

the
JOURNALS
series

The Dangerous Journey
The Lost Journey

the
Journey
series

W. Lenore Mobley

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Preface

Four decades before the beginning of the twentieth century, Idaho was still primarily a mining area. Its mineral and cattle interests were strong and dominated the land. The coming of the railroads changed that in two ways. It brought more people to the area, along with needed supplies for starting new settlements, and it took back cattle and sheep that the East Coast cities needed.

Many of these early pioneers were great, adventurous people looking for a new life. There were the first homestead acts that began as early as 1850, but rapid transfer of the land to private individuals was near the railroad lands. The settling of the less expensive land was often several hundred miles from these railroad towns.

The 1849 gold rush in California brought miners and others West. There was influence from Mormon Utah, mining Montana, and pioneer Oregon, much of which came from the influence of the Whitman missions. Gradually many of these pioneers turned from mining and lumbering to livestock-herding and farming.

Fort Boise was a bustling town in 1863. Many of its inhabitants were ranchers and their families, along with Basque shepherders and their families that were brought here from Spain and Portugal. The sheep barons expanded their grazing from Nevada into the high Idaho plains.

There began to be battles between the sheepmen and the cattle ranchers. The cattlemen claimed that the sheepmen encroached on

farming and cattle territory and spoiled the land for future use. The region had to be made safe and accessible for settlement. This led to new communities with self-government to combat violence.

Idaho became a territory in 1863. At that time, silver was purchased by the government to be minted into silver dollars. Placer mining was being replaced by more elaborate processes requiring heavy machinery. This required heavy capital. As a result, profit went more often to absentee capitalists than to resident prospectors and would-be miners. Better transportation was provided by the stage coach, the pony express, and, finally, the railroad was developed and heavily used.

Along with these came the telegraph, opening communications from East to West. Ranchers discovered that the treeless grasslands were ideal for grazing livestock, although before the railroads they had to drive cattle to cow town rail centers as far away as Nebraska. When the Desert Land Act was enacted in 1877, families could start homesteading for as little as a dollar and twenty-five cents an acre for a section of ground to call their own. They came by the hundreds and required safe and fast transportation. With this expansion, the railways—and the settlers they served—expanded further and further West.

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Win Lenore

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Part I:

The Dangerous
Journey

Chapter One

Molly Newman never knew what was grand about this place, until on this fall day she looked across the great abyss to see the colorful grandeur that was below her. A large, emerald lake lay against beautiful forested mountains. These mountains, topped with dark, weathered granite, shown brightly against a clear, blue sky.

The waterfall at the end of the lake below fell perhaps one hundred feet, misting the shrubs and flowers with its spray. In the morning's sunlight, it created a beautiful rainbow.

The days had fallen into their autumn routine. She hadn't been here in the late summer to see the change of colors, although Molly had often come to this overlook to meditate and pray when there was a crisis.

"I felt a little sorry for myself today," she thought, "and I believe it is time to search my soul. I know the things I want for my life are not at the end of the world; they can be within my reach."

She spoke to herself as she sat alone in the shaded pines. She breathed in deep the cold, damp air, which made her feel better. It seemed just yesterday she had returned from her trip to Kentucky.

"Boarding the trains and visiting friends in the East last month allowed me to go from isolation to spheres of influence," she cried out in her heart as she remembered. "Did it help me? Or did this visit just remind me of heartaches? My mother thought it would help to rid myself of unresolved pain, but I'm not sure it did so."

Seeing the school and a few classmates was nice, and Molly did enjoy their company. Perhaps if she had left out the lonely rides along the river where she and Thomas first met she would not have had this pain. She remembered that time in her life now.

It had been the beginning of a new semester and she enjoyed riding along the beautiful pathway near the Ohio River. When she first saw him coming around the large hardwood trees into open view of the river, he was accompanied by a classmate of hers. Molly might not have stopped except the classmate hailed her to stop and say hello.

“Was it the magnificent thoroughbred horse the stranger was riding, or the way he gave her a tip of his hat?” Whatever it was, it was clear to her that he was a virile and exciting man. The emotional tide of the introduction left her enchanted and bewildered.

Soon, Margaret (Molly) Newman and Thomas Bernson were the talk of the university and considered a serious couple. One memorable time as they rode along the river path, the evening was delightfully calm and the air near the water refreshing. They discussed their different worlds, their lives, and their paths. Sometimes they rode along without talking, just enjoying the green lane and being with each other.

Their horses, slowly moving along, seemed to sense the serious attitude of their riders. She had known for months he was in love with her. The last day she had seen him, they were riding here when Thomas reined in his mount beside a park bench. Swinging to the ground, he reached for her to dismount, asking her to sit there beside him. There was tenderness within his look, as he asked the familiar question once again.

“Please, Molly, come with me as my wife. I have to leave next week. We have time to be married.” Molly remembered this same conversation, which they had had last week, when she tried to discourage him from going. But he was determined to take this job and would not listen.

Sadly, she shook her head *no*. The week after he left, Molly was sitting out on the big veranda of the women’s boarding house. She did not look up from her task as the sheriff rode up and dismounted to the tie up his horse in front of the house. It was not until she heard her name called that she realized he was there to speak to *her*. As he told her the terrible news, she felt her vision blurring, her throat closing, and her heart breaking.

Her need for air was urgent. She walked out into the sunshine and turned to quickly walk away, as if she could run from the shocking news of Thomas’ tragic, accidental death. Molly spent the days

that followed with her grandmother, who lived near the university. Here she learned the sympathy of God as He began to restore her broken heart.

Grandmother's wisdom had helped her, too. She had said to her, "Death can hide, but it cannot divide. When one knows God and when answers are not enough—there is Jesus." Molly clung to these words in the following months. After graduation, she turned down several opportunities to work in Louisville. She knew she needed to go home to help resolve her sorrow.

Now, six months later, Molly was at home at her Idaho mountain ranch. Sitting there in the morning shade, Molly became aware that she had company. It was very quiet; there was no sound that came from the hole in the side of the rocks, but a movement flickered. Along the side of the slope downwind from her, a red fox came out of this cavity and was cautiously sniffing the air. His red-tail plumed, fringed in white.

He took several lopes away from the safety his home provided. He had not gone very far when a slow growling came from deep out of his body. It was answered by another low and frightening growl that came from something just beyond the trees. All Molly could see in the shadows were amber-colored eyes, cold and drooping, until it came out into the sunlight. Then she noticed that the two looked much alike, except one fox was bigger and had a bitten ear with a ragged edge.

The fight did not take long as the young fox was quicker and had longer sharper teeth. He decided when it was over, and that was not until his enemy lay bleeding on the forest floor. Then the young, male fox trotted back into his place at the rock ledge.

Life and death go on, Molly said to herself. Sometimes even nature sits and chooses. And today the wind of death did not moan through the trees as it has done before, she mused.

Then, when she connected back to the passage of the morning, she understood that she was whole again. "Today I am enjoying the freshness of the mountain wind and the odor of pine. For the first time this year, the spirit of the wilderness gave me shelter. I had a friendship with you, Thomas that came along once in a lifetime. I thank you for it, and I thank God for blessing me because of it."

She sighed as she lifted her hands up toward the heavens. "I steadied my course through storms, and now I'm here, Lord. What do you have for me next?"

Leaving this place of prayer, she went to find her horse, Copper, whom she never had to tie up or hobble. He was always there for her.

A “people horse,” Shadow had once said about this animal when he helped her train him. Molly found the horse where she left him, relaxing in the shade with his shining hair glowing like his namesake.

“It doesn’t matter whether good company walks on two legs or four,” she said. “Come on, Copper, let’s go home.”

When Molly returned to the ranch, she put Copper in the barn and began to give him a good brushing.

“Thank you for a very good outing, Copper, but I think you enjoyed it as much as I did.”

She spoke to the young horse with much affection. As she led him out to the pasture, she noticed that Shadow’s horse, Scout, was not there.

“Where are you, Shadow? I expected you yesterday. If it was not so late in the day, I would go look for you now. Oh, I fear something has happened to you,” Molly thought, as she hurried to the house to see if there was any word of him.