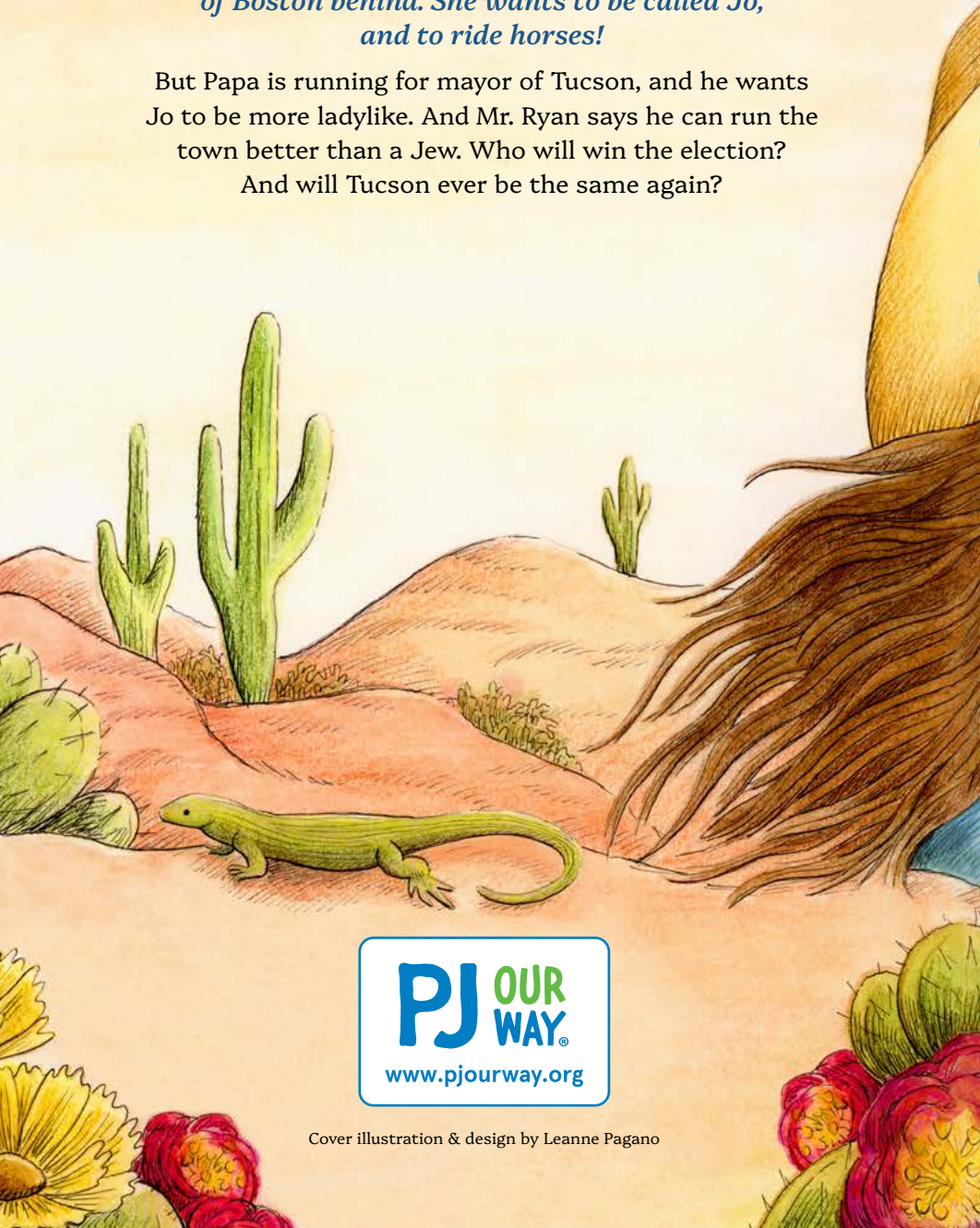


*Now that she's had a taste of the Wild West,
Josephine is determined to leave the stuffy world
of Boston behind. She wants to be called Jo,
and to ride horses!*

But Papa is running for mayor of Tucson, and he wants Jo to be more ladylike. And Mr. Ryan says he can run the town better than a Jew. Who will win the election?
And will Tucson ever be the same again?



Cover illustration & design by Leanne Pagano

Tucson Jo

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While the events described and some of the characters in this book may be based on actual historical events and real people, Josephine “Jo” Fiedler and the other main characters are fictional, created by the author, and the story is a work of fiction.

Cover design for this edition by Leanne Pagano.

Originally published in 2014 by Fictive Press.

Printed in Ningbo, China, by Ningbo Union Printing Products Co., LTD.

Manufactured for the Harold Grinspoon Foundation,
67 Hunt Street, Suite 100, Agawam, MA 01001

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Dust.

I cough.

Mabel coughs.

Isaac coughs.

Even Mama coughs.

Papa refuses to cough. Papa prefers to pretend that there is no dust storm poised to unleash its full fury upon us from the desert. He has gathered us in the courtyard for some sort of “pronouncement.”

Isaac is trying to reach a fig from the tree overhead. Mabel has her sketchbook out and is hard at work reproducing a hummingbird.

I am straightening my new trousers. Well, hardly new. I snuck them away from Isaac, who like Papa is built small and slight. Isaac might only be a year younger than I am but he looks like he could be two, even three years my

junior. I have grown, as Mama says, like a poplar tree, tall and straight and strong. I needed to add three inches of fabric to the bottom of the trouser legs so they would reach my ankles.

Papa stares at me, forgetting for a moment his impending talk.

“What is the meaning of this?” he asks, his voice quiet but all the more menacing for that. I much prefer it when he shouts.

“Aren’t they dashing?” I answer, forcing my voice to be as nonchalant as possible.

Papa’s face pales.

“Dashing? Dashing?” He turns to Mama and in that same quiet voice says, “Anna, I am about to run for mayor of Tucson.”

“Well dear,” Mama says, “I’m not sure what one thing has to do with the other.”

“I’ll tell you what,” Papa says, his voice growing louder. “I am running on ‘law and order.’ I cannot have my daughter flouting the rules.” He walks over to me. “You have not been outdoors in those have you?”

“What if I have?” I reply, gazing down upon him, trying to look unconcerned. Of course I would never *dream* of going outdoors in trousers without Papa’s express permission. That exact permission had been the point of putting them on now, as a type of test. So

far, judging by his reaction, the test isn't going very well.

Mabel puts her pencil and her sketchbook down. "Are you really going to be mayor, Papa?" she asks.

"Not if your sister goes around like that, I'm not," he says grimly. "That was, however, the announcement I intended to make. Perhaps, Josephine, you would like to explain yourself. You are not a child any longer. You are a young lady who has just had her fourteenth birthday. And yet you feel you can dress up as a five-year-old would at play time."

A five-year-old? I can feel my blood boil.

"May I remind you, *Father*," I say, trying to keep my voice calm and the tone even to prove to him I certainly am *not* five, "that when we left Boston, you made me a promise. If you recall, I did not want to leave my friends and my school and travel to this," and I gesture around me, "this wilderness. I wished to stay put. But you promised me that every mile we traveled would be a mile away from the stiff and stodgy world of Boston and one mile closer to freedom for me."

I dare not pause, because I know Papa will try to dominate the argument if given the chance. "And now we are here and I have embraced the Wild West. I am even trying to learn to ride a horse! In short, I am keeping to my part of the bargain. But I fear I cannot say the same for you."

I have just finished reading *Emma* by Jane Austen, and perhaps my speech reflects that a little too much? Still, I do have a point to make and I want to make it with force.

It seems to work because Papa's face goes from pale white to bright red, and Mama says in a low warning voice, "Jo, perhaps another time, dear?"

But it is too late for that. Isaac ignores us and continues to search for figs. Mabel picks up a different pencil and begins to fine-tune her sketch. They know what is about to happen. Neither Papa nor I will back down. We never do.

I remember the first big fight I ever had with Papa was on my sixth birthday when he expected me to recite a short poem he had taught me for my birthday gathering, and I changed it to something I thought was better. He informed me in no uncertain terms, later, that mine had been no improvement on the original written by some great poet, and I had informed him that mine was better by half! He couldn't believe that I was not accepting his word for what was superior and he has had trouble with my independent thinking ever since!

Papa takes a deep breath and says, his voice trembling with anger, "There is freedom, Jo, and there

is freedom. You do not understand. Without law, without order, there is no freedom.”

“And do you truly believe that my wearing trousers will bring down civilization as we know it?” I ask.

He actually pauses for a moment, as if considering my statement before he replies.

“I think,” he says slowly, “that what Tucson needs right now is a sense of propriety, decorum and a civilizing influence. I intend to do away with the bawdy houses that proliferate on Main Street. I intend to pave the streets and when genteel people walk those paved streets it will be in proper attire and with dignity. Do I think women wearing trousers will contribute to that dignity? Not at all. In fact, now that you have forced me to consider this, I believe I will draft a new ordinance outlawing it altogether.”

He looks at me then, and a quiet calm comes over him. As if he knows that there is nothing, nothing at all I can do or say to change anything.