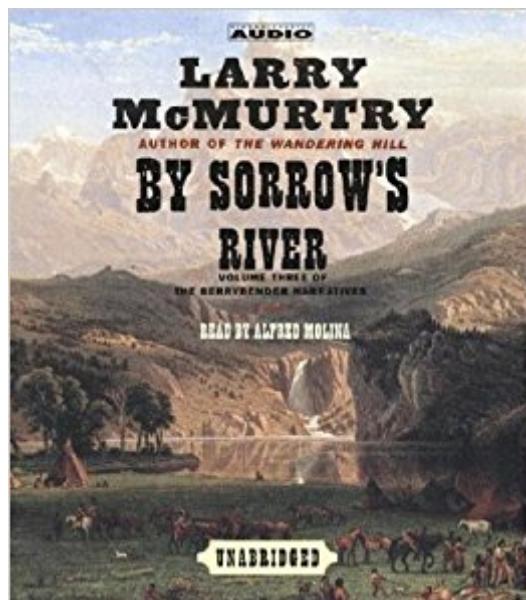


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# By Sorrow's River (Berrybender Narratives)



## Synopsis

In this tale of high-spirited and terrifying adventure, set against the background of the West that Larry McMurtry has made his own, *By Sorrow's River* is an epic in its own right, with an extraordinary young woman as its leading figure. At the heart of this third volume of his Western saga remains the beautiful and determined Tasmin Berrybender, now married to the "Sin Killer" and mother to their young son, Monty. *By Sorrow's River* continues the Berrybender party's trail across the endless Great Plains of the West toward Santa Fe, where they intend, those who are lucky enough to survive the journey, to spend the winter. They meet up with a vast array of characters from the history of the West: Kit Carson, the famous scout; Le Partezon, the fearsome Sioux war chief; two aristocratic Frenchmen whose eccentric aim is to cross the Great Plains by hot air balloon; a party of slavers; a band of raiding Pawnee; and many other astonishing characters who prove, once again, that the rolling, grassy plains are not, in fact, nearly as empty of life as they look. Most of what is there is dangerous and hostile, even when faced with Tasmin's remarkable, frosty sangfroid. She is one of the strongest and most interesting of Larry McMurtry's women characters, and is at the center of this powerful and ambitious novel of the West. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Molina keeps the bar raised high with his latest performance of McMurtry's third Berrybender Narrative. As with his readings of the previous two volumes, *Sin Killer* and *The Wandering Hill*,

Molina creates richly nuanced voices for the many characters in this Wild West tale, from the energetic and innocent young guide Kit Carson to the comically selfish old Lord Berrybender, whose pursuit of drink, fornication and wildlife to shoot is what has brought his aristocratic, idiosyncratic and self-centered British clan to the wild and unforgiving Great Plains. This installment revolves around Berrybender's eldest daughter, Tasmin. Having married and mothered a child with the stoic and sometimes brutal frontiersman Jim Snow, also known as the Sin Killer, Tasmin's heart is now drawn to their quiet and emotionally distant guide, Pomp Charbonneau. Though the story seems to lose some of its steam as it explores the nuances of Tasmin's torn-between-two-lovers quandary, Molina's pace never slows. Even when he is not breathing life into a character, his role as narrator is played with such earnest urgency that it keeps the momentum high and the listener wanting more.

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A party of Ute warriors placidly negotiates the price of trade goods with a group of mountain men whose encampment they had murderously raided the previous day. A pair of slightly absurd European travelers manages to escape menacing Sioux by inflating a hot-air balloon and flying over their stupefied foes. This is the third installment of the projected four-volume Berrybender saga, which tracks a British family and a motley assortment of comrades as they traipse across the trans-Mississippi West in the 1830s. As in the earlier novels, the focus of the narrative is Tasmin Berrybender and her strange (even to her) attachment to her husband, the rather primitive frontiersman Jim Snow. As the Berrybenders move from South Pass toward Santa Fe, McMurtry relates numerous, seriocomic incidents like those above, revealing the West as a place where irony, vanity, and tragedy are inevitably intertwined. Tasmin and Jim are certainly wonderful literary creations; equally interesting and memorable are McMurtry's finely drawn portrayals of actual historical characters, including Kit Carson, Jim Bridges, Charles Bent, and Pomp Charbonneau. Each plays his part in an exciting, humorous, but often heartbreakng story that unfolds across magnificent, dangerous, and often deadly landscapes. Jay Freeman

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Interesting "yarn" about characters in the old West who came from England to see the country and hunt various animals. It is an adult story with much "rutting" taking place but an overall cute story line and it uses historical figures as part of the plot. There are four books, this is book 3 and continues the saga. Great light reading and similar to Lonesome Dove in characters and plot.

Sadly, but clearly the Old West is receding from American memory: just recently I noticed that the stagecoach was removed from the Wells Fargo Bank logo. But with the likes of author Larry McMurtry this memory of the West will not easily fade. McMurtry IS a product of North Texas--the land of the Comanches--he was born there and went to college there. All four books of this "Berrybender Narratives" series (which should be read in consecutive order) makes you feel for a past gone since the U.S. Census Bureau in 1890 announced the closing of the frontier! This is historical fiction at its finest: all the names of that period are dropped, although not with the total historical accuracy that some purists demand. But he is a great author, for example I'm embarrassed to admit that throughout this series it often became necessary to look up the meaning of words he so easily employs.

I went to this book with high expectation. I have only recently begun reading "Western" stories. I had really enjoyed the "Lonesome Dove" mini-series and anticipated more of the same. What I did not know when I purchased this ebook was that it was the middle book in a much larger(?) series. Perhaps because of that I found it very difficult to bring myself to really care about any of the characters. The book is told largely from the point-of-view of Tasmin Berrybender. Although "married" to the Sinkiller, she lusts for another man who shares their camp, Pomp. for me, it was way too much soap opera and way too little horse opera. McMurtry writes well, I just feel disinclined to look up the rest of the series.

Completely different perspective, the English rich have found the great west. What a mess they have created, great story line

In 1832, Lord Albany Berrybender chartered a steamboat to take him up the Missouri River on a hunting expedition. Albany is one of the richest aristocrats in England, and also a dissolute, selfish, old fool. Along for the ride are his wife Constance, six of their fourteen spoiled children, fifteen of nineteen servants, including a cellist and a botanist, an aging parrot named Prince Talleyrand, the staghound Tintamarre, and a gaggle of American talent hired to ease their way, including Toussaint Charbonneau, the guide for the Lewis and Clark Expedition many years previous. In BY SORROW'S RIVER, a year and two books later, Lord Berrybender has since lost a leg; his wife, two children, assorted servants, Prince Talleyrand, and Tintamarre are dead. Berrybender's eldest daughter, Tasmin has borne a child to her mountain man husband, Jim "Sin Killer" Snow, and is now pregnant

with a second. Another daughter, Bess, takes up with a Ute brave, High Shoulders, and a third daughter, Mary, loses her virginity to the botanist, Piet Van Wely. Berrybender himself marries the cellist, Vicky Kennet, and gets her with child. And finally, after much aimless wandering in the second book of the series, *THE WANDERING HILL*, the fecund group is off to Santa Fe accompanied by a ragtag group of mountain men and hangers-on. It's only in this book that the series really takes off for me, mostly due to the fact that its chief protagonist, Tasmin, is becoming engagingly difficult. Increasingly disenchanted with her husband, Tasmin casts lustful looks at Jean Baptiste "Pomp" Charbonneau, the son of Toussaint Charbonneau and Sacagawea born on Lewis and Clark's epic trek to the Pacific. Moreover, Tasmin has a soft spot in her heart for the young Kit Carson. Trouble is, Pomp has barely a prurient thought in his head, and Kit is too busy becoming a famous scout. What makes *BY SORROW'S RIVER* particularly interesting are the historical characters that sprinkle the narrative: Carson, the elder and younger Charbonneaus, mountain men Jim Bridger, Hugh Glass, and Tom Fitzpatrick, and traders William and Charles Bent, who established Bent's Fort in present-day Colorado. Having said that, it's because author Larry McMurtry occasionally plays fast and loose with the historical record that I found this fictional narrative unreasonably irritating at times. When reading this book, keep in mind that Carson didn't marry (his third wife) Josefina Jaramillo until 1843, and Pomp Charbonneau died in 1866 at Innskip Station, OR. Does Larry's version represent careless research, or just unconscionable literary license? With this third book in the series, the Berrybender saga is finally attaining some of those qualities of excellence that characterized, McMurtry's classic, *LONESOME DOVE*. Despite my reservations regarding the glaring historical inaccuracies, I just may immediately begin the fourth and final installment, *FOLLY AND GLORY*, without stopping to vary my reading fare. For the moment, I'm hooked.

*By Sorrows River* is the third in the series about the Berrybender family's stampede into the early West. Problem is it doesn't always go so well under the direction of Lord Berrybender, the head of the family, as he blindly leads them on this quest. This book, as the others, is full of humor, heartache, and the brutal realities of the times. The characters are vivid and the strength of Tasmin Berrybender as the one trying to keep her family safe, from themselves at times, is compelling. I can't wait to start the final book. McMurtry has done it again, with a big dose of humor in this series.

The descriptions of Kit Carson and contemporary frontier heroes are informative and delightfully entertaining. The love interests of all these people add spice to the tale.

This is the first Larry McMurtry book that I read. I was attracted to it because I love his son, James McMurtry's lyrics and music and I thought this is probably a very creative family. My hunch was right! I enjoy books about the west in the early days. Reminded me about how easy all of us have it today compared to these people traveling across the country with barely anything to get to Santa Fe. I plan to read more of that Larry McMurtry's work. I enjoy his writing style.

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