

A Jack Sloan Novel

GYPSIES, TRAMPS, AND THIEVES

Book One of The Border Wars Trilogy



LARRY SEELEY

Read the other Novels in the
Jack Sloan Border Wars Trilogy
by Larry Seeley:

17 Degrees North

The Bridge of the Americas (May 2013)

What reviewers say about *Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves*:

The SantaFean: Larry Seeley, a budding novelist stuck out in the middle of nowhere in a tiny New Mexico canyon, has one vivid imagination. I ordered a copy...because I liked the sound of the title. Little did I realize that I would be spending my entire Friday night and Saturday afternoon stuck in a chair while biting my nails and waiting for the last shoe to drop. "When are we going to have another Jack Sloan novel? I want it NOW!

Glenda Bixler, Reviewers Roundup: Would you like to meet a really cool dude?...Jack Sloan [in]...*Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves*... readers...this book is fun to read, exciting, romantic in a way-cool, different way! It is unique with a style of writing that is thoroughly enjoyable--sorta laid-back, yet get up and MOVE!...a *must-read*.

Stephen Tremp:...I highly recommend *Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves*. It's not...for your kids. But if you enjoy a great story of murder, revenge, and redemption with terrific character development, you'll love this book. 5.0 out of 5 stars. A Great Read!

Susi Perry: "Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves" by Larry Seeley is a great read...very entertaining...looking forward to the sequel. Action builds until you can't put it down!

Betty Gelean, Reviewer for Nighthead, Vancouver, BC:...action... identities/characters, plotting, good guys and bad guys, each trying to out-think the other. I rarely set it down.

Redda Booky for the San Luis Obispo Book Review: I loved this book. Great adventure, mystery and setting. The characters come alive. I urge my readers to get this book and read it. You won't be sorry. Larry Seeley is the next James Lee Burke. 5.0 out of 5 stars. Can't wait for the sequel!

Brandon Christiansen: Excellent. It keeps you guessing...It is so great, it could be a movie. I can't wait for the second book to come out! 5.0 out of 5 stars. Involved and intrigued.

E. Scanlon: Gypsies, Seeley...is one of those rare writers of an intriguing story that gets you involved and makes you want to travel the road of Jack Sloan. I found it hard to put it down... can't wait for the next in the series. 5.0 out of 5 stars. Slick, well-written, and fast-paced.

Steve Godofsky:...It's not often I feel a book is a real page-turner for me but Gypsy's, Tramps, and Thieves got me. 340 pages went down in 2 reading sessions...and left me wishing there was more. And I hope from Mr. Seeley, there is! 5.0 out of 5 stars Jack Sloan's #1 fan.

Niecy Strong:...intriguing, captivating and totally engrossing. As I read the book, I find myself thinking what a great movie it would make. The characters are well-developed, the descriptions of the scenery are descriptive but not laborious and lengthy. Jack Sloan is smart, heroic, vulnerable and decisive. I want more Jack Sloan. 5.0 out of 5 stars. Jack Sloan Rocks!

Dirty Frank, Manassas Review:...an instant con-classic. I want to be Jack Sloan. From beginning to end the cast of seedy characters keeps your guts tied in knots and wanting more. 5.0 out of 5 stars. Riveting .

Raine, New Zealand Book Reviews:...a thrilling novel...talk about sitting on the edge of your seat...romance, drugs, alcohol, violence and murder. Can't tell you any more without ruining the twists and turns but if you enjoy a good thriller, read this book. 5.0 out of 5 stars.

Sara Howard, author of Apollo Engineer on the Saturn V: A story set in the southwest. This involves Indian Casinos and some really bad guys. Everybody shoots or kills everybody else. Every character is a thief, murderer or a bad guy. The women are truly tramps. If you like foul language, sexual scenes and murder on a grand scale, this book is for you. 5.0 out of 5 stars. Danger & Suspense Create Page Turner.

Marty Shaw for Reader Views:...a wild ride...providing an intensity that makes the book a definite page-turner. ...compelling and realistic characters, combined with a tightly woven plot, had me reading as fast as I could...fans of action, mystery, and suspense will not regret reading "Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves," and just might see me standing in line with them when the sequel, "17 Degrees North," comes out.

And what do critics say about *17 Degrees North*?

Stephen Tremp: I love the Jack Sloan character, who I liken to Jack Reacher from the Lee Child series...steel in his back and velvet in his heart...not a book to buy for your kids. But if you like gritty straight up action, relentless killers, and well developed characters, then *17 Degrees* and *Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves* are books I highly recommend. Download them both and read them in order. Thanks Larry for the second book and I hope there is a third one soon!

5.0 out of 5 stars. He gets better and better!

S.P. Washburn, to the Washington Post: A great read, from the characters to the landscape, keeps you turning page after page! 5.0 out of 5 stars. Couldn't Put it Down.

Kay Hoffman, to the Lexington Herald-Reader: ...a new adventure--even more gripping and more thrilling...the reader is taken on a wild journey between Juarez and Northern New Mexico that is fraught with danger... a book that's a lot of fun to read because Jack and Darlene do things most of us would flee from. Go Jack. I can't wait to read the next book in his trilogy.

5.0 out of 5 stars. A Supersonic E-Ticket Thrillride.

pinky mo, Goodreads, Firstreads, May 2012: This book isn't just a page turner - it grabs you by the throat with both hands and hurls you through the pages at over 100 MPH. This is one E-Ticket ride that you won't want to pass up! ...relevant to our times...scary...a classic story of good versus evil...gun battles, explosions, mangled personal property, an asphyxiation, several shootings, beatings, torture through electrocution, sniper attacks, knifings, and a whole lot more. 5.0 out of 5 stars An excellent and engaging book!

Linda Hedrik, Peachy's Ya-Ya and Sweet Potato Book Club: I couldn't put it down...strong women characters, and main character Jack Sloan is tough but with his tender side - just like a real person. It was a riveting book and I thoroughly enjoyed it. 5.0 out of 5 stars. Exciting read.

Vashti Watston, Guest Reviewer for the Miami Herald: A great sequel! The characters are colorful and the storyline is exciting. Perfect follow-up to *Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves*. It's got it all and is a perfect summer read. 5.0 out of 5 stars. Sloan Strikes Again.

Redda Booky, San Luis Obispo Reviews: Larry Seeley, in his stunningly crafted second shoot-'em-up, *17 Degrees North*, brings Jack Sloan back with a vengeance... a tapestry of love, betrayal and murder. I couldn't put this book down. Could not recommend it more highly.

5.0 out of 5 stars. Jack Sloan Series Even Better with Second Novel.

Glenda A Bixler "Glenda" (Pennsylvania)The Vine Voice: [Larry] Seeley has his own style of writing that I have come to appreciate... [he] has done it again! A thriller that keeps the suspense high and the action ongoing! Jack is a James Bond type, but more laid-back... Darlene is the perfect cool lady that not only stands behind her man, but gets along side of him when the fighting and shooting starts!... characters alone are worth getting to know.

Added Feature

Read an excerpt from *17 Degrees North* and *The Bridge of the Americas* at the conclusion of this one.

**And now, introducing the third novel in the
Jack Sloan Border Wars Trilogy,
*The Bridge of the Americas:***

A young girl is murdered on a dark highway during the winter of 1995. Fifteen years later, the crime sets in motion a string of events provoking carnage and mayhem. Jack Sloan and his wife, Darlene, are caught in the middle, and it's up to them to find a way out.

The Bridge of the Americas is the primary artery connecting Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, Texas. When El Lobe, a notorious cartel enforcer, crosses it in 2010, he lights the fuse. For five years he has operated as a mole for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Now, one of his cartel buddies has dropped a dime, and El Lobo, Harper Prescott, must flee for his life and the safety of his beautiful companion, Rosa Lara.

The Bridge of the Americas is non-stop action and suspense. Buy it online or at your favorite bookstore.

Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves

A Novel

By
Larry Seeley



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For Katie, my partner in crime

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Prologue

Rain pelted my thin tee shirt. It chilled me through in five heartbeats. No sense in trying the fancy Leica field glasses. Water dripped from my eyes and obscured the lenses. The storm surprised me. Nothing to do except hunker down and pull my hat over my ears.

I could make out my rancho without binoculars. The arroyo behind the barn roared with runoff. Twenty-six acres looked small from here, marked off by the barbed wire and coyote fences that crisscrossed the property. Someone ran from the casita to the main house with an umbrella.

The rain stopped after fifteen minutes. I took off my tee shirt, wrung it out, worked my arm and shoulder muscles, and put it back on. The dampness would feel good once the sun came out.

Movement to the west made me look up. Too awkward for a coyote or stray dog. I wiped the lenses and adjusted them to the new distance. I focused on a shadowy figure in a poncho. Short and skinny, he looked familiar, but I couldn't place him. I stretched out on the level rock I'd selected for an observation post and hoped no rattlers wanted to come out and take the sun.

The man carried a battered leather satchel over his shoulder and what looked like a scoped .223 rifle in his right hand. A bush hat shaded his eyes, and a pair of binoculars hung around his neck. He placed his paraphernalia on a rock and stripped off his rain gear. He spread the poncho on a flat shelf and disappeared. *What the fuck?* I stared through my Leica's for a full five minutes before I picked up an outline. His clothes made him blend into the landscape. The storm had caused him to move, otherwise, I wouldn't have spotted him. Once detected, his image became sharper. He'd assumed the position, flat on

his belly, propped on his elbows, field glasses trained on the main house.

I checked the load in my Glock, shoved it into my shoulder holster and crab-walked to a boulder twenty feet back from my position and out of his line of sight. Once I felt safe, I stood and stretched. *Way too old for this kind of shit.* I peeked over the rock, shaded the binoculars with my hat, and checked to make sure my man hadn't moved. I wouldn't feel so alone if Mike, my old collie, were with me. Bile rose in my throat when I thought of the moron who ran him down.

The familiar terrain belonged to me. I worked my way several hundred yards downwind and around the backside of the slope until I judged I stood behind his position. My running shoes may not have been official western wear, but they didn't make noise on the rough surface. If he spotted me from a distance, the rifle would give him a huge advantage, but close quarters would give the edge to my pistol and knife. I patted the handle of the worn Ka Bar blade strapped on my thigh. Five inches of hell—that's what my old platoon sergeant called it.

Sweat poured from my hat band and ran into my eyes. The hill hadn't looked this steep from a distance. A rock gave way and started a small slide, but the wind muted the sound. The breeze helped cool me while my shirt dried on my back—good thing, because the backside of the incline lay exposed to the sun's full blast. Hell's furnace. I slipped and banged my knee on a small, sharp stone, and blood seeped through the tear in my Levi's. *Goddamn it.*

The only other time I'd stalked a man, I'd had my rifle squad around me. Flying solo this time. *What if he sees me coming? What if he's better?*

When I reached the top of the rise, I took off my hat, wiped my face with the old red bandana I carried, and peered over the precipice. The sun glared off the sand-colored rocks and into my face. It made me dizzy, and I had to squint to see anything. The watcher's chosen spot lay no more than fifty yards down and away from where I stood. The hair on the nape of my neck rose when I realized my visitor had vamoosed.

I scrunched down beside the rock barrier and curled into a ball. If he knew I'd spotted him, he could perch anywhere and take me out at his pleasure. The fetal position offered some comfort. At least I'd die the same way I'd been born.

I don't know how long I stayed like that. My back, arms and legs cramped in agony. Parboiled in my own perspiration, salt stung my eyes. I remembered George C. Scott in *Patton*. He told somebody that he dreamt about a bullet hitting him in the middle of his forehead. I squirmed around and hoped I could see it before it found me.

After an hour, or a day, I don't know which, I heard a car door slam in the opposite direction of the house. A pickup truck engine rumbled. Whoever had been here had pulled up stakes, or so I told myself. I stood and yanked the small plastic bottle from the pouch on my belt, sipped the tepid liquid, and longed for an ice-cold beer.

I stumbled from the lee of the rocks and moved in a crouch toward the area where I'd seen the watcher. The sunburn on the back of my neck and hands tingled, and my jeans itched like third-degree mange. Had a tarantula crawled up my pant leg? I jumped up and down and jiggled, but nothing came out. Nerves.

Cigarette butts lay scattered across the ground, and a crumpled plastic water bottle had lodged in a fault in the rocks.

Maybe the trash could tell me something. I'd always known that somebody would come looking. Cops would have walked into my house and busted me, so it had to be someone else.

I scanned the area one more time for anything that might provide clues. A white flash in the sand at the end of the small arroyo got my attention. The envelope could have fallen from his haversack. My sweat turned cold when I pulled out the black and white photograph of Darlene and me, taken from a distance. My arm hung over her shoulder and we laughed at something. A familiar buzz roused me, chips flew from the rock above my head, and I hit the ground hard.

Once you've been under fire and know the sound, you don't forget it. Someone had just thrown a round my way. The rifle's crack followed a millisecond later. A thousand-yard shot based

Larry Seeley

on the time lapse. A warning? A poacher who mistook me for a big cat? Then I heard the same truck engine start and grind away somewhere to the east. I felt the small trickle of blood from a stone cut on my cheek. He'd gone, but left his calling card.

Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves

CHAPTER 1

Vegas—Two Years Earlier

Some women are too beautiful to approach. My next-door neighbor at the Manhattan co-op where I'd moved after my divorce fit the category. I'd heard she was an actress, but she never came out before noon, so maybe she did something else. She wore jogging gear the day we talked.

My eyes locked on her flawless skin. I introduced myself as her neighbor. I know, she said. You like to run? I asked her. She said she used to like it, but she runs now because she has to.

You can run from or run to. I had to run from. I couldn't face going back after what happened in Sacramento. The two guys I'd killed, Lonnie and Chris, painted pictures in my mind every day. The purple bruises that covered Lonnie's face, Chris sucking air while his blood pumped into the dirt.

I sold everything I owned, including the condo, and banked the money. On top of the sale proceeds, I had fifty thousand in cash and two ounces of primo coke I'd taken from Lonnie. I used some of the cash to do something I'd always fantasized about and bought a one-way, first-class ticket to Las Vegas. I could get lost there, a town where nobody cares.

* * *

I'd been in town for six months. Drinking, doping, and whoring too much, but that was my business. Late one night, I sat alone at a \$100 minimum blackjack table in an almost-deserted casino. I liked playing solo. No need for conversation, and I could shut out the rest of the world while I counted down the

deck. A familiar-looking man in a tie and jacket approached me. Anybody dressed like that in a Vegas casino is an employee, and the Bernini suit screamed high up on the food chain.

“Jack, my name is Bill Farrington. I’m the General Manager here.” He extended his hand and I shook it.

“I know who you are Mr. Farrington. What can I do for you?” It took me time to focus. I’d just gone to the bathroom for a snort, and the lights, music, and smells of the casino rushed at me.

“Nothing personal, Jack, but when you’re finished at this table, we’re putting limits on your action. You’ll be permitted to wager five dollars per bet, and play no more than one hand at a time. To be blunt, we don’t want your business.”

I scrutinized him. Grey hair, golf tan, trim physique, smooth like a banker. One of the big boys.

“I thought you said ‘nothing personal’? This sounds personal to me. What’s the deal? I don’t cheat. I haven’t broken any rules.” I shook my head to clear the dust. Why should they fuck with me?

“You’ve been hammering the BJ tables for six months, and you don’t lose. Add it up. You play large money, you win, and sometimes you win big. You hit and run. We call guys like you *Desperados*.”

“Hey, I put my money up same as the other players. So I’m lucky. Aren’t you in the gambling business? I’m easy to please. Leave me alone, and I’ll return the favor.”

“No. We’re in business to make money, and we won’t make it from you. I like you Jack. I’ve watched you play, and you’re courteous and generous to the staff, but go gamble somewhere else. My advice to you would be to take your winnings and leave town.”

While we talked, I continued to play. I won six hands in a row and, with a plus-twenty-three deck, parlayed my bet up to five thousand dollars. I looked at my cards—a three and an eight. The dealer, a young guy in a vest and bow tie, showed a face card. I pushed another five grand next to my bet and took the card down. The dealer flipped his hole card—a five. Fifteen.

I peeked at my double down card—a three of spades. Fuck. The dealer drew an ace. Sixteen.

Farrington, who'd been about to say something, got quiet.

It doesn't matter how many hands you play, if you're a gambler, the thrill still comes. I watched the dealer fumble with the shoe and extract the next card. My heart beat faster.

He didn't come close.

"Get outta here," he slapped the eight of spades on the table and grinned. "Easy game."

I pulled twenty thousand to my pile, gave the dealer four hundred, and pushed all my chips toward him to color up. He changed the hundreds and five-hundreds for yellow, thousand-dollar tokens.

Sometimes I listen. I said a fond farewell to the best deck I'd seen in a while, took my winnings, wished Farrington a good night and walked to the cage and cashed out. I didn't gamble in a casino again for over a year. Lonnie's fifty had turned into five hundred.

The hiatus ended—I never sit still for long, and I'd been deprived of the right to screw away the rest of my life on blackjack, drinking, and fucking. I didn't want to give up the latter two. I concluded that I needed an occupation. Straight business didn't interest me, and the most significant moment of my life up to that time came when I'd shoved the bridge of Lonnie's nose into his brain. I'd think of something.

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