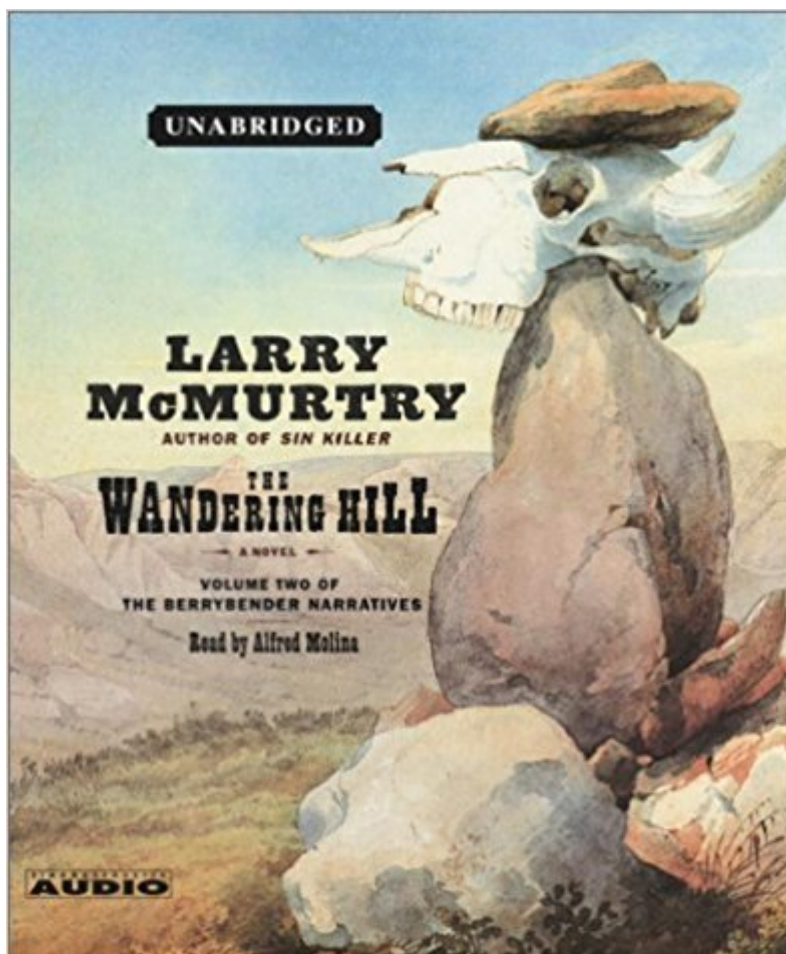


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# The Wandering Hill: A Novel (Berrybender Narratives)



## Synopsis

In *The Wandering Hill*, Larry McMurtry continues the story of Tasmin Berrybender and her family in the unexplored Wild West of the 1830s, at that point in time when Lewis and Clark are still a living memory, and when the clash between the powerful Indian tribes of the Missouri and the encroaching white Americans is about to turn into full-blown tragedy. Amidst all this, the Berrybender family -- English, eccentric, wealthy, and fiercely out of place -- continues their journey of exploration, although beset by difficulties, tragedies, and the increasing hardships of day-to-day survival. Abandoning their luxurious steamer, which is stuck in the ice near the Knife River, they make their way overland to the confluence of the Missouri and the Yellowstone. Tasmin is about to become a mother, living with the elusive young mountain man Jim Snow. Theirs is a great love affair, lived out in conditions of great risk. From the murder of the iced-in steamship's crew to the appearance of the Partezon, a particularly blood-thirsty Sioux warrior with a band of over two hundred, *The Wandering Hill* is at once literature on a grand scale and riveting entertainment by a master storyteller.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*The Wandering Hill*, the second volume in Larry McMurtry's *The Berrybender Narratives*, retains the humor of the first installment, *Sin Killer*, while establishing a more meditative mood. Picking up where *Sin Killer* left off, *The Wandering Hill* finds noble English family the Berrybenders waiting out the oncoming winter at a high plains trading post, delaying their hunting expedition through the

frontier-era American west. Tight confines force the spirited, bickering Berrybenders to contend with one another, as well as an assortment of colorful attendants and raw trappers. Conflict has arisen between fiery and very pregnant heroine Tasmin and her stoical, evangelical mountain man husband Jim Snow, a.k.a. Sin Killer. Selfish, randy patriarch Lord Berrybender, having lost a leg, seven toes, and three fingers thus far on their journey (though not his "favorite appendage"), is slowly losing his sanity. Malicious youngest child Mary begins an odd pseudo-sexual friendship with naturalist Piet Van Wely, while "foppish" heir Bobbety's no less ambiguous relationship with priest Father Geoffrin inspires his father to accidentally stick his son in the eye with a fork. In between many such self-inflicted disasters, three children are born, fierce native tribes attack, a man is sewn into a buffalo carcass, and many lives are lost, often in the presence of a strange, mobile hill whose legendary appearance signals impending doom. McMurtry, meanwhile, continues the momentum he built with Sin Killer, offering graceful storytelling, wonderfully dimensional realism, and deadpan wit. The wintry Wandering Hill, however, diverges from Sin Killer's madcap activity to further consider the inner lives of many of its splendid characters. McMurtry will have his fans clamoring for an answer, though delighting in his wandering path toward a resolution. --Ross Doll --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Fans of Molina's reading of Sin Killer, the first volume in McMurtry's over-the-top Berrybender Narratives, will be pleased to find that he has lent his considerable talents to this second volume. Again, the marriage of McMurtry's capable storytelling and Molina's dramatic reading gifts create a sum that is greater than its parts. The Berrybenders are a noble English family bent on exploring the Wild West in the 1830s. Just as the West holds no sympathy for its inhabitants, so it is with the Berrybenders, whose lives are rife with dark wit and unexpected (and often strangely humorous) violence, as when Lord Berrybender, himself "whittled down" by a leg, seven toes and three fingers, pokes out his son Bobbety's eye with a carving fork. As with all their hardships-stampedes, murderous Indians, grizzly bears, etc.-the victim as well as his family take this in stride. "You've made Bobbety a Cyclops, Papa," says young Mary Berrybender, "only his one eye is not quite in the middle of his head as it should be in a proper Cyclops." Listening to Molina capture the comic subtleties of every character-from the shy young Kit Carson to the Berrybenders' pet parrot-is to experience the art of the audiobook at its very best. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

The Wandering Hill is part two of a four-part series chronicling the adventures of the aristocratic,

English Berrybender family exploring the American West in the 1830's on a steamship on the Missouri River. Lord Berrybender is accompanied by his gluttonous wife and six of his 14 legitimate children. The series is historical fiction in that it incorporates actual people such as Kit Carson, Jim Bridges, yet the tales are so fanciful that history is left in the dust. Outrageous is the best general characterization of these stories. The adventures and their characters seem larger than life and more colorful than neon. Not for the faint of heart, unexpected, random, senseless and disturbing atrocities, injuries, and deaths litter these tales, with a side of lots of "rutting." The majority of the initial primary characters do not survive to see book four of the series. Yet, the stories grabbed me. I went through the series like popcorn, wanting to see what amazing events would occur to the crazy Berrybenders and their growing entourage. The series is intense, rollercoastering through every facet of human emotion and many aspects of abnormal psychology. Nothing dull in these books. The frequent connections to actual historical persons and events keep the tales interesting and grounded, despite the continuum of bizarre incidents. Not for everyone, but I liked it.

The first of the four part saga of the British Berrybender Family saga, travelling in the west for hunting, etc. Lord B is very rich and takes most of his family and servants with him. Apparently they think they are going into the woods in England. Surprise!! Gruesome events overtake them because of their total inability to deal with primitive America and Indians.

In *THE WANDERING HILL*, Volume Two of the four volumes of the Berrybender narratives, McMurtry begins to polish and sculpt his delicious cavalcade of characters out of the American West. (Don't start here though. Begin by reading *THE SIN KILLER* and continue through the 4 books in order. The story is vast as the western sky, an odyssey, and it requires the length and breadth of all four books to get "home".) The cast includes an oscillating number of the unpredictable, aristocratic Berrybender family; Jim Snow (the Sin Killer); and a thoroughly entertaining parade of European explorers, mountain men and Indians. This series is "compare and contrast" gone wild: Old World/New World, nature/civilization, human/animal, male/female, adult/child, wild/domesticated, free/enslaved, alive/dead, young/old, European/American, white/Indian, crazy/sane, servant/master, safety/danger, historical fact/myth, tragedy/comedy and so on. McMurtry has neatly sandwiched genuine historical characters (who develop quite complex fictional personalities) and events of the 1830's into this western salad. I recommend *THE WANDERING HILL* for its entertainment value as well as its delineation of personalities that survive and thrive (or not) in the New World. While Cormac McCarthy's *ALL THE PRETTY HORSES*

illustrates the solitary visual beauty of man and nature in the American West, McMurtry's gift in The Berrybender Narratives is the clash and complexity of colliding souls and civilizations. Enjoy!

On and on we travel the paths in the wilderness, adventures around every bend over the next hill, or hidden in the next draw. The life of a true wilderness wanderer alive with the freedom of the wild. Great story, funny at times.

One of the very few McMurtry books I threw out. Could only read about the first 100 pages -- and unbelievable account written capriciously by Larry McMurtry. BORING... even more so than the the first book in this series, "The Berrybender Narratives". Can't imagine reading the third and fourth book! What happened, Mr. McMurtry?

This is probably the weakest book in the series but still you will need to read it to get the full understanding of the last 2 books in the series. There is sort of an odd dry cowboy humor to these books but sometimes things seem to be thrown into the story that are just too odd to ring true. I don't re-cap stories in a review because its kind of a spoiler for a reader and after reading all 4 Berrybender books I am kind of lost to remember what part went with each book. There is lots of killing/dying in every way imaginable and lots of "fornicating" in these books. All I can say is buy all 4 books, read them without believing that's the way the early western travelers actually behaved, don't worry about little details like how did the old Lord Berrybender pay for this 2 year or so ramble through the wild ( did he carry money?) and just enjoy a interesting tall tale.

Read the first of the series now this one waiting to order the third before I read the 4th. Great imagination this McMurtry. I loved "Lonesome Dove."

Throughout most of this book it seemed like a four star effort, not quite up to the hilarious standard set by Sin Killer, the first in this series. The Wandering Hill is not hilarious. It's a good action story with interesting and very unusual characters. The final chapter of the book is what earns that final fifth star. It is an awesome scene involving Pomp Charboneau, Tasmin Berrybender, and Pomp's deceased mother Sacagawea. I could see it in a movie, bringing tears to everyone's eyes, including Tasmin's. There is a sort of humor in death. Larry McMurtry kills his characters off more than just occasionally, and those he doesn't kill he will often maim. One of the oddest scenes I've ever read involves Lord Berrybender, his son Bobbetty, and a fork in the father's hand. Poor Bobbetty really

gets it in this story, harmless and silly though the teenager is. He seems like a nice enough kid to me, completely unsuited to the wild, but having lots of fun, come what may. Tasmin is still the star of the book, as she was in Sin Killer. She's amazing. I'm really glad I discovered this series. Sin Killer just showed up in a drawer. I don't know who bought it or how it got there. It had been sitting there for a long time, maybe years.

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