



The Cowboys

GLEIGH
GREENWOOD
SEAN

WINNER
OF THE
ROMANTIC
TIMES
CAREER
ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD

CRITICS ARE RAVING ABOUT SEAN, LEIGH GREENWOOD'S LATEST IN *THE COWBOYS* SERIES!

"*Sean* is like a vivid canvas, painted with vast landscapes, brushed with ugly shanties, then splattered with the mud and filth of a mining town. The author molds characters like a potter, then breathes life into them as tensions and conflict build. Every Western lover and romance enthusiast should include Leigh Greenwood's books in their collections—they are classics."

—*Rendezvous*

"Sean and Pearl are as tough as their surroundings, but both hide a heart of gold. This book rivals the best this author has written so far, and readers will want to make space on their keeper shelves for *Sean*. While you're at it, you might want to save room for the other *Cowboys* as well! . . . *Sean* is Western romance at its finest! Leigh Greenwood continues to be a shining star of the genre!"

—*Literary Times*

"*The Cowboys* series is still riding high in the saddle! Leigh Greenwood has the ability to bring together unique plot lines which suit the characters and personalities already established in the series' early books, he makes it look easy! It's not! What it is, is captivating to this reviewer, who anxiously awaits the next *Cowboy*."

—*Heartland Critiques*

PRAISE FOR THE PREVIOUS BOOKS IN *THE COWBOYS* SERIES

CHET

"*Chet* has it all! Romance and rustlers, gunfighters and greed . . . romance doesn't get any better than this!"

—*The Literary Times*

"*Chet's* plot moves with the speed of stampeding cattle. Supporting characters spring to life and swing into action. Tension is as sensitive as a hair trigger. Leigh Greenwood tops my list of favorite romance writers."

—*Rendezvous*

BUCK

"*Buck* is a wonderful Americana Romance! Leigh Greenwood remains one of the forces to be reckoned with in the Americana romance sub-genre."

—*Affaire de Coeur*

"If anyone can write a perfect historical romance, it has to be Leigh Greenwood!"

—*Bell, Book & Candle*

WARD

"Few authors write with the fervor of Leigh Greenwood. Once again [Greenwood] has created a tale well worth opening again and again!"

—*Heartland Critiques*

"Leigh Greenwood is synonymous with the best in Americana romance."

—*Romantic Times*

JAKE

"Reminiscent of an old John Wayne/Maureen O'Hara movie, *Jake* kicks off what is sure to be another popular series from Leigh Greenwood."

—Robin Lee Hatcher

"Only a master craftsman can create so many strong characters and keep them completely individualized. Greenwood's books are bound to become classics."

—*Rendezvous*

SEAN'S SEDUCTION

"What are you worried about?" Sean asked.

The question startled her. How much could he guess?
"Nothing. Why do you ask?"

"Your body's tense. Does the first time with a man make you nervous?"

She was disappointed his thoughts hadn't changed. Why? What did she want him to think?

She sidestepped his question. "Do you always romance a woman by taking her dancing, eating supper in her bedroom?"

He held her a little tighter. "It's the first time."

"Why now?"

"It feels right."

Then he kissed her. A light peck on the forehead, but the kiss rocked Pearl as nothing else had in more than ten years.

The Cowboys series by Leigh Greenwood:

JAKE

WARD

BUCK

CHET

The Seven Brides series:

ROSE

FERN

IRIS

LAUREL

DAISY

VIOLET

LILY

The Cowboys

SEAN

**LEIGH
GREENWOOD**

LEISURE BOOKS



NEW YORK CITY

*To my son, Chris.
If he had red hair, the book could have been about him.*

A LEISURE BOOK®

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SEAN

Prologue

May 13, 1861

San Antonio, Texas

Sean O’Ryan stood perfectly still, his eyes respectfully lowered, but it was hard not to stare. He’d never seen a woman dressed like his aunt. He could hardly take his eyes from her ruby lips or her nearly black eyes that seemed to be surrounded by a dark green color. Her dress of rich red fabric rustled noisily every time she moved. A profusion of ruffles and buttons decorated the front of her dress. A funny little hat of flowers and feathers rested precariously on her abundant raven’s-wing hair without benefit of a strap under her chin. Sean wanted to ask how it stayed on, but he was afraid if he made a sound, his aunt wouldn’t take him.

“You sure this is my nephew?” Kathleen Kelly asked. She moved restlessly to and fro, impatient to

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be gone. "He looks too big to be just nine."

"The records say he's Sean O'Ryan, son of Shamus and Gwenda Kelly O'Ryan," said Mrs. Grasty. She ran the orphanage where Sean stayed. It baffled him that she looked almost as angry at his aunt as she was with him when he got into trouble.

"What would I do with a nine-year-old boy?"

"Bring him up properly like any decent woman."

But Mrs. Grasty had told Sean his aunt wasn't decent, that she was a dancer, that she painted her face to attract men. Sean didn't see anything wrong with that. He thought she looked a lot prettier than Mrs. Grasty.

"He needs a home," Mrs. Grasty said. "He needs to learn responsibility."

"I'm too busy to have a home. I live in hotels. Why can't he stay here? As big as he is, some farmer's bound to adopt him."

"He's been thrown out of two homes and one orphanage already."

"Well, if you can't handle him, how do you expect me to?" Kathleen pulled on long black gloves and tossed something that looked like a tangle of furry animals over her shoulder.

"I see you refused to take him nine years ago," Mrs. Grasty said, her tone more severe than Sean had ever heard it.

"He was a baby," Kathleen said. "What could I do with a baby?" She peered at him again, made a face. "Are you sure he's my nephew?"

"Positive."

"Well, I can't take him, no matter who he is," she said with an air of finality. "There's a war coming. I gotta head West."

The Cowboys: Sean

"Take me with you," Sean cried. Being quiet wasn't working. "I can ride and shoot."

"Don't lie," Mrs. Grasty ordered.

This was no time to be shackled by the truth. His only chance to escape Mrs. Grasty was about to walk out the door. "I can fight Indians, too."

"I'm going to San Francisco," his aunt said. "They don't have Indians there."

Nor did they need little boys who could shoot or ride horses. She didn't need him at all. She didn't want him. Nobody did.

May 13, 1861

St. Louis, Missouri

Agnes Satterwaite stared at her father, wondering if she'd ever loved him. If she had, she'd stopped today. No matter what happened, he'd never hit her again.

"Don't leave this room," her father said. "And if I find Rock Gregson hanging around when I get back, I'll teach him what happens to men who try to ruin decent girls."

"He's not trying to ruin me," Agnes said, willing to try once more to make her father understand. "He wants to marry me."

"Men like him don't marry their women," her father yelled at her. "They turn them into whores, then leave them for somebody else."

"Rock isn't like that. He loves me. He says we can live on the riverboat in a room all our own. He's offered to buy me any dress I want for a wedding present."

"Is that all you can think about—fancy clothes and ruining yourself for some gambler?"

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"He's not a gambler. He works for the riverboat company. Besides, being the wife of a gambler couldn't be worse than working on that farm until I'm so worn out and ugly nobody will have me."

"It'll keep you pure and virtuous for when you get a husband."

"When will that be?"

"When you're older. Fourteen's too young to be thinking about getting married."

"Mama was fourteen when she married you, fifteen when I was born." And twenty-seven when she was laid in her grave.

"It was a mistake to bring you to St. Louis. It's turned your head. You'll marry a decent man one day, and—"

"How? You won't let Benton get down from his wagon when he comes. And you told Orvis you'd shoot him if he ever set foot on the place again."

"I won't have them nosing around you like you was in heat!" he shouted. "It's a sin."

"Ma said it's natural for a man to want to be with a woman. She said—"

"Don't argue with me, girl. You'll do as I say."

"Mama told me not to let you keep me on that farm. She said you'd work the life out of me like you did her. She said—"

"I loved your ma."

"Is that why you hit her?"

"I had to. She wouldn't mind sometimes. She wanted things no decent woman wants."

"She only wanted to laugh, to have pretty things."

"A good woman doesn't want anything but her husband and her children."

The Cowboys: Sean

"I'm not going to be like Mama, Papa. I'm going with Rock. He loves me. He'll—"

"I'll kill you before I let that man have you."

He lunged for Agnes, but she was ready. She hit him as hard as she could with the washbasin. Stunned, he dropped to his knees.

She grabbed her coat and ran to the door. "I'm leaving, and you can't stop me. When I come back, you'll see—"

"If you go with that man, don't ever come back. I won't have a whore for a daughter."

"Papa!"

"Whore!"

She ran from the room, the horrible word still ringing in her ears.

Chapter One

Colorado gold fields, 1876

"Sit still and be quiet, or I'll wrap this bandage over your mouth," Sean O'Ryan admonished Pete Jernigan. "I can't get it tight with you squirming." Pete had been shot during a gold shipment robbery, and Sean had gotten stuck with patching him up.

"You've got to see her," Pete said, trying to turn so he could see his friend. "She's absolutely beautiful. Every man who sees her falls in love with her."

"I won't."

"Even you'll agree Pearl's gorgeous," Pete said earnestly. "She's perfection."

"You think about her perfection. I don't have time, not with having your work to do and mine as well." Pete had taken care of their tent, buying supplies, and seeing about the laundry until he got shot.

Sean and Pete had been in the gold fields nearly

The Cowboys: Sean

two months, plenty of time to stake their claim and set up their tent in the ramshackle settlement that served as home to the men who searched for gold in the nearby hills and streams. Tents, log houses, huts of sticks and brush, even caves hollowed out of the hillsides served as shelter for men who poured all their energy into the pursuit of the yellow metal. It represented a dream so powerful that it drove them to leave homes and families—even to abandon wives and children—to travel a thousand miles into a wilderness, toil endless hours at backbreaking work, and live worse than barnyard animals. All for the hope of the riches represented by those tiny flecks of gold.

Sean had come for the dream, too, but he had no family to leave behind.

"If you didn't spend every daylight hour at the diggings, you'd have enough time," Pete said.

"I don't intend to stay here any longer than I have to. I mean to have my own ranch by fall."

"I know," Pete said, rolling his eyes at Sean's oft-stated goal. "You want a ranch like Jake's and a wife like Isabelle."

"What's wrong with that?"

"Look, being adopted by Jake and Isabelle was the best thing that ever happened to us. I'm just as grateful to them as you are, but I don't want to be just like them."

"Why not? They're good people. Besides, I like ranching. I'm good at it, too."

"I know. Jake told everybody it would take two men to replace you. But we agreed it was time to make our own way. That's why we're working like demons for this gold."

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"I'm working like a demon," Sean said. "You're getting yourself shot."

"I'm not in such a hurry to leave," Pete said, ignoring Sean's jibe. "I don't have a ranch to buy or a wife to find. I mean to enjoy myself before I get married."

"I'm not looking for a wife out here. Sit still so I can finish this bandage. I want to leave for Twisted Gulch before dark. Damn, I hate that place. There's not a person in the whole town who cares for anything but your money."

"You'd like it better if you'd go to the Silken Lady," Pete said, reverting to his favorite subject. "Pearl serves the best food, real whiskey, and has the prettiest girls. Not that you'll notice them with Pearl around."

Movement outside their tent caught Sean's attention. He turned to see the washerwoman drive her wagon into camp.

"I forgot to tell you she was coming tonight," Pete said. "You'll have to sort the clothes before she gets here."

Sean secured the last pin in the bandage. "You and I have been friends and partners for ten years. I'll fix your bandages, cook your food, and do your work at the mine, but I'll be damned if I'll sort your clothes."

"You too good?" Pete asked, firing up.

"No. Too ornery."

"That's God's honest truth. All the more reason to go see Pearl. She'll—"

"Stop!" Sean shouted as he began gathering up dirty clothes. "I give up. I'll sort your clothes, tuck you into bed, do practically anything if you promise not to mention that woman's name again."