



Lethal Journey: Victorian Fallen Angel: A True Woman's Tragedy

John T Cullen

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She is said to be the ghost who haunts the Hotel del Coronado near San Diego to this day. Lethal Journey is a noir period thriller, closely based on the true 1892 crime story that created the legend of the ghost. Read this entertaining novel, and painlessly learn a great deal about the Hotel del Coronado, as well as San Diego and U.S. history. The Beautiful Stranger appeared out of nowhere in the early afternoon of Thanksgiving Day, 23 November 1892, without luggage or a chaperone--very bad form in strict Victorian society. She registered under a false name at the brand-new resort and hotel owned by mega-wealthy John Spreckels. Over the next five days, her elegant and refined manner attracted much attention from hotel guests and staff alike. So did her stranger behavior and odd statements, and the fact she was next to broke, though she behaved like a great stage actress. Nobody would ever really know who she was, where she came from, what her mission at the expensive resort was, or why she met a violent and mysterious death. Until, that is, John T. Cullen published his nonfiction, scholarly analysis **Dead Move: Kate Morgan and the Haunting Mystery of Coronado** in 2008. **Lethal Journey** is a fast-paced, riveting period thriller--a powerful distillation of the factual analysis in *Dead Move*, plus some of the most rousing elements of the now 120-year-old legend. Her name was not Kate Morgan, as a 120-year-old coverup by John Spreckels' Pinkerton-type agents would have us believe. She was not the wife of a gambler who murdered people on trains. Her name was Elizabeth 'Lizzie' Wyllie, which was the first I.D. on the body after authorities realized that Lottie A. Bernard was a false name. From this novel, a very enjoyable read, learn the real truth about how the ghost legend of the Hotel del Coronado came into being. Learn the grim and unforgiving customs of the times, whereby a beautiful young woman like Lizzie was 'ruined' for life upon becoming pregnant out of wedlock, by her married shop foreman at Binn Hammond bookbindery in Detroit. Out of desperation, she latched up with a ruthless, sociopathic grifter from Iowa named Kate Morgan. Kate had developed a scam of working as a temporary domestic in wealthy households, under an endless variety of assumed names, and then blackmailing the father of the household before disappearing once again into anonymity in the Wild West. Only the Frontier closed officially in 1890, according to the U.S. census. The blackmail plot on John Spreckels, son of the internationally wealthy 'Sugar Baron' Claus Spreckels, was to be Kate's biggest heist by far. She recruited poor, beautiful Lizzie and Lizzie's bumbling lover, John Longfield, even as Spreckels was in the White House, negotiating with family friend President Benjamin Harrison over the fate of sovereign Hawaii and the fabulous Spreckels sugar cane plantations there. Both Kate's plot and the Spreckels cane were doomed to a dark end within weeks of each other. Kate would escape into history, Longfield would return to his wife and children in Detroit with a false story about Lizzie's new life in Canada, and the real Lizzie lay dead and buried in a pauper's grave in San Diego under the name Kate Morgan. In the long term, Lizzie gave rise to a famous ghost legend. In death, she became that ultimate Victorian ideal of womanhood--the Fallen Angel. Every Victorian author, composer, and painter tackled this famous ideal. Perhaps the most famous is Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. But Lizzie, decked out like a princess in her coffin in a storefront window in San Diego for thousands to view, was Tess, who became a real and tragic woman, and died among us.

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