

## Chapter I

### Captivity and Rescue

When I was a girl, I came to be called *Kóshkeya*. I cannot say why. The name means *Deer* in the Lipan dialect. In my life, I have had many names, but *Kóshkeya* is how I was known to the Texians for whom I scouted and to whom I gave my loyalty. I knew them all—James Bowie, Henry Wax Karnes, Ben Milam, Isaac Watts Burton, James Walker Fannin, William Barret Travis, Thomas Jefferson Rusk, Mirabeau B Lamar—and they, of course, knew me; some better than others; some, in fact, as Adam knew Eve. I even met Sam Houston once. He shook my hand and thanked me for my service.

“Nice work, son,” is what he said. “Well done.”

I did not correct him. Nor were my feelings hurt. It was by design that I looked so much like a boy. Whenever I was scouting for the Texian Army or for the Rangers, I wore buckskins and a broad-brimmed hat similar to those worn by the Kentuckians and Tennesseans, whom I so admired. During the Comanche Wars, I carried a brace of Paterson Colt revolvers, one in a holster on my hip, the other in the waistband of my trousers. I knew how to use them too. They were damned heavy, at least for a scrawny little girl such as I, but I practiced hour after hour until I could hit whatever I aimed at, even from horseback at a full gallop. Those were my glory days, and I lived them to the hilt. Telling you about it now is my way of reliving the adventure one last time.

But let me back up a few years here. My childhood or the better part of it was spent with my father's people, the Lipan Apaches, who call themselves the *Light Grey People*. My paternal grandfather Xolic was the leader of our band. You will find his name in the history books, I think. My mother, Constancia Ballardo, died of yellow fever when I was not yet fully grown. She was not Apache herself, but of the Tejano people. She hailed from a family of publicans. My maternal grandparents owned an inn and tavern in the city of San Antonio de Béxar, which, in later years, came to be called *San Antonio*, but in those days,

was usually referred to simply as *Béxar*. I was a frequent visitor there and always welcome. Two aunts—elder sisters of my mother—helped to run this establishment. To this side of my family I was known as *Manuela*.