

# LARAMIE LASS

*By Katrina Susan Henderson*



*ILLUSTRATED BY BRIAN DUKEHART*

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A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL

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## LARAMIE LASS

By Susan Henderson

### 1. Gunplay in Omaha

The dance hall was filled with music and the dancing of the chorus girls as I sat there in that saloon in Omaha on that fine October evening of 1880. I was in a good mood having just completed a job for the richest man in the city, J. E. Roberts, the rancher. I knew the money I had made that month was going to be spent here for the most part. The reason for this was named Trixie.

Well, Trixie wasn't her real name, of course. No legitimate dance hall girl ever used her real name. Her real name was Elizabeth Anne Carter and she was a right pretty sight to a loner like me. Trixie was one of those girls who just couldn't seem to keep two things in mind at once, but I had fallen in love with her during the course of my long stay since the beginning of the summer.

I am, by choice, a mostly solitary man. I hadn't had much time for anyone else since I left my mother and older sister in Boston when I was sixteen. Pausing over my beer, I thought about my life up till now.

My father had never been home much, from what my mother told me, with him being a private in the Union Army. He died during the civil war fighting for the Union Army in the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863 on July 2 when I was only five. I, therefore, grew up without a male role model to help shape by early development. My older sister, by eight years, and my mother raised me the rest of the way. I had gone to school in a small Boston school for boys and had learned to shoot a gun from one of the teachers who had taken a fancy to my interest. When my sixteenth birthday had come, I left home, and headed steadily westward to seek my fortune on the other side of the Mississippi.

Sitting here, in this saloon, nursing a warm beer was proof of my failure. I had started out with the thought that golden opportunities had existed for a man of my learning and background. Little was I to know that the west gave nothing to no one. If you wanted something, you either killed for it, took it away from someone else or worked your fingers to the bone to scratch out an existence. I had been reduced from a bright eyed boy to a dull and bitter man who hired himself out as a bodyguard to the ranchers when they were away from their spreads.

As I sat there, sipping my warm beer, the voice of a drunken Jake Callan boomed out, "Well, if it isn't, young Daran McLaughlin. Mind if me and the boys join you?"

I looked up at the shaggy hard face of Jack Callan and his two partners, Bob Gulch and Tom Pickney. I really didn't want these men to set with me but, ignoring my silence, they sat down at the table. I never have liked Jack and the feeling was mutual. I had met Jack a couple of months ago when I had a small job helping out the local

Wells Fargo man. We had stared over the barrels of our pistols until Jack had decided that the presence of a Marshal would deter from the enjoyment of shooting me and stealing the money of the small Eastern. Since then, we had enjoyed an uneasy truce.

“Heard you just got paid, Daran. How about buying me and the boys a round, just for friendships sake?” hinted Jack with a broad grin on his scarred face.

I looked up from my beer and replied, “What gives, Jack? I thought we had agreed to leave each other alone.”

He leaned toward me, his fetid breath in my face and answered, “That was then. Now, you don't have no Marshal to back you up. You did hear the news, didn't you, pansy?”

“Listen, Jack. I don't care if you gunned down the Marshal. Heck, me and him weren't exactly pals. I don't want any trouble with you and your two, uh, associates,” I replied keeping my hands on the table in plain sight.

“I gunned down the Marshal in self defense, the Sheriff even agreed with me,” said Jack tensely.

“I doesn't matter to me if you had shot him in the back. All I want is to be left alone to enjoy myself,” I replied setting the glass down.

“Listen here, Momma's boy. I don't give a cow's fart what you want or don't want. I want a beer and we're going to have one!” shouted Jack.

“Is that your final word?” I asked.

“Yes it is, pansy. Now fork it over,” said Jack reaching for his gun.

I saw Jack's partners reaching down under the table and at that moment the Sheriff put his gun to Jack's head and pulling back the hammer. Jack's eyes went wide and moved away from his guns.

“Put'em away, boys, or I'll blow his head all over the ceiling,” ordered the Sheriff.

Jack nodded his head and his partners brought their hands up into plain sight.

“Well that's better. I think you and your boys have had enough excitement for one evening. Why don't you boys take some air and a brisk ride back to your camp,” suggested the Sheriff in crisp tones.

Jack got up from the chair and said, “As you wish, Sheriff. We don't want any problem with the law. This isn't finished, McLaughlin. One day, the law won't come between us and I'll kill you.”

I picked up my beer, took a swallow and replied, “If I don't get you and your boys first. Now, I'd get moving if I were you. It looks like, to me, that the Sheriff's just itching to pull the trigger.”

“Right you are, McLaughlin. Move out, boys,” ordered the Sheriff, punctuating his remark by shoving the gun into Jack's neck.

“Let's get out of here, boys,” commanded Jack heading for the exit with Gulch and Pickney.

After they had left the saloon, the music started up and the Sheriff turned to me and said, "I'd watch my step if I were you, McLaughlin. Callan and his boys are up to no good. Now, I wouldn't care if you and them killed each other right here. You're not exactly my idea of a peaceful citizen, but at least you haven't killed anyone yet. Just take this as a friendly warning, McLaughlin. Don't let me catch you shooting anyone."

"I hope I don't have to, Sheriff. I don't want to be a murderer, but if I have to, I have to. You heard Jack. He just declared that our vendetta is on again," I replied.

"I know that, Daran, but I've got women and children to protect. Just keep that gun in your holster," stated the Sheriff.

"I can't make any promises, Sheriff," I answered.

He just gave out a growl and walked away. The music changed and hit into a nice burlesque number. As the music picked up, out on stage came Trixie in her dance hall outfit. As the music played, she slowly stripped in tune with the music. She was something else and the hoots and howls of the men in the saloon were testimony to the artistry with which she performed. As the music died, she came out among the patrons of the saloon and began to serve drinks and entice money out of the men. She winked at me as she came by and then continued with her work.

Now, I don't fault anyone who is working to get ahead. Heck, I've done some jobs that I haven't been too proud of myself. But, I really detested what Trixie had to do for a living. I'd always thought that she was much more suited to being the wife of a rich rancher than a dance hall girl, but I was just a down on my luck gunman and not the rich rancher I had hoped to become upon coming out west.

After the dance hall had closed for the evening, I still sat there waiting for Trixie. Soon she came down the stairs from the upstairs rooms, her outfit askew and with her quick date on her arm. The slobbering cowhand kissed her and left the saloon. Trixie came over and took a seat across from me.

"How's it going, Daran?" asked Trixie kicking off her shoes.

"Fine, Trixie. I was just waiting for you," I replied with all thoughts, but of her, wiped from my mind.

"That's sweet of you, Daran, but you didn't have to wait up for me. I can take care of myself," she answered tartly.

"I know that, Trixie. I just wanted to see you," I said leaning across the table.

She reached out, patted my cheek and answered, "That's nice. I'll just go and get changed and then you can walk me home."

"All right, Trixie," I replied as she left me and went into the curtained area in back of the stage.

After about an hour, she came out in a plain blue dress and cloak. She could even make normal clothes look exotic. I got up on my feet and offered her my arm. She accepted and we left the dance hall and headed down main street toward her place at Mrs. McNarry's Boarding House.

As we came up to the front entrance, I asked nervously, "Could we sit on the bench here in front. I need to talk to you."

"Very well, Daran. What's up?" replied Trixie seating herself.

I took a seat next to her on the bench and began, "We've know each other for quite a spell, Trixie. I've got to tell you. I love you, will you consent to be my wife?"

The silence was deafening for a long moment. It seemed to me that the night had just came to a stop and that the world was listening for her reply. She looked quite struck to me. Surely she must know how I felt. Wasn't my concern for her safety and my frequent visits proof enough of the regard I held her in?

Slowly, she licked her lips and answered, "Don't take this wrong, Daran, but I can't."

"Why not? Is it because I'm not rich?" I asked in pain.

"No that's not it, Daran. I don't care if you don't have a dime to your name." she replied.

"Then why?" I questioned in confusion.

"I'm in love with someone and it isn't you, Daran," she said with a sigh.

I sat there thunderstruck. I couldn't believe what I had just heard. Deep inside of me I felt my heart break and the black pit of depression opened its maw to engulf me. Trixie got up, smoothed down her dress and came over to stand in front of me.

"You're a fine person, Daran, and you've been a good friend to me, but that is all. I've never even thought of you in those terms and if I had, I wouldn't have let it go on so long. I have to go. Good-bye," she said with compassion as she left me.

I sat there long after she had entered the boarding house. I was filled with a deep sadness and an incredible agony deep in my soul. I sat there for a few minutes in dire agony, then stood up and started toward my room at the hotel. As I walked, I was filled with misery and had to stop in an alley to gather my fractured self back together.

I heaved a sob in the alley and sat down in misery in it's embracing darkness. As I sat there, I heard the sounds of someone approaching. I sat back in the shadows as three men on horseback came down the street. They were dressed in black and had black bandannas covering their faces.

"Right, boys. Let's raid the boarding house. That pansy has gone and it's time for us to collect a little honey before getting out of town," said the voice of the leader that I immediately identified as Jack Callan.

"Sure, boss. Will we have any time for raping?" asked the blurry voice of Bob Gulch.

"Nah. If you want a filly, grab one, but remember, that Trixie is mine as will be the pansy when he calls me out," replied Jack gruffly.

"Sure, boss," answered the voice of Tom Pickney from the last rider.

As they rode past the alley, I got up and moved to a position behind a barrel sitting there in front of O'Mallery's General Store. I drew my Colt pistol and took aim at Jack. Just as I was pulling the trigger, Tom Pickney dropped back and took my shot in the

back of his head. Suddenly, Jack and Bob dropped from horseback and, using the horses for cover, took position behind a water trough.

“Whoever you are, we've got no beef with you. Why don't we talk about this?” shouted the voice of Jack from behind the trough.

I didn't reply and when Bob stuck his head out from behind the water trough, I took a shot at it. He ducked back and soon two pistols were blazing at me from the water trough. Every once in a while, I poked up and squeezed off a shot or two at the water trough. I was pretty sure that I had winged one of them, but I wasn't sure which one. When I was down to my last shot, Bob got careless and took it in his chest. I ducked back around and started to reload my revolver. Suddenly, I heard the crunch of a boot on some gravel and spun around. Standing there was Jack Callan with a shotgun in his hand. The varmint must have snuck up on me while Bob had kept me occupied. He grinned and pointed the shotgun at me.

“Well, if it isn't the pansy. Time to die!” he snarled bringing up the shotgun.

A shot rang out from down the street and caused Jack to duck back into the alley. Seeing my break, I tried to dive out of the way when the shotgun went off catching me below my waist. I fell heavily in the mud in front of the general store. I could hear the sounds of people screaming and the sound of a quick getaway on horseback. That was the last thing I heard as I lay there in the mud.

## 2. The Perfect Disguise

I awoke to find myself lying in a bed in a small smoke filled room. I instantly recognized the familiar smell as that of opium. Peering through the curtains of the bed, I managed to make out the shape of an old Oriental man sitting on the floor smoking opium from his water pipe. At my stirring he looked up and took the pipe stem from his mouth.

“Ah, I see the injured one awakens,” he said in highly accented English.

“Where am I?” I asked trying to move.

“No, do not move. You will injure yourself. I am most honored to be Chin Xian, a knower of medicines and herbs. You are an honored guest at my humble home on the river front,” he replied rising to his feet and approaching me.

“What is going on here?” I questioned starting to rise.

He reached out a hand and easily stopped me in my weakened state. Just then, I started to notice the stirrings of pain. He heard my grunt of pain and quickly poured me a cup of some herbal tea.

“Here. You are in much pain. This will help. I will get the ones who must explain. You must rest now,” he said handing me the cup.

The pain, which had been in abeyance hit me a little hard right then so I drank the tea. It wasn't bad at all. It had a peculiar earthy taste but was moderated by the addition of honey and an orange peel. I soon had drained the cup and after the warm liquid hit my stomach, the pain began to subside.

“Is that better, honored guest?” he asked taking back the fragile china cup.

“Yes, thank you Mister Xian,” I replied.

“So, sorry. It should be Mister Chin. I forget that you Americans put your surname last. That is all right, though. Lie back and I will inform the two who will explain that you are awake,” he said backing away.

“Thank you, Xian,” I answered leaning back in the soft bed.

He left the room and after a moment, the Sheriff and Trixie walked in. The Sheriff was obviously suffering from a lack of sleep and Trixie was dressed in an evening frock with an overcoat over the top.

“Well, it looks like you're going to make it, McLaughlin.” said the Sheriff.

“I reckon so. I don't remember much of what happened after Jack got the drop on me.” I replied.

“I don't know what I should tell you, McLaughlin. I warned you about Callan. The sound of gunshots woke me from my snooze in the jail and I ran out to see what it was about. When I came out, I saw that Pickney was lying on the ground with his head blown off and you and Gulch were blazing away at each other. I moved down the street along the storefronts and arrived in front of Franklin Jewelers when I saw Jack Callan step out of the alley. I saw you shoot Gulch dead and then attempt to reload. Jack then stepped on some gravel to alert you and cause you to turn. I drew my gun and



shot the varmint in the arm. He ducked back out of sight but managed to get a shot off at you as he took off. I followed the varmint but he got away on his horse,” answered the Sheriff.

“I see, Sheriff. How did I wind up here?” I asked looking at him.

“Well, you have Elizabeth to thank for that.” he replied.

“Trixie?!” I exclaimed in amazement.

She just laughed and said, “Yes, me. I felt bad about what happened between us tonight. I realized that I had just, most likely, lost a true friend. I watched you as you walked like a shot dog down the street and was just beginning to close the shade, when I heard horses approaching. Now, I had no lights on in the room and could see the three horsemen in the street. I saw no sign of you, but saw them stop and gesture toward the boarding house and I heard them talking about raiding us and taking some of us girls away to rape us. I was quite frightened and I crouched down below the window sill. I then heard the shots ring out and I saw Pickney fall dead. The other two dived behind a water trough and soon guns were blazing. After a bit, I heard the sound of a double barreled shotgun go off and I saw you lying in the mud next to the barrel in front of the general store. I ran out to help you. I managed to get the bleeding stopped, but you were banged up real bad. I knew you didn't have long to live without any medical care, so I took you to someone us girls at the saloon knew about when we needed medical help and Doc Jorgens was out.”

“I see, Trixie. So you brought me to Chin's,” I replied starting to feel a little woozy.

“That's right, Daran. Then I went and brought David here,” she replied leaning against the Sheriff.

Suddenly, it was clear to me whom she loved. She was in love with the Sheriff and he was obviously quite smitten by her. Well, it was obvious that I would never have her and at the moment, I didn't care.

“So what happens now, Sheriff?” I asked.

“Well, McLaughlin, it's like this. You've murdered two men tonight, one of them in cold blood. You should hang for it,” replied the Sheriff rubbing his whiskered chin.

“I am sorry about Pickney and Gulch. The only one I really wanted to kill was Jack Callan. It was just a lousy stroke of luck that Pickney chose that moment to want to converse with Gulch,” I answered as calmly as I could.

I knew that the Sheriff was right. According to the laws of the state of Nebraska, I was a dead man. Even if I fully recovered from my encounter with Jack's shotgun, I would soon be hanging from the tree out in the center of the town courtyard.

“However, Elizabeth begged for your life. She felt that you had done it to protect her and the other girls, even if it was an afterthought. Well, she talked me into letting you live. Now don't thank me yet, McLaughlin,” he said seeing me start to open my mouth.

I promptly closed it and he continued, “Now, I don't want you anywhere in this town or in this state for that matter. You are already well know here and if you stick around, Callan is liable to come gunning for you again. Now the only way to make old

Jack give up on his vengeance is to get you out of the state and into the Wyoming Territory. There, you can live out your life, if you can keep from killing anyone else."

"How could I get there without being discovered?" I asked.

"Please, David. Let me explain it to Daran, in private," said Trixie.

"Certainly, my dear. Good luck, McLaughlin. With any luck, I will never see you again," pronounced the Sheriff as he left the room.

Trixie pulled a chair over to the bed and sat down. She had a very serious look on her face and sat down near the head of the bed. She laid her coat on the back of the chair and crossed her legs elegantly.

"Okay, Trixie. How are you going to smuggle me out of Nebraska?" I asked.

"We'll get to that. Now, has Xian told you how injured you are?" she questioned pointedly.

"No he hasn't. He seems to be a nice man, but a little mysterious and inscrutable," I replied with a smile.

The smile didn't phase her serious mood and she continued, "All Orientals are. Anyway, you almost died there in the street. If it wasn't for Xian's extraordinary skill, you would have died on his table downstairs."

"It was that bad?" I asked feeling a bit uncomfortable.

"Yes, it was that bad. Xian managed to patch most of you back together, but. . ." she answered.

"But what, Trixie? Tell me. I need to find out and we're still friends, aren't we?" I asked.

She smiled, patted my hand, and replied, "Of course, we're friends. Okay, here it goes. Xian managed to get your guts back inside you body and sew that part up. But, the area between your legs had taken the blunt of the damage."

"You mean, I'm paralyzed?!" I exclaimed in horror.

"No. Xian is a genius. He managed to save your legs, but something had to be sacrificed in order to do it," she answered taking my hand.

"Okay. Give it to me. What had to be sacrificed?" I asked steeling myself.

"In order to save your legs, he had to remove your mangled manhood," she replied matter of factly.

I was stunned. My manhood. Gone! I reached down for the covers but she gently pushed my hands back down.

"No. It won't do for you to see it yet. You must get better first," she said.

"Now, don't take this wrong, Trixie. I'm glad to be alive, but not as a gelding!" I exclaimed.

She jumped up, put her hands on her waist and asked sternly, "Is it a prick that makes a person?"

"Well. . ." I began.

"It's not," she cut me off and added. "It is much more. Look, now I don't have a prick but am I not a person?"

"Of course you are, Trixie," I replied quickly trying to calm her down.

"And don't I have a life? Don't I have love? Don't I have plans for the future?" she rattled off in quick succession.

"Of course you do, Trixie," I answered truthfully.

"Well then," she replied taking her seat again. "So should you. David has spared your life on the condition that you get out of the state. Now going out as Daran McLaughlin would only get you shot or even hung. I'm sure the wanted posters have gone up on you even now. So what are we to do?"

"I don't know, Trixie. It's going to take me weeks to recover. Is this place safe?" I asked with concern.

"It's safe. Mr. Chin doesn't cotton to reporting fugitives having been one himself in China. Now, I have an idea that will save you, keep David happy and simplify matters for me, after all, I can't have a gelding mooning after me on my wedding day. Now, Mr. Chin is an expert in medicines and herbs and has studied for many years in the forbidden lands of the Orient. Have you noticed how us dance hall girls don't have any hair we need to shave on our legs and how we all seem well developed?" she replied.

"Yes. You all seem to be silky smooth and your, uh, feminine attributes seem to be very well developed, especially yours," I answered.

"Thank you, hon. Well, Mr. Chin is an expert in the treatment of female patients and for the next month you are going to be in his personal care. He will help you get well and prepare you for your new life," she said in her matter of fact voice.

"My new life as what?" I asked.

"As a woman. In fact, as my best friend Ellen Holland from St. Louis," she replied.

"But as a woman? Trixie, I can't become a woman. I'm every bit of a man," I answered.

She just laughed a cruel little laugh and replied, "Not anymore, gelding. Mr. Chin has many methods at his disposal. I can assure you, you will become a woman. It shouldn't be too hard for you. You often told me how you were raised by your mother and sister and how half the time you fell into a feminine pattern of mannerisms. If you can remember those lessons that your mother taught you and your sister, you should do just fine. Now since no one saw us bring you here, our story will be that you rode out of town into Iowa and got away from the posse that has been sent out to find you. You will be my best friend, who just arrived yesterday and fell ill. You are being cared for by my private physician, Mr. Chin. From time to time, I will stop by to help you. After a few weeks, the physical changes will become apparent and irreversible. At that time, I will take you to the rail station and put you on a train to Wyoming."

I sat there for a moment then asked, "Why, Trixie?"

She looked thoughtful for a minute, then answered, "You've been the best friend I've had, bar none, and you never asked to go to bed with me. You were always my

confidant and always supported me. Soon, David and I are going to be married, and frankly, your friendship as a male would have complicated matters. Now, with you becoming a woman, that problem is solved. I know you are highly educated and they're always looking for teachers on the frontier. As a woman, it will be easy for you to find a job and a new life free from the dangers of getting shot. That's something, I frankly couldn't take. So, you'll be a fine girlfriend and we can still write as friends do. Well, I had best go and attend to David. You know how men are, Ellen, all they want is sex and attention. Don't worry, Xian is a genius and you'll make a perfectly lovely lady. Ta, ta!"

With that last remark, Trixie got up, put on her overcoat and left the room. I sat there in stunned shock. Trixie wanted me to become a woman and the Sheriff had agreed to let me live if I did it. As I sat there in the bed, I realized that I had no choice at all. I was going to become a woman. Well, at least it might beat being a eunuch. As sleep began to hit me, I thought that maybe becoming a woman wasn't such a bad idea after all.

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The next day, Xian woke me up with the chime of a small gong he had mounted on a trolley. As I opened my eyes, I caught the scent of his herbal teas and the fresh smell of freshly baked bread and recently washed fruit.

"Ah, I see honorable guest awakens." he said giving me a little bow.

"Good morning, noble physician. I'm sorry I can't return the compliment," I replied smiling slightly.

"It is good that you display courtesy. It will make preparing you much easier. Now I, Xian Chin, will perform the complicated physical part of your rehabilitation. Most beautiful, Miss Carter, will prepare you mentally and emotionally for your ordeal. First is breakfast and a mild herbal tea to soothe your remaining pains," Xian replied with a ghostly smile on his oriental lips.

"Thank you, Mr. Chin," I answered as he poured me a cup of tea.

As I ate, he said, "Now, I know honorable guest will wish to know how I will proceed, yes?"

I nodded as I began munching a pear.

"I will take your nod as yes. First, I have already begun your transformation. When I removed your manhood, I managed to save enough to create a convincing womanhood where it had been. I have outdone myself this time and thank Buddha for the chance to stretch my skills. It came out a perfect replica of a woman's private place and will even provide you with pleasure. Secondly, I have begun a regiment of homeopathic drugs that will create a woman's attributes upon you. You need not worry, these have been used for centuries in my country for geishas. Today, I will begin treatments on you to remove hair from your body and face. We will start slowly. In a couple of weeks, your wounds will heal enough for you to get up from the bed and then Miss Carter will train you in the art of womanhood. At the end of the next six weeks, I should have you fit for your new life. Great Buddha has spared you by the friendship

of a woman who had no friends and has chosen this way to make you pay for his saving you. Wise is the way of Buddha and you must accept.”

I looked up at Mr. Chin and replied, “I have no choice but to accept.”

“It is good that you understand this. What name does Miss Carter wish you to answer to?” he asked.

I thought about telling him my name, but realized that that name was dead to me, so I answered, “Ellen.”

“Very good, Ellen. You and I have much work to do. Finish your breakfast and then we'll begin,” he replied setting down cross-legged on the floor.

“Yes, Xian,” I replied as I finished the pear.

The next two weeks passed in a painful haze, I lost track of all the things, Xian did to me. He doused me with potions, he covered my skin with pastes and lotions. He even used large amounts of fine wires hooked to a hand cranked electric generator and applied something he called, acupuncture.

After the two weeks had passed, I was at last allowed up. Whatever Xian Chin had done, was entirely effective. I was totally devoid of body and facial hair and had begun to develop flared hips and breasts. As I was up examining myself in the mirror, Xian Chin entered the room.

“Good morning, honorable Miss Ellen. I see you admire my handiwork in the mirror,” he said in his differential way.

“Yes and thank you, Mr. Chin,” I replied dropping into a curtsy like my mother had taught me.

“Very good. We will have breakfast, but I think it is time for me to remove the bandage from your womanhood,” he decided.

“Oh,” I gulped in nervousness.

“Stand still. I will not gawk for was it not I who made it? Stand still, girl.” he ordered kneeling before me.

I stood rigidly still as he began to unwind the bandages. All during my convalescence he had used a tube and a bedpan to cleanse me of my wastes. I had not once seen what had been done to my nether regions. I was going to see, at last, what had been done to me. I can tell you that I was more than a little nervous. He came to the point where only a few bandages remained. He then carefully removed the tube. It felt odd when he removed it, not really painful, but as if something was now missing. He smiled up at me and undid the last few bandages. As the last bandage came off, he looked at my nether region studiously and then looked up at me.

“Well, Xian, what is it?” I asked in a feminine concerned voice. “Is there something wrong?”

He gave me a ghost of a smile and moved out of the way of the mirror. What I saw in the mirror stunned me, even though I had been looking at the rest of the package, nothing prepared me for what I saw. It was a perfectly formed womanhood, virginal, to be exact. Xian had been a genius! I had seen my sister's womanhood before and mine

looked just as perfect as hers' had. I felt weak on my feet and knelt there on the rug. Suddenly, Xian was there and he put a ladies night coat around me. I looked up at him in gratitude and allowed him to help me rise.

After breakfast, he left me with instructions to dress and that Trixie would be stopping by soon to begin my orientation into my new life. I went to the chest and found it filled with feminine underthings. They were all satin, silk and lace. I was embarrassed for a minute. Normal respectable women only wore cotton underthings. Apparently, these were like those that Trixie wore and she must have thought them to be natural for me to wear. I gave out a surprisingly feminine giggle and then proceeded to put them on. The panties were smooth and luxurious as I slid them on. I then stuffed my, amply developing breasts into a corset and was just beginning to tie it on when Trixie walked in.

“Good morning, Ellen. Here, let me help you with that,” she said setting down her parasol and handbag.

“Thanks, eh, Elizabeth,” I replied as she put a knee in my back and began to tie me in tightly.

“That's all right, hon. Why don't you call me Beth like we used to back home,” she said.

“Sure, Beth,” I grunted out as she tied the thing at last.

“You'll learn how to tie it yourself, given time. Of course, it will be difficult for you to reach it at first, but you will develop the needed flexibility. Let's get your make-up on and get you ready,” she ordered.

Soon she had me in make-up and dressed in a plain blue dress with a pair of hose, some fluffy white petticoats and some ladies lace up heeled boots.

“There we go. Much better, Ellen. Now listen to me and do what I say,” she said.

For the next few days, she drilled me on how to walk, how to sit, how to hold myself and how to speak like a lady. I was the victim of her riding crop infrequently, due to me remembering the lessons my mother had drilled my sister in while I had watched from the doorstep. After that, Trixie acquainted me with the feminine arts of cleaning, sewing, cooking and gave me some pointers on how to please a man. I must admit, I was blushing most of the time during the latter lessons, but I found myself wondering what it would be like to be on the other side of the sexual exchange. I remembered the lessons on how to be a respectable lady, that my mother had given my sister and integrated it with what Trixie was teaching me. It seemed like no time had passed until I was ready to leave Chin's.

On my last night in Omaha, we had a party at Chin's, just me, the Sheriff, Trixie and Xian. At the party, they all gave me gifts to get me started in my new life. The Sheriff gave me a ladies' derringer with a small box of shells explaining that a woman needed to defend herself sometimes. I thanked him and told him I hoped I'd never have to use it. He smiled and sat back down. Next, Trixie presented me with a huge carpet bag full of clothes to go with the others she had given me. It turned out, that a collection had been taken up for me when the girls at the saloon had heard that I had my luggage stolen from me. I thanked Trixie and next came Xian. The Chinese man simply

presented me with a bag full of his special herbal tea, instructing me to have a cup of it every day and to write him when I ran out so that he could send me more. I thanked him for his kindness and hugged each of them. It was going to be hard to leave such dear friends, but in order to save my life for good, it was best I leave.

After everyone had left, I lay there in bed in my best nightgown and began to think about all that had transpired over the past few weeks. I discovered that it had been an education and that I was beginning to adjust to my new role. What I found to be even more amazing was the fact that I was beginning to enjoy it. With those happy thoughts filling my head, I drifted off to sleep.

### 3. Westward Ho!

The next day found me delivered to the train station by the Sheriff and Trixie in his wagon. It wasn't a very elegant trip to the station, but it sure beat trying to walk there. You never know how hard it is for the womenfolk to negotiate those muddy streets in heels until you have to give it a go yourself. The first time I tried, I nearly fell in a steaming pile of horse manure. Thankfully, Trixie managed to grab me and steady me. While, the Sheriff loaded my bags on the train, Trixie got my tickets.

"Here you go, Ellen." she said handing me the tickets. "Now, I hope you let me know how things go out in Wyoming. Be sure and write me. Oh, here's the address."

I looked down at the address, noticed that it was the house of the Sheriff and replied, "When is the big day, Hon?"

"Tomorrow. We're going to be married in the church off Main Street," she replied in a gush.

"I'm so happy for you, dear. I wish I could have attended," I answered, mindful of the people around me.

"I know you do, Ellen. I'm sorry too. Can't you postpone your trip?" she asked playfully.

I noticed the Sheriff's expression and replied, "I'm sorry, but I can't. They've been without a teacher for months now and I'm overdue because of my illness. I'll write you though."

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor.

"Well, I've got to go." "Take care, Ellen." Trixie giving me a sisterly hug.

"You too, Beth. I wish you and David only the best together," I replied returning her hug.

The Sheriff helped me onto the train with a smile and the tip of his hat. As I was seated by the conductor, who also took my ticket, I gazed out the window. There on the platform, I saw the Sheriff put his left arm around Trixie and I saw her weeping as the train began to pull away. As the Omaha station faded away, it hit me that I was on my way to my new life, come what may.

As the train moved away from the Omaha station, I had a chance to relax. No one paid me any attention, so I reached into the seat pocket in front of me for something to read. The only two items in it were an old copy of the New York Times and last month's copy of Godey's Ladies Book. As not to arouse suspicion, the first one I took out was the Godey's. After cautiously opening it, I discovered that it was actually pretty good and soon found myself absorbed in the pages.

I finished Godey's by the time the conductor announced lunch in the rear dining car. I put away the Godey's and began to rise from my seat. Unfortunately, my left leg seemed to have fallen asleep and when I tried to stand up, I found myself teetering on my right boot heel. As I began to fall, I felt a hand stop me and help me right myself. I turned to face a whiskered well dressed man of forty and his lovely wife, several years



his junior, dressed in a maternity dress and just starting to show that she was with child..

“Are you all right, Miss?” he asked with concern.

“Yes. Thank you, sir. It seems that I'm just not used to the train yet.” I replied with a small laugh and a whisp of a smile.

“You're welcome, Miss,” he answered giving me a short bow.

“Are you on your way to the dining car, Hon?” asked the woman.

“Yes, ma'am,” I replied meekly.

“Oh, Alfred,” said the woman to her husband. “Let's invite her to join us for lunch.”

“A capital idea, Susan. Would you be amenable to joining us and our family for a noon repast?” he asked me formally.

“I would be delighted. I don't believe we have been introduced?” I replied.

“Excuse me. It was really quite thoughtless of me. I am Alfred Coulson and this is my wife, Susan,” he answered with a stiff formal bow.

I gave a brief curtsy and answered, “I am Ellen Holland and I'm pleased to meet you both.”

“Excellent. Shall we adjourn to the dining car?” he questioned pleasantly.

“Yes, sir,” I replied.

“Ladies' first,” he said allowing his wife and I to precede him to the dining car.

The dining room of the Transcontinental was everything that it was reported to be. The seats were covered with the finest leather, the tables with the finest white linen, the wood work of pure mahogany and fixtures in metallic silver. It took my breath away when I first saw it and even more so when I beheld the exquisite art work between the windows. Susan led me over to a table set with six chairs. All ready setting there was a matronly lady in her mid fifties and two small children, a girl who looked about six years old and a little boy who was just at the toddler stage.

Alfred seated his wife on his left side along with his children, the matronly lady on his right with me sitting on the right side across from the two children. After seating us all, Alfred took the seat at the head of the table and called for a waiter. The waiter smiled at us pleasantly and gave us a copy of the menu.

“May I get sir and the ladies some drinks while you decide on your order?” he asked.

Alfred ordered himself a beer, Susan a small glass of wine, the matron a glass of sherry, and the children a cup of apple juice each. When it came to my turn, I followed Susan's lead although a shot of whiskey wouldn't have been amiss right then. It only took a moment for the waiter to return with our glasses.

Alfred rapped on his glass and said, “Miss Holland. Please allow me to present my children, Linda age six and Samuel age two. Also with us is Mrs. Michelle Dittman, our Nanny. Children, Mrs. Dittman, allow me to present to you Miss Ellen Holland.”

“Hi,” said Linda shyly pushing back her golden blonde hair.