

The Long way around

Written by Lambert de Penrith

Helena poured the dregs of her coffee onto the remaining coals and kicked the dirt pile over the fire. Picking up her pack, she starts off with the new day sun peaking over the few trees and the birds singing their welcome song to the morning. Putting the sun to her back she sets off continuing her journey.

Within a half hour she reaches the edge of the plateau. A grand vista fills her sight and takes her breath away. Stretching out in front of her is a landscape painted by a master painter. At the foot of the plateau is a vast forest. She sees the edge of the forest starting with spruce and pine trees gradually giving way to aspen, colorful maples, and the pristine birch trees. The mighty regal timeless Oak trees stand their guard over the heart of the forest. Beyond the forest Helena sees a rolling grassland frolicking in the sunlight delighting in the kiss of the breeze. A mighty river splits the grassland in two. Even from this distance she sees specks of white as the water crashes against boulders. Beyond the joyful grassland glistening in the sun a range of rolling hills raise to contain the flatness of the grassland. Finally, off in the distance just at the point where the land seems to bend and fall into the mythical pit that swallows the earth she sees a speck of white with a black dot on the top, her destination.

At the foot of the plateau, the path she has been following splits in two. One goes to the right straight as an arrow to her destination. Helena follows the path with her eyes and sees that it follows the land where it can and cutting through it when it can't. One constant is that the path heads directly toward the white speck in the distance. The sentinels of the forest that would have blocked its way have fallen in battle. The rollicking grassland subdued where the path crosses it. The mighty river thrown down under a massive bridge crossing it. Even the rolling hills are made to carry the path on their backs. Helena knows that this is the Quick Way Around. It leads directly to her destination, where salvation or damnation from her past weakness and choices awaits her. She hopes that it is also just a stop along her journey as she races toward a new future and away from the pain of the past.

The second path heads to the left. It continues generally toward the white speck but unlike the right hand path it meanders here and there. Going from the plateau into the majestic forest. It makes its way through the dark foreboding pit of the forest's hurt soul, through its old majestic heart and out again. It plays with the grassland jumping from point to point like two kids playing on a nice day. It then reaches the majestic river where she sees the path continue along the river's bank for a league or more like two lovers hand in hand. Finally, it crosses the river in a patch of darkness that mirrors the pain in her heart when one's love falls. Finally, it emerges from the darkness and climbs and falls with the hills just like the journey one takes when the core of a person's life passes and one must learn how to live again. Again Helena knows from her research, the path on the left eventually reaches the speck of black on the white spot in the distance. This is the Long Way Around; it will get her to her destination but it will take much longer.

The Quick Way Around gets you there as fast as you possibly can but in the need of speed it sacrifices little things and you miss unique sights and experiences. The Long Way Around is much slower but offers many chances to see things others may never see.

Helena stands at a crossroads. The needs of her past and the answers she needs demands she take the Quick Way Around. Once she reaches her destination she can get on with her life, get the answers she needs, and she can start toward the next destination along her journey. The Quick way would almost certainly mean she could stay ahead of the consequences following her. The Long Way Around would mean waiting much longer to get the answers she needs. The experiences offered and the chance to learn from them and about herself may be more valuable than the answers at the end. It would mean she would not be able to see spots further on. It also could lead to Helena not getting to her destination and learning the answers she needs to confront the consequences following her with them catching up to her before she is ready.

What to choose, the need to get what she needs to either face what is behind her or to at least stay ahead of it? Or to take the chance and live and grow but risk not learning what is needed to face what is behind her and getting caught before she is ready? Neither path is perfect but each offers something she needs. As she stands in the sun she thinks back to the moment that set her on this path. The moment that shattered her perfect life and what was lost. This moment of pain and nostalgia clears away the fog of indecision and the warm loving hands of her past enwrap her and helps her decide on what must be done.

The Long Way Around may be slower and offer more risk but in the end that is where life truly is. Turning to the left Helena starts along her path.