



The Legacy of Trickey's West
Book I: Winning

by
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



"The emancipation of women may have begun not with the vote, nor in the cities where women marched and carried signs and protested, but rather when they mounted a good cowhorse and realized how different and fine the view. From the back of a horse the world looked wider."
(Joyce Gibson Roach *The Cowgirls*)



"Women had helped to conquer the West, so why shouldn't they now be able to conquer the Westerns?" Mary Louise Cecilia ("Texas") Guinian

"I enter graduate school, and they teach me all these great names, all these famous names, and they teach me about a world in which women don't exist," she said with obvious irritation. "And when I ask about it, one of their favorite sayings was that unfortunately, most women were illiterate ... I came out of an experience where I had organized at the grass-roots level, and I knew what these women could do and did do," she said. "I was able to bring that knowledge in the push for women's history." When asked whether women's studies were still needed, Dr. Lerner laughed. "For 4,000 years, men have defined culture by looking at the activities of other men," she said, putting on her professorial voice. "The minute we started questioning it, the first question was, 'Well, when are you going to stop separating yourself out and mainstream?' 'Give us another 4,000 years,' she said, "and we'll talk about mainstreaming." Dr. Gerda Lerner (who began the field of "Women's History")

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An Author's Note & Reminder

Dear Readers and Critics:

This is a novel and a work of fiction, which means that the events and/or the people are not historically or factually accurate. While this story is inspired by actual events, certain characters, characterizations, incidents, locations, conversations and dialogue are fictionalized and invented for purposes of dramatization. With respect to such fictionalization or invention, any similarity to the name or to the actual character or the history of any person, living or dead, or any product or entity, or actual incident or event, is entirely for dramatic purposes and is not intended to reflect on any actual character, location, history, product or entity. This book happens to be based on actual events, which occurred to people who lived, loved, won and lost one hundred years ago. This is not a biography, a history or a non-fiction account. I claim the prerogative of a fiction writer to alter and amend to fit the narrative. If you want other versions, there are several excellent books on the magnificent legacy of the cowgirls, or perhaps someone will produce a documentary which explores the legacy of the pioneer cowgirls. I hope you'll enjoy the ride ...



"What we failed to say yesterday, no one will know tomorrow." Mollie Gregory, Women Who Run the Show

"History gets so easily written in masculine form." Julia Roberts, 2022 Interview

"Even when we were equal partners, we are the ones left doing the dishes." Lili Fini Zanuck, Academy Award® winning producer, Driving Miss Daisy

"If you want a job that sucks, try pioneer. There's nothing to recommend it. Nobody believes in you, you're the first of your kind. You have an idea whose time hasn't come yet. It's a terrible job." Julia Phillips, Academy Award® winning producer, The Sting

*"Women will finally be equal when we have the same right to be mediocre as men."
Beth Blumenreich Kennedy*

"When we write the history of our feminists, we must begin not with them, but with their mothers." Gwendolyn Willis



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PROLOGUE: NOT WITH A BANG OR A WHIMPER

Palmer - The Dalles, Oregon

It was October 4th and a gang of boys were playing Cowboys and Indians. Most of them dressed in cowboy style, their checked-and-plaid flannel shirts provided a warm boundary against the morning's chill. The boys didn't notice the temperature; they concentrated on the game. The cowboys raced in all directions, waving their hats; flapping gun belts that contained real, but very empty handguns, barely anchored on well-worn leather chaps above well-worn denim jeans. Their deteriorating cowboy boots clumped noisily through the dust.

Not many were dressed like Indians, barely disguised by the dried mud-and-squashed-berry war paint that branded their faces. They seemed to be completely immune to the cold, their naked chests covered by the thousand white chill-pimples that surrounded their battle stripes. Crow and prairie bird feathers flopped carelessly in the breeze and held back their hair.

"Pachew! Pachew!"

Two Indians hunched behind a bush, waiting patiently to launch a counterattack.

"POW! POW! POW!" The Indians lunged; the pace of the game accelerated when the cowboys counter attacked. They fake-shot anything that moved with puckered breath-shot bullets, *"Pa-chew!"*

"Got you!" One of the Indians wrestled a cowboy and sent him sprawling, sending dusty tendrils into the breeze. The Indian, in triumph, kept his knees on the cowboy's back and pulled his blond hair as if it were his horse's reins. Leaning backwards, he yapped in full coyote cry, *"Yippee!"*

"Wahoo?" Out of nowhere, a doll-like little girl with big gray eyes and shiny black hair appeared, riding her pony in a clumsy rescue. She rode bareback at breakneck speed, slid off her horse, ran to and landed on top of the Indian's back, yanked his hair back and pushed him off the cowboy. The Indian shrugged off her attack with one arm violently; she tumbled flat on her backside. Her arms and legs flapped up and down like Raggedy Anne, as she regained her balance, and used her momentum to propel herself upright. She threw herself on the Indian's back, elbows down – one on his back, the other pinned his shoulders, and straddled him, bouncing

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on his back, before she grabbed for the rope cinched at her waist. She clumsily tied the Indian's hands and feet in the approved cowboy style and held him captive under her triumphant boot heel. The game stopped. The Indian threw backwards.

"We told ya' a hundred times, you can't play with us!"

"Let him go!" "Get outta' here!"

She hunkered in the dust, rubbing the back of her head, prickly with sweat. She looked them square in their eyes, accentuating her point by grinding her boot heel into the dust. "I won fair and square." Her eyes flared. This cowgirl expected to be treated as an equal. More or less.

"Where'd you get that horse?" "That don't belong to you!"

"I found this stray pilgrim. I roped him. Don't that count?"

"It *doesn't* count. Get out o' here!" they shouted.

"Even if you're our sister." The smallest cowboy, Joshua, wouldn't acknowledge his secret conflict between the male reality and his emotions. He liked his sister, but he'd never break ranks and admit that she was right; it wasn't fair. "You have to leave."

The tallest cowboy, Michael, delivered their judgment, "Girls can't play with boys!" He was the oldest, strongest, keeper of the rules, and arbiter of truth. "Get home where you belong."

Lorena yowled. "This isn't fair!" The meanness wasn't lost on her, despite her euphoria and automatic responses, she barely paid attention to her brothers' words. "You don't mean it." She was young, not stupid, and her responses were well rehearsed and habitually practiced. "Okay, I'm a girl. So what?" She didn't know why they acted that way and she didn't care why. Deliberately, she stepped forward, placing one hand on her hips; the other *wagged her* index finger in the air. "You listen and listen good. I asked you a question." It was hard for the boys to restrain their smiles; she was only four years old and doing a perfect imitation of their father.



'You listen and listen good --' Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Ed Trickey *wagged his* gnarled finger at Lorena's oldest brothers, John and Samuel. "-- Where is your sister? His face was like old leather, creased and weathered. Obviously troubled, he pushed the boys through the door, "Go find her!"

The boys escaped the dilapidated ranch house. At seventeen and fifteen, the two oldest Trickey brothers looked equally old, worn and wan before their time, their youth erased by life's constant challenges. Their manly and athletic physiques had already matured beyond their years; they were accomplished ranch hands, real

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cowboys, who spent most of their time outdoors on the range. Until now, the day's unfortunate circumstances had kept them penned inside. They found it unbearable to be around their father; they could remember only one other time they'd seen tears in his eyes, the day they'd buried their *own* mother. John and Sam were thrilled to break out; his public and barely disguised display of emotion embarrassed them. Such indulgence wasn't the cowboy, or the Trickey family, way.

While the teens searched the horizon, the steady funereal procession of neighbors entered the ranch house to express their condolences. Loretta Trickey, Ed's second wife and baby had died in childbirth. Although ninety-five percent of all births took place at home, Loretta's ill-fated, late-in-life pregnancy had been exacerbated by exhaustion. In Trickey's West, death by exhaustion wasn't unusual for women, and many others routinely died from infected cuts or ingrown toenails. An equal number died from syphilis and other sexually transmitted infections. There were no antibiotics to cure the leading causes of death: childbirth, pneumonia, flu, tuberculosis, diarrhea, heart disease and stroke.

The boys slowly searched the area surrounding the ranch house, then, in silent agreement, moved further away. Taller and younger, Sam waited for John's despairing nod. "Go ahead." Sam brought his fingers to his mouth, pursed his lips and whistled. It echoed sharp and clear in all four directions. They waited for a response but weren't surprised there was none.

John bellowed, "Lorena!"

"Lorena!" Sam echoed. "Pa wants you home – and that means *now!*"



Back at the Cowboy and Indian war-games, Lorena heard the faint summons. Torn between desire and demand, she knew she had to acknowledge her inevitable defeat. She warned her Cowboy-and-Indian adversaries, "You listen and listen real good, or there'll be the devil to pay! Whatever boys do, I will do, better!" She smoothed her clothes, shooing the dust; she untied the latigo wound around each leg and freed her skirt. When her femininity and self-esteem were restored, Lorena rose to her full, but tiny, height. "Just you wait! Ma said boys will *want to play with me* one day."

"Lorena! Home! Now!" John's now threatening tone was clear, but still faraway. Lorena knew they would be closing in. She lingered. Without turning, she locked her eyes on her target.

The smallest cowboy, her youngest brother, Joshua, braced his arms, then arched his body into the air and propelled himself into a standing position in one graceful movement. His comrades applauded. Lorena stood her ground. Neither smiled, neither spoke; Lorena didn't move, even when Josh went toe-to-toe with her and yelled into her chin, "Pa's gonna whup you. Get home."

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"And return that pony or you'll get in real trouble!" Michael echoed.

"I'll show you --" Like most females who'd reached the age of almost five, Lorena was aware there were differences between boys and girls. She couldn't understand or accept the ramifications. She had already acquired her reputation as a tomboy, who craved danger and would never walk away from a challenge. Dare her and you'd have to drag her away kicking and screaming.

The boys waited.

"—one day." She backed off only because her older brothers' threatened capture; she knew they had reached the end of their rope. She hitched up her mourning dress, ran and supported by Joseph's interlocked hands, she clumsily hurled herself up onto the pony with a final, "You'll see!"

The cowboys watched her ride off until she disappeared.

"When is she going to -- ?" Joshua asked, although he didn't understand it all himself.

"She's been getting away with murder since Ma2 was feelin' poorly," his stepbrother explained. Secretly proud of his female sibling, he was certain it would lead to heartache. "She may be the apple of Pa's eye, but things have to change," he chided, "or she'll have the devil to pay."



Lorena galloped away, scarcely noticing the neighboring homesteads, with the bare yards, and the collapsing fences, and the run-down facades weathered and peeling paint. Everything she passed looked worn out from the constant battle for survival, the norm on the northwestern frontier. When she reached the riverside, she slowed. She listened to her brothers' calls, increasing in frequency and frustration, but decreasing in volume. Intuitively, she weighed her desire against certain difficulty if she ignored them. Well practiced, she circled 360° around and checked in all directions. Assured that no one was near, Lorena carelessly slid down the muddy hill. She landed smack in the river's sludge, ignoring the brown muck that covered her boots, even as she sunk deeper into it.

Knee-deep, she rubbed her forehead with the back of her muddy hand, then dropped to her knees to pat the fresh mound, speckled by a few wisps of river grass, and partially dried wildflowers. She squinted at the inscription on the handwritten memorial, under the six-pointed star. It read: "Loretta Trickey, Beloved Wife and Mother, and Boy Baby Trickey, Rest Here For Eternity."

"I promise Ma—" Her words were indistinguishable from the sloshing stream that slammed into the river rocks.

"Lorena!" The edge on John's voice was loud, intense and now nearby.

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She ground her boots deep into the hole she was digging for herself. She knew she had to go, but she didn't have to like it and she wasn't going to give up easily. She climbed back up the hill and stopped halfway up for one last look. Her isolation was overwhelming. "- I'll do it or die!"



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