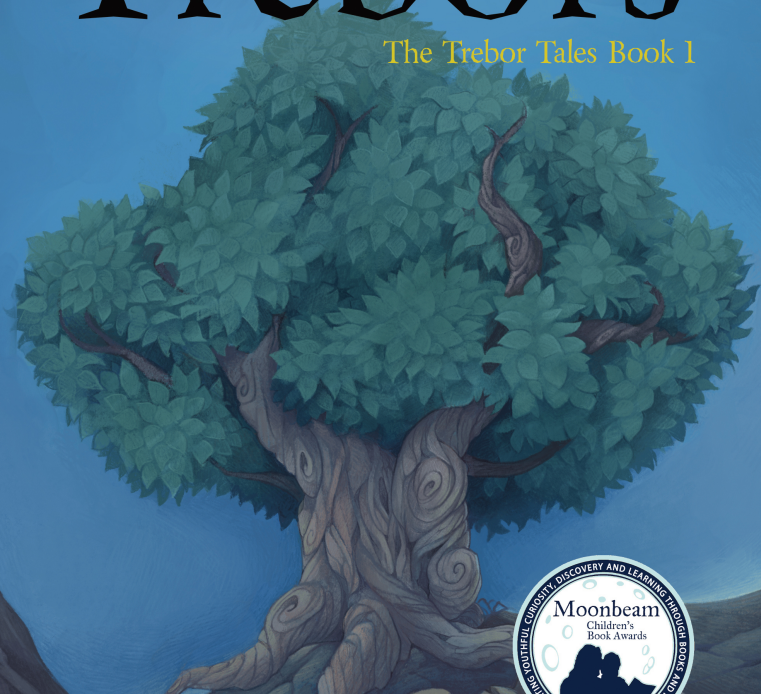


The Trebors

The Trebor Tales Book 1



"...an INCREDIBLE, magical book!"
Miss W Book Reviews

Caroline C. Barney

The Trebors

Trebor Tales, Book 1

Caroline C. Barney



Relax. Read. Repeat.

The Trebors (Trebor Tales, Book 1)
By Caroline C. Barney
Published by TouchPoint Press
Brookland, AR 72417
www.touchpointpress.com

Copyright © 2020 Caroline C. Barney
All rights reserved.

ISBN-13: 978-1-946920-99-7

This is a work of fiction. Names, places, characters, and events are fictitious.

Any similarities to actual events and persons, living or dead, are purely coincidental. Any trademarks, service marks, product names, or named features are assumed to be the property of their respective owners and are used only for reference. If any of these terms are used, no endorsement is implied. Except for review purposes, the reproduction of this book, in whole or part, electronically or mechanically, constitutes a copyright violation. Address permissions and review inquiries to media@touchpointpress.com.

Editor: Jenn Haskin
Cover Design: Codex Art & Apparel
Map image design: Michael William Aldinger

Visit the author's website at carolinebarney.com

First Edition

Printed in the United States of America.

Chapter 1

The tree shook violently. The winds and rain rushed through its branches, bending, pulling, and twisting its limbs. Stella's chest tightened and her fingers tingled. She took a deep breath and tried to calm her nerves as she clung tightly to her family. With her eyes squeezed shut Stella attempted to block out the terror of the storm by thinking of the quiet from the day before. The gentle winds had meant a cooler evening with the dancing and singing of the other Trebors. She wished she could go back and take part this time. But even as she tried to distract herself with these thoughts, the howling winds and screaming voices forced Stella to open her eyes. The tingling in her hands returned and crept up her arms and down her spine. She shuddered and slid her knees in more closely to her mother. Her younger brother, Ebert, lay on her mother's lap, tucked into a tight ball with his blanket looped around his pinkie finger and pressed against his face.

"Shhhh... shhhh... it'll end soon," her mother whispered into Ebert's ear. She wrapped her arm around Stella's knees and pulled her closer as she spoke to Ebert. Stella let herself rest against her mother's embrace, her warm body soothing the twitching that bristled Stella's fur. Ebert whimpered again and Stella lay her head

on top of his long, curly, blond hair. She ran her fingers in circles along the fur on his arm, trying to bring him some comfort. The floor they sat on shook as the wind howled and Ebert only moaned more loudly. She dropped her hand from his arm and sat up straight to look directly at her mother.

“Yama, what if the tree can’t hold?” Stella whispered.

“The tree will hold. Remember, our tribe has lived here for hundreds of years. Its roots are strong and most of our homes are built within the trunk, where it is the strongest... it will hold,” Yama replied.

Stella felt annoyed by the thinness in her mother’s voice and by another answer that her mother certainly doubted herself. She was twelve now, she didn’t need her mother to protect her from the truth. She shook her head, pulled away from her mother, and slid a few feet away from them. The roaring wind shook the tree again and she pressed her back against the wall to steady herself. A sudden flash of lightening lit the inside of the tree. The bright explosion bounced off of something swinging violently back and forth in the corner of her home. Stella squinted to focus her eyes. It was her father’s pouch, the one he usually wore around his neck. There was no mistaking its long, worn, leather string, with the tiny cloth pouch dangling at the bottom. The pouch swung so vigorously that Stella was surprised she hadn’t noticed it before. *Why didn’t her father have it with him?* She thought. *He always carried it on him.* Yet, there it was dangling from a hook in the tree’s bark. She had to get to the pouch to save it from flying off the hook and getting lost.

Slowly, Stella pushed herself up to her feet. She stood with her arms wide and her knees bent, but the tree lurched and sent her crashing back to her knees. She peered back at her mother, but the sound of the storm had blocked the noise of her fall. Her mother was too busy comforting Ebert to notice what Stella was doing. Once again, she pushed herself to her feet, and when she was able to stand, she took a small step. Emboldened by this small progress, she took a larger step and then another. She reached her arm towards the pouch, but the tree heaved again. She was knocked off her feet and landed hard on her knee once more. A sharp pain ran through her leg. Yama grabbed Stella's forearm and pulled hard. Stella slid across the floor back to where her mother and Ebert sat, the force of her mother's grip left no room for alternatives.

"Why won't you stay still and listen to me? You can't go anywhere. The tree is doing the work. There is nothing we can do. Stop making this harder than it already is!" Yama hissed.

Stella gave in to her mother's grasp and crumbled against her brother. She sat in silence rubbing the exposed skin on her knee where the fur had torn off. The pouch swung back and forth, back and forth. Her heart seemed to beat in rhythm with the swinging pouch, its pattern harsh, quick, and erratic. The wind howled and the tree groaned. Branches snapped as the wind pulled limbs from the tree's trunk. The pouring rain grew louder outside, echoing in the hollow core of the tree. Lightning came in fits and bursts, blinding Stella with its glare. The thunder was deafening.

"We had signs that the storm was brewing on the other side of Mt. Bor weeks ago... why couldn't we do more to prepare?"

she yelled to her mother. “How can you all be so sure that the tree is going to hold... and Yapa... Yapa...he just left us here in the tree with nothing to help us fight against the storm. Why would he and the other elders leave like that?” She was angry and her voice betrayed her emotions.

The blood rose in her mother’s checks, the pink hue of the skin under her fur slowly became crimson. There was a catch in Yama’s voice as she replied, “You know your father and the others did everything they could to reinforce the homes. We are lucky that our home is in the trunk, not in the branches. Those families had to leave their homes behind to get closer to the tree’s core to ride out the storm.”

“Ok then... if this is the safest place, why did Yapa and the others leave? What’d they think they would find elsewhere?” Stella replied.

“None of us knew the storm would hit so soon, Stella. Their expedition was to gather more supplies. We didn’t know they wouldn’t make it back in time,” Yama yelled to be heard over the growing noises of the storm.

“But where do you think he found shelter?” Ebert asked. He sobbed and his small body shook as he tried to speak. Stella fell silent. Her mother dropped her head and turned her attention back to Ebert. They had forgotten he was listening.

“Shhhhh. It’s okay. Yapa is fine,” Yama replied calmly, rocking Ebert to soothe him. She turned to Stella and leaned into her, her lips at Stella’s ear, “*Enough*, Stella.”

It was Stella’s cheeks that burned now. She lowered her chin and closed her eyes. A deep, low growl echoed around her, and a chill caught in her bones, making her tremble. No storm had

ever sounded like this before. A screech pierced the air, and Stella pressed her hands hard to her ears. All around her the tree responded to the storm. It sounded like it was alive, like it was one of them. It groaned and creaked as it fought the storm.

Then it suddenly shuddered. A quake rippled through its core.

Stella threw open her eyes. Water was gushing into the hollow of the tree. Limbs had been ripped from the tree's trunk and left behind holes exposing the terror of the storm. Water poured in the holes and flooded the bottom of the tree's hollow. The huge, arched doors that stood as the tree's entry were covered in a matter of moments. The water rose quickly and violently.

"Run... get higher... run... climb," a voice yelled from somewhere in the dark tree.

Stella and her mother jumped to their feet, her mother swung Ebert on her back. They staggered to join the other Trebors running and climbing towards the tree's inner core. Hundreds of Trebors scrambled up the core's central stairway, winding, winding, higher and higher. Those that couldn't climb were pulled to higher places by the chain of Trebors. Teams worked together to make sure the children were as high as they could go, giving them the chance to squeeze into the places in the core that only the smallest could possibly manage to fit in. Stella and her mother hurried to put Ebert into one of these nooks. He looked safe there, in one of the tree's most secure crevices. The adults and older children hung close by, tying themselves to parts of the tree attached to the core, digging their claws into the bark as deeply as they could. There was nowhere

left to go now. They were as high as possible inside the tree. It was only a matter of time before the water would rise to meet them there. No one screamed. No one spoke. It was up to the tree now to keep them alive.

The tree groaned and screeched. Rain pounded the sides of the tree, thunder echoed along the inside walls. And then, just when Stella felt she couldn't withstand the tormenting noise any longer, it faded away. She relaxed her shoulders and smiled. But her relief was cut short as, to her horror, it was replaced by a torrent of harsh, crackling sound. It was even louder and more terrifying than the heavy rains. Explosions filled the air. Stella's ears rang. The tree shook as the giant booms filled the space where they all hid. It wasn't just Stella that shook, the other Trebors were all shaking as she was. Even her mother, a few inches from her, couldn't still her body. The sight scared Stella as much as the monstrous sounds around her. No Trebor was strong enough to stop it, even the elders were helpless, the torment of the storm was too great. Stella pressed herself closer to the tree wall and once again squeezed her eyes shut.

Chapter 2

Disoriented and exhausted, Stella could not tell how long she had been clinging to the inside of the tree. The sad and withdrawn look on her fellow Trebor's faces told her that she was not the only one losing hope.

And then, pirouetting through the tree, a small voice began to sing.

The little voice tumbled out from a crevice in the tree like a small beacon to the other Trebors clinging nearby. The sound was sweet, perfect, and seemed to hold no fear. One by one other Trebors began to sing along. With each new voice, the sounds of the storm seemed to fall away. Stella joined the singing too, her voice trembled as her off-key notes drifted to meet the notes of the others. Ebert's voice rose from his small hiding place, shaky at first but stronger with each passing verse, and soon her mother's voice rang out as well, her tone clear and strong. The collective voices bounced throughout the tree. They all sang as one. As their voices grew louder Stella could hear less of the storm, and with each new voice the howling seemed to wane. The storm let off another loud clap, but the Trebors only sang louder. The lightning still flashed, but the tree did not shake. As they sang, the low grumbles of the storm faded further and further away. As quickly

as the anger of the storm had descending on them, it stopped. A stillness sat in the air and all of the Trebors fell silent.

Stella held her breath and looked carefully around her for the reaction of the others, she was afraid to exhale in case the silence would be broken and the storm roar again. Her ears perked up, standing in perfect triangles on top of her head. The little voice began to sing again. All at once, with voices loud and triumphant, every Trebor joined in. Stella pulled in her claws to release her grip and jumped to a platform below where she had been hanging, her wide feet smacked on the wood floor. Yama dropped down to join her. She sang loudly. Stella smiled and grabbed her mother's hand, weaving their long fingers together. Tears ran down Yama's face and Stella felt the salty taste of her own tears on her lips. Ebert crawled out of his hiding space and leapt into his mother's arms. Yama laughed and hugged them both tightly. Stella buried her head between her mother and her brother, taking a deep breath. They had made it... they were alive!

Time passed slowly as all of the Trebors cautiously came back to life. Families and friends scattered throughout the tree hugged, cried, and rejoiced at the passing of the storm. Stella's hands no longer trembled, and the shaking that had rattled her bones for so many hours also stopped. She wriggled her fingers, so the blood rushed back through her long, skinny hands, making her claws extend and her fur feel hot. She smoothed down the fur on her arms and brushed back the long, brown hair that had fallen into her eyes, tucking it behind her ears. She checked her knee and found a large bump with dried blood

caked at its edges. She tried to brush the blood away, but it stung when she touched it and she pulled her hand away.

“Does it hurt?” Yama asked.

“No, it’s fine, I’m fine,” Stella replied.

“You could have been really hurt trying to move around during the storm by yourself.”

“I was just trying to get to...” Stella began to reply, but Yama held up a tired hand and interrupted, “I don’t want to hear ‘I was just’,” she said.

Stella nodded and avoided her mother’s piercing, round eyes. She gritted her teeth. Ebert climbed closer to Stella and took her hand in his. He was still clutching his blanket with his other hand, but it was now a soggy mess. Stella took it from his hand and squeezed out the water. He smiled and took it back from her. His little ears perked up and a small smile pulled at the corner of his mouth, setting his small, button sized nose twitching. Stella tried to smile at her mother.

“Ok, sorry,” Stella said.

Seeming satisfied with Stella’s response, Yama squeezed her children to her again, giving them a long, hard hug before saying, “I need to find the other elders now and figure out what the plan is. Stella, look after Ebert.”

“But don’t you want to check our home first, Yama? We climbed away so quickly; shouldn’t we make sure the water did not rise to its level?” Stella asked.

“You can go and check. Take your brother with you. I am more concerned with the homes built away from the core. I’m worried others have lost everything,” Yama said. She started to

climb towards a group of adults gathering on a landing nearby. Stella watched her mother climb away and shook her head.

The low hum of the Trebors' voices filled the vast, open hollow in the core of the tree. Trebors everywhere were taking stock of the damage left by the storm. Stretching thousands of feet above and below them the inside of the tree, her home, bore the signs of the storm's terror. Stella put her face in her hands and thought again of the day before. She had taken for granted the mighty doors that closed off the giant opening at the base of the tree. Everyday those doors were swung open and the sun jumped off their ornate carvings. Stella had often stood in front of them wondering how many Trebors it must have taken to create such beautiful, massive doors. She felt grateful for their strength that held off the worst of the storm. From those doors, she had always felt so small as she looked up at the massive inside hollow of the tree that stretched beyond her sight to the highest point of the tree's reach. The rumors of old suggested the tree was born of a match between the ancient sequoia and maple trees. No living Trebor had seen the days when the sequoia and maple trees populated the forests, but the elders told stories past down from generation to generation about these past trees. According to legend, the trunk of the great tree bore the breadth and might of the sequoia, while the branches and leaves reflected the grace of the maple tree. There was no other tree like their home in all of the lands of Bori or beyond.

The hollow inside the tree was walled by the tree's strong, smooth wood, its outer rings. The walls were thick enough for homes to be burrowed safely within them, a vertical city of

homes. Giant, round openings pocked the inside of the tree's walls leading to tunnels that were the inside of the tree's branches. Small storage ran the length of these tunnels, stretching the Trebors' inside city to the tree's widest points. The core of the tree always shone with peaceful colors and warmth danced on its walls. In the center of the hollow, the inner most rings of the tree were built into a spiral staircase that twisted its way to the highest points of the tree. And somehow it had all survived.

Stella opened her eyes quickly to look again at the stairway. It was badly mangled at the bottom but remained mostly intact as it wound its way upward. Water pooled on some of the lower level landings that jutted out from homes in the tree's thick walls. The landings, which looked like shelf mushrooms climbing up the inside of the tree, were not damaged badly and Stella felt relieved. The cave-like homes burrowing into the tree walls were littered with food, furniture, clothes and treasure. Lifetimes' worth of family belongings were strewn everywhere. Many struggled through tears as they peered into their home. They had sad expressions that clung to their open, round faces.

"Come on Ebert, let's look for ourselves," Stella said.

Stella and Ebert carefully descended towards their home. The water below them was receding quickly, but the inside of the tree was still damp and chilly. Under Stella's hand, the usually warm bark of the tree felt slick and cold. As they climbed down, shadows fell over the landings, giving them only a dim light to illuminate their way. The meager light came from streams of sun piercing through gaps in the tree's wall. Great holes littered the walls of the inside of the tree where branches

had been ripped from the trunk. So many crops and supplies had been nestled down the long tunnels of the branches. But now they were gone. Entire harvests had vanished, blown into the vortex of the storm. Stella stopped climbing and stared at a hole a few feet to her right. She fought back anger as she scurried towards the opening.

“I thought we’re going home,” Ebert said.

“Look,” Stella pointed to the hole. “The branch is gone. It’s just a window to outside now. I want to see. I want to know what it looks like out there.”

“But Yama wouldn’t like that. Shouldn’t we go home and wait for the elders to tell us what to do?” Ebert rubbed his bright, blue eyes, they were red ringed and tired. Stella patted the damp fur on Ebert’s shoulder, gave it a squeeze, smiled at him, and waved for him to follow her. Ebert’s ears and nose twitched quickly. He climbed after his sister.

“STELLA!”

As Stella and Ebert reached the opening, Stella’s best friend Snu swung through the air. He landed easily beside Stella, catching the bark with his claws. As he landed, the grey streaks in his light brown fur shimmered and his spiked hair bounced. “That was crazy! I thought we were goners for sure!” he exclaimed. Snu punched Stella on the arm and grinned. His wide smile made his green eyes crinkle at the edges; the grey patch that surrounded his left eye made it sparkle in contrast.

“How can you joke?” Stella demanded.

Snu’s face grew serious. He lifted his left shoulder. “Sorry, I was just, I don’t know, trying to lighten things.”

Stella huffed.

“Ebert and I are going to take a look outside. I want to see what happened out there. Wait—Ebert? EBERT?”

Ebert had already climbed ahead of them. He slid his small body through one of the new holes created by the storm. His clawed feet dug deep into the bark as he steadied himself to shimmy through the space.

“Ugh,” Stella groaned and raced to the hole as Ebert disappeared. She stuck her head through the hole to see where Ebert had gone. He was hanging onto the rough bark outside. The look Stella saw on his face scared her, his wide eyes were glazed over with fear and sadness. She followed his stare.

She gasped.

Everything in Bori was destroyed. The forest floor was black and crackling. Smoke rose from the smoldering earth like snakes through the air. Pools of water gathered in great holes throughout the forest floor. A thin black film lay on top of the pools, catching the sun and sending an ugly glare off the surfaces. The few standing trees had no branches and looked like lone soldiers on a battlefield. Stella could not see beyond the hills to Mt. Bor because of the haze that filled the sky. The smoke clung to the air all around them. The sour stench of the air burnt the inside of her nose and the smoke stung her eyes. Ebert remained frozen, his eyes fixed ahead, his mouth hanging low.

“We should go back in,” she said.

“Where’s Yapa?” he asked in a whisper.

“He’s fine, he’ll be back soon, he has to be,” Stella mumbled. She grabbed Ebert’s arm and yanked him through the hole and back into the tree.

Throughout the grand, central hollow of the tree, the other Trebors were busy greeting one another and celebrating their survival. They moved quickly from home to home, up and down the twisting staircase. A happy buzz filled the space.

“They haven’t seen yet. They don’t know,” Ebert muttered.

“I know,” Stella sighed. “They haven’t even looked.”

“But the tree did save us, Stella. Why wasn’t Yapa here where we were safe?” Ebert asked.

“I wish I knew,” Stella huffed.

“What’d you see?” Snu interrupted, his eyes creasing at the edges.

Stella pulled Snu by the arms and dragged him to the hole. She grabbed his shoulder, pushing him against the opening. His plump body tightened and then deflated as she held his shoulder. Snu turned, wide-eyed, and looked at her, “Oh. . .” was all he could say.

The three climbed wordlessly to where Yama was standing with the other elders. They were an impressive group of Trebors. Their round, smooth faces, huge, wide set eyes and lopsided nostrils sitting on their button sized noses all mirrored each other in intensity. Their furrowed brows made the gentle, pink skin wrinkle under the light fur that covered their faces. Their ears did not move, but stood in formation like two mountain peaks on top of their heads. Their noses twitched so quickly they gave away the grave nature of the conversation. The dark brown streak that ran down Yama’s back stood on end and Stella reflectively flattened the brown, speckled fur on her arm. She wished she had the same light brown fur with the single streak of dark that made her mother so stunning, but instead she looked like her father. They were unique he used to tell Stella, and although she knew it gave them

a very special bond, it did little to make her feel better. Both she and Yapa had bright, white fur lining their chests while the rest of the Trebors' bodies covered in light brown fur. They all had their own hair colors and markings on their fur, but other than Yapa, no other Trebor had such a distinct difference like Stella's fronted, white streak. It was Ebert that looked most like their mother. His blue eyes, blond hair, and even colored, light brown fur were a perfect match. At least she too had Yama's long blond hair that spiked from her forehead until it fell flat and smooth to her shoulders. She was also just as strong and fit as her, if not more.

"Yama, Yama..." Stella got hold of her mother's shirt and gently tugged.

"Not now, Stella. We are talking about how to proceed, what to do next. Just watch Ebert and stay inside."

"But you haven't seen. Everything's gone," Stella insisted.

"I know. The others told me," Yama replied.

"But you haven't seen. Don't you want to see with your own eyes?"

"I trust the report from the others. For now, I'm more interested in making sure everyone is safe and cared for before nightfall. Now, please take your brother. Go. Be useful and leave us to figure out what needs to be done," Yama responded.

Stella threw her arms up and let them drop to her side. Yama ignored her dramatic gesture and turned back to the group.

"What's most important is that we stick together," Stella overheard Elder Malc saying. "I believe we should call for a tribe curfew. Night is almost upon us and we are safest together here, inside the tree. All Trebors should remain here until morning

breaks.” Elder Male’s voice carried through the passage as Stella walked away.

“Trapped again, useless...” she muttered under her breath.

What do you think Stella does next?
Does she venture into the devastated forest in search of her father?
Can she face what lurks in its deep crevices?

I'd love to hear what you think happens next!
You can be in touch (with your parent's permission) here

Instagram - @trebortales
Facebook - @carolinebarneyauthor
Email – caroline@carolinebarney.com

AND ~

If you'd like to keep reading (with your parent's permission)
You can download the full version from Amazon for only \$2.99!

You'll find all the links you need & more information at...

www.trebortales.com

OTHER BOOKS IN THE TREBOR TALES SERIES

👉 *RETURN OF THE MALPEDS – Available Now*

👉 *BOOK 3 – Coming Fall 2021*

*Proceeds from EVERY book sold
go to SAVE THE CHILDREN