supervision, and guest activity coordination were the most obvious parts of this job. Those would be a challenge wherever she worked.

He turned to his briefcase and removed a yellow sheet of names and addresses.

"Here are some places your supervisor suggested for contacting potential guests. I'll give your estimates to my accountant and have him calculate a list of fees. I want you to place some ads right away. Set a date for the opening as soon as you can tell when the rooms will be ready,"

Koyl placed the paper in her hand. "You can work in here. Jim will give you all the help you ask for." Koyl stood stiffly before her, waiting for an answer.

Lynne sank back into the chair. For a moment she sat staring off into space.

There was more here than she was given to believe when she was offered the job. But this was the only job she had and it was one she could handle with ease.

She stood up and flexed her elbows towards her back. Beyond the window stretched her dream. To work here would be ideal. But she couldn't do it.

"No." Lynne blurted as she placed her hands on her hips.

Storms filled Koyl's eyes and Lynne saw a hint of pain and disappointment.

"Aren't you going to think about it?" Koyl demanded, angrily. He had bungled that. Now what was he going to do?

They stood face to face in silent belligerence. Lynne turned away, "There's not much to think about," she said flatly and walked out. She couldn't bring herself to tell the truth. To stay here was what she wanted more than anything else in the world. But she had a career to build and this was not the way to start.

Koyl looked grim and his voice had a sharp edge, "Jim, see that the items

on Lynne's list are picked up from the hardware store in town, if possible. And don't offer to take Lynne into town. I'm going out in the field." He picked up his research materials and headed for the corral.

Several days later Jim was faced by the irate neighbor. Margaret folded her arms tightly across her expensive riding habit and set her chin. "Surely he won't stay out all day. I'll sit right here until he comes in." Jim knew she would be difficult to put off but it was his job to protect the boss's schedule.

"Koyl stays out until after dark, Miss Worthington. He goes out before dawn and stays out all day".

"Then I'll go out and find him." She stood up and looked defiantly into Jim's weathered face. "The least you can do is tell me where he is." She put her gloved hands on her slender hips.

"All I can do is give you the general direction," Jim lied. He knew exactly where Koyl was but he also knew that Koyl didn't want to be disturbed. The observation area was off limits to all the ranch hands.

"He rode off in this direction this morning," Jim pointed to the opposite direction on the map to specifically mislead her. A search would keep her busy anyway and out of his hair. He had work to do. He hoped she wouldn't find Koyl. If she did Koyl would probably want to skin him for it.

Margaret's exclusive designer riding boots clicked on the oak floor. Her short steps echoed like the pecking of a woodpecker on a living tree. A vague scent of expensive perfume rippled out behind her.

What urgency moved Margaret? Jim never saw much of her when she came to see Peter. He couldn't figure what motivated her. Now that there would be no marriage, he shouldn't have to consider trying to understand her at all.

Then his face twisted toward the door that Margaret closed behind her. That look of terrible determination hardened her porcelain features. She wanted that mansion badly before Pete died. Was she looking for another way to get it? He rubbed his chin and shrugged. It was none of his business. He pulled out the lower drawer of the big oak desk, looking for the ledger with the cattle register.

Instead of the book he sought, his hand fell on a glass frame. The grizzled foreman pulled an aged photograph from the drawer. When old man Chapman was alive that picture of him and his wife occupied a prominent place on the massive desk. Jim held the photograph and looked up as Lynne entered the office. She smiled at his weathered face, wondering at his momentary discomfort.

"Was there enough hardware?" he asked.

"Oh yes, Mr. Daring, and Stefano is getting it installed. He'll have the

locks and bolts on by the time the drapes are hung."

"You know, you promised to call me, Jim, Miss Redding," Jim ducked his head, shyly.

"Right," Lynne stated defiantly with an impudent smile tugging at the corners of her mouth, "and you agreed to call me Lynne."

They laughed together. Jim came around the desk and shook her hand. "I won't forget again."

He sat on the corner of the desk and looked into her eyes. Steadiness and intelligence were her hallmark. She could make a success of this damned venture if anyone could. He liked her competence and diligence. Koyl needed her and explained that in urgent terms which she forcefully refused to consider. He had to interfere.

"Koyl needs a manager--no--this dude ranch needs a manager," he stated adamantly and motioned her to the chair. They sat down side by side. He cocked his head and studied her for a moment, "Is there a chance you might reconsider?"

"I just don't think I can work here," Lynne said as she rubbed her hands. She sat down on the edge of the chair. Her mind was in turmoil. No matter what she said, working beside Koyl wasn't going to be easy. He was cold and calculating and hopelessly wrapped up in his research. And she could easily fall in love with him.

Jim was encouraged at her hesitancy. At least she wasn't as closed to the idea now as she sounded when first asked.

"I kinda thought you liked the ranch life. Everybody is willing to help all they can because if Koyl has to sell, the whole place will fall apart." Jim stated it as plainly as he knew how.

Lynne's resolve began to waver. She did like being here. A new owner might make many changes but a ranch is a ranch. "I think it is a wonderful place, but..."

"But what? Koyl says you have the credentials to handle the job. You do understand how much the job involves, I think, so is it something we can work out?"

She tucked her folded hands tightly between her knees and leaned forward as she sat on the edge of the big chair. In her mind she sought desperately for the right words.

She simply stated, "I just find it hard to work with Mr. Chapman."

Jim's face took on a skeptical frown. "Koyl isn't around enough to hassle you. He leaves early in the morning and doesn't get back 'til after dark. So what's the problem?"

"I know I seldom see him. I leave my reports on the desk and hope he takes the time to look at them," Lynne said, unable to go on.

"Koyl's serious about his work. I found out the hard way that he doesn't want to be disturbed." Jim's face had the concentration of a storyteller and he went on.

"One day when I was out looking for a newborn calf I almost stumbled into one of his shelters. I sure got cussed out for disturbing his studies so now I make sure I know where he is studying and stay away."

"I'd better be careful where I ride. The last thing I need is a cussing out." Lynne remembered the kiss in the big house. The color rose in her cheeks making the few freckles more prominent than ever.

Jim misunderstood her discomfort. "He shouldn't cuss you out for anything. You seem to know what it takes to turn that white elephant of a big house into a first class dude ranch hotel."

"Thank you." Lynne said running her hand through her hair and tucking it in above her ear as Jim continued.

"It's going to be up to you to make this a going business because Koyl doesn't want to learn how to deal with the hotel part, and he wasn't cut out to be a rancher and I don't know anything except ranching and neither one of us knows anything about hotels."

Lynne knew what management involved. She still wasn't convinced that she could work so close to Koyl. But she did need a job and nothing more promising had turned up. Maybe management of the hotel and coordinating guest activities would keep her so busy she could stay out of his way.

As it turned out staying out of his way was easy. Koyl simply wasn't around. She knew he was totally immersed in his research, gathering the data and making records for the proposal to the Land Preservation Society.

She had extended periods of time on her hands. But she couldn't hover over the workers in the mansion. She spent the late afternoons riding when Louise also had free time.

This morning she rode out alone. She remembered her dilemma when getting separated from Louise and vowed to stay on well established trails.

Leaning down to push at the gate, Lynne, more than ever, appreciated the horse that she was allowed to ride since arriving at the ranch. Prince responded to her as if he were an extension of her own legs. He moved through the open gate at her urging and swung around behind it allowing Lynne to nudge it into place where she easily restored the latch.

Horse and rider turned their concentration to the slightly rutted trail up into the hills. The bright spring day lifted Lynne's spirits and she was happy to reflect on her good fortune of not only having an excellent horse to ride but the freedom and the space to do so.

Trees, pines Lynne thought they were, dotted the rough terrain. Shrubs of a grayish green crowded into narrow spaces between boulders that jutted

out of the grassy expanse. No cattle grazed here. They would be driven to these higher pastures when the grasses flourished and the lower pastures were grazed off.

Prince followed the trail with as much interest in the surrounding area as Lynne. His ears pointed forward, his head turning from side to side as if to take in the passing scenery. Lynne's interest in the scene was only cursory. She decided to take this trail because it was well marked by four-wheel-drive vehicles and she did not have to concern herself about getting lost.

Meandering around the boulders and deeper ravines, the trail led eventually to at least one line cabin and beyond to other fencelines making access to the far reaches of the ranch quicker by four-wheel drive vehicles than by horseback. She found that out when she studied the detailed map on the office wall.

As hard as she tried, she could not keep her thoughts on the trail nor any particular destination. Her thoughts kept going back to the progress at the mansion and her part in developing a guest ranch.

Koyl wanted to hire her as full time manager but she refused. She agreed to prepare the rooms to allow rentals to begin. The hardware for the locks and drapes were being installed and when the furnishings arrived, guests could be settled in. Managing those guests would be a formidable task and the large ranch staff would share the burden. She wasn't afraid of the work, perhaps it was a job that really suited her.

Prince halted at her brief command, turning to give her a full look around her. The hills had a rugged appeal that was overpowering. Rugged, solid rocks protruded among the muted greens of brush and smoky browns of understory. The trees stood like magnificent sentinels against the steepest slopes. The contrast of textures caught her eye and kept her interest.

If she had to design activities for tourists, she would organize trail rides into just such a place as this. Out of inspiration, she put her heels to Prince and urged him on. She had a sudden curiosity about just what a line cabin was all about.

What she found was a small log cabin, probably constructed fifty years ago, isolated in a clearing where she pulled Prince to a stop. She hesitated to dismount only because she needed time to take in the details of the space, the building and the surrounding features.

This cabin and the surrounding area resembled pictures she had seen and she rode around it with a vicarious pleasure of being on an old western movie set. She rose in her stirrups to dismount.

At that moment a whiff of cigarette smoke stung her nostrils.

She was not alone.

Settling carefully back against her saddle, she felt a pang of alarm. She

saw no one. Nor could she identify the direction from which the smoke came. Prince sensed her indecision and fought at the reins to move forward or sideways, any direction just to keep moving.

She crouched over his neck and never saw the flying rock that struck the back of her neck. Her knees reflexively grabbed at Prince and inspired a violent burst of forward motion. She slumped over the saddlehorn as Prince sped back toward the ranch house.

A bullet-headed man stomped his cigarette into the gritty soil and glared after her.

"Why in hell did you do that, Herb? She'll have some damn cowboys swarming up here all over the place," his companion growled.

"She saw my plans at the library," Herb snarled in uncontrolled fury, "I've got to stop her, Ledd, she'll ruin it all." He moved out to go after her.

"You can't stop nothin', Herb," Ledd held fast to Herb's arm and pulled him back. "How many times we gotta tell you. Just do your job and we'll take care of the rest."

He yanked harder until Herb gave in. "We gotta get out of here, c'mon, before somebody comes." He looked nervously toward the trees where the girl disappeared on her horse. The two men stepped between the strands of wire and moved into the shadows of the trees on the Willison side of the fence. Hoofbeats became more faint as Lynne's horse moved steadily toward the ranch house.

Hoofbeats became a thudding intrusion on Koyl's thoughts as he secured his saddle bag and mounted, turning his horse toward the main trail that wound into the upper hills. He ignored for the moment a rider that was obviously heading toward the ranch on the main trail.

The ground rose slightly toward the more remote parts of the ranch. Koyl would illustrate their utility in the overall preservation project and he hadn't yet explored them in detail. Because of his experience with the steppe shrub areas, he had a strong notion of what he could expect to find there, as far as birds were concerned.

Grazing cattle were no threat to birds that nested in the trees. Quite the opposite, some species thrived among the cattle but ground nesters had more difficulty in finding safe nesting sites in the wide open areas where large numbers of beef cattle roamed. But even then, persistent species accommodated hazardous nesting conditions if food was abundant. The deep ravines and wide grassy areas with numerous shrubs harbored definite species that he didn't find in grassy open prairies and Koyl was curious to see just what lived on his ranch.

He urged his horse up the trail with no difficulty. An uphill slope, no matter how slight, required extra effort and the horse grunted with additional

exertion in a short steep incline that turned abruptly. Koyl intended to get this higher area defined before dark. A blood bay horse confronted him in the next dip as he topped the grade.

The nose of the horse jerked downward. Koyl could not see a rider. Then as he cautiously urged his mount forward, cautiously, he saw Lynne slumped forward, her hat hanging by its string and her hair disheveled. He spoke soothingly to the horse and moved slowly, belying the fearful tremor that threatened to overwhelm him.

The bay stood stark still, almost as if frozen to the spot. Koyl grasped the reins and dismounted, dropping the reins of his own mount in a ground tether.

Lynne stirred when Koyl ran his hand down her arm in a search to understand her injuries. She straightened up. Her hand went to the back of her neck. Her eyes were glazed.

Koyl held her arm firmly as if to balance her. "What's wrong? Have you been hurt?" he asked scrutinizing her body once more.

"I don't know," she faltered. Her head was not clear and she dazedly tried to understand her location but her eyes indicated that she was trying to pinpoint another place that would explain how and why she got where she was.

"I was near the line cabin. I smelled smoke--cigarette smoke." She fumbled with her hat, then without thinking, she wound her hair ontop of her head and placed the hat firmly upon it.

"There's blood on your hand," Koyl blurted, but as she examined it, they both realized that it had been wiped off the back of her neck. He found the gash seeping blood.

Koyl acted quickly. He knotted the reins of his horse, placed them over its neck, turned the horse toward the ranch, and slapped its withers to send it trotting off. In one fluid motion, he swung up behind Lynne, and with his arms firmly around her, grasped the reins and urged the bay down the trail to the ranch house.

That was yesterday. Maria cleaned the blood away and dressed the wound which didn't look serious. Lynne guessed that Koyl had gone back to his research because she hadn't seen him since. She puzzled over how she managed to be so far down the trail when Koyl found her. She couldn't have been unconscious because she stayed in the saddle and controlled the horse. She had been thoroughly stunned, however, and in a way, she still was. How she became injured was a mystery. She had seen no one, although the smoke she smelled was evidence that some one was nearby.

None of the details she could recall about the moments she spent regarding the cabin held any apparent peril, yet her apprehension prevented her from dismounting at the time. There shouldn't have been any danger.

Alarm suddenly registered in her eyes as she recalled the cold antagonism on that neighbor's face by the line fence the day she was lost. Had Cal Willison been at the line cabin and decided to get rid of her before she spotted him again?