



A Nation of Shepherds

Donald L. Lucero

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Driven into exile from Carmena, Spain, in 1577, to escape the threat of death by the Inquisition, the Robledo family immigrates first to New Spain and then joins the Onate colonial expedition in 1596 to New Mexico. Set against the historically accurate backdrop of the colonial enterprise, and conveying a sense of New Mexico's vast wilderness, freshness, beauty, and soul, the novel brings to life a courageous and devoted family bent on establishing a new homeland. Here is the true story of the Robledos' tragic year of 1598 in which they suffer the deaths of two family members: Pedro Robledo the elder, from a prolonged illness and the rigors of the trail; and his son, Pedro Robledo the younger, as the result of an Indian attack at the Pueblo of Acoma in which eleven Spanish soldiers are killed. The difficulties of maintaining the colony during an era which would later become known as 'The Little Ice Age' are revealed in intimate detail. Lacking adequate harvests, and semi-dependent upon their Pueblo Indian neighbors into whose villages the Spaniards have moved, the colonists are eventually reduced to eating roasted cowhides even as the Indians are eating dirt, coal, and ashes. In the end, some family members return to New Spain in 1601.

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