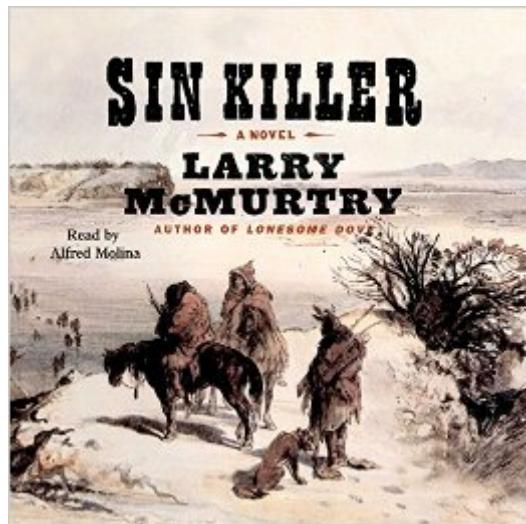


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# Sin Killer (Western Series)



## **Synopsis**

It is 1830, and the Berrybender family -- rich, aristocratic, English, and fiercely out of place -- is on its way up the Missouri River to see the American West as it begins to open up. Lord and Lady Berrybender have abandoned their palatial home in England to explore the frontier and to broaden the horizons of their children, who include Tasmin, a budding young woman of grit, beauty, and determination, her vivacious and difficult sister, and her brother. As they journey by rough stages up the Missouri River, they meet with all the dangers, difficulties, temptations, and awesome natural scenery of the untamed West. At the very core of the story is Tasmin's fast-developing relationship with Jim Snow, frontiersman, ferocious Indian fighter, and part-time preacher. Known up and down the Missouri as "the Sin Killer," he's the handsome, silent Westerner who eventually captures her heart. Against the immense backdrop of the American West, Larry McMurtry tracks this engaging family as they make their way up the great river, surviving attacks, discomfort, savage weather, and natural disaster. Sin Killer is an adventure story full of incident, and suspense, as well as a charming love story between a headstrong and aristocratic young Englishwoman and the stubborn, shy, and very American Jim Snow. As big as the West itself, this is the kind of story that only Larry McMurtry can write.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Larry McMurtry is one of the best known western writers today. He won a Pulitzer Prize for his "Lonesome Dove" trilogy and is also known for "Terms of Endearment" and "The Last Picture

Show". Now, he's taken on a big task - a four-novel series he calls "The Berrybender Narratives". This book, "Sin Killer" is Book 1 and was just published in May of 2002. A mere 300 pages long, it's a wild comedic ride with the Berrybender family in 1832. They've come over from England and are on a boat making its way up the Missouri River. There's Lord Berrybender, his wife, his mistress, six of his 14 legitimate children, servants, guides, tutors, artists and a couple of Indian chiefs traveling home after being feted in Washington. The family is rich and spoiled and totally clueless. They meet a variety of tragedies but the writer presents it all as a farce, and I couldn't help laughing out loud at times. Central to the plot is the oldest daughter, Tasmin. She falls in love with an American God-fearing frontiersman named Jim Snow, nicknamed "Sin Killer" by the Indians. Their romance is hilarious as are the other events in the book, as the many characters meet with accidents, violent death and love affairs. Several of the women are held captive by the Indians, some of the men are caught in a snowstorm while out shooting buffalo, and the wild and wooly frontier itself plays a role in the story. There are lots and lots of characters who romp across the pages, each with a distinctive personality, profession and passion. I loved them all. This is a fun book, not to be taken seriously. It's just pure entertainment all the way and the action never stops. I loved it. And, since all the threads of the complex plot were certainly not tied together on the last page, I am eagerly awaiting Book 2. I sure hope it's released soon because I can't wait to continue this very enjoyable saga.

Recommended.

Reading through the reviews for Sin Killer, I see there is a decided split of opinion about this one. I really enjoyed the novel, but I can see how many would absolutely hate it. I think if you are looking for a Western in the Lonesome Dove vein, keep looking and don't pick this one up. I think the publishers do this novel a disservice by packaging it in the manner of Lonesome Dove. If you enjoy a good tongue-in-cheek romp, one that will take you a little below the surface if you want to, then give Sin Killer a try. Larry McMurtry is certainly a talented writer. I have read many of his novels, and on the storytelling level, none ever fail to disappoint and in that connection Sin Killer makes enjoyable reading. The story of the Berrybender family--an eccentric collection of British nutcases in the early 18th century who decide to explore the American west on a steamboat so the borderline insane patriarch can go hunting--is, of course, absurd. The story, however, allows McMurtry to explore the differences between American and British culture at the time, enabling him to smash through the assumptions that the Americans were wild and uncivilized. Most characters in the novel (except for perhaps the Sin Killer himself) are full of folly and hubris, and McMurtry exploits them to our benefit. The characters in the novel form a microcosm of their respective societies--everyone

being an exaggeration. The story is fun and makes for fun reading (so long as you can forget you ever read *Lonesome Dove*). If you can handle this one not being anything like *Lonesome Dove* (other than it being written by McMurtry and taking place in the American West), if you are looking for an enjoyable, humorous read, pick this one up. It's a lot of fun.

If you've been nostalgic for the years when *Bonanza*, *Gunsmoke*, and *Maverick* were hits on television, take heart. Larry McMurtry is still cranking out the gothic westerns. *SIN KILLER* is the first offering of a four-volume work set along the Missouri River in the 1830's. An English family that includes Lord and Lady Berrybender and their fourteen children along with their entourage is bent on exploring the untamed American West. The cast of characters numbers fifty-eight (Don't worry, there's a glossary), headed by Tasmin Berrybender, a willful young lady who falls in love with Jim Snow (think Jim Bridger) and is nonplused when he doesn't hang on her every word and deed. The other plot line involves how often Lord Albany Berrybender gets himself in some kind of pickle, shooting off his toes at one point, getting caught in a blizzard in another. Twelve-year-old Mary Berrybender was perhaps the most engaging character. She is erudite beyond her years and has mysterious powers, the ability to sniff out edible roots, Jerusalem artichokes, tubers, onions. Ever since *LONESOME DOVE* and *Blue Duck*, I've been impressed with McMurtry's facility with Indian names. In this one, we've got Big White, The Hairy Horn, Neighing Horses, Blue Thunder, and Cat Head. Three of these are old men being escorted back home from a parley in Washington D.C. by Toussaint Charbonneau (the guide on the Louis and Clark expedition). He keeps losing them when the steamboat snags on a sandbar. There's lots of ravaging and fornication going on, rather much if you're the prudish sort. McMurtry is having a wonderful time making fun of nineteenth century aristocracy. *SIN KILLER* would qualify as a comic novel if so many characters weren't falling down stairs breaking their necks or being hacked to death by axes. The novel also comes to a screeching halt, abrupt, even for a four-part novel.

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