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Clarion Review

General

Having Hope
Sherry Burkett
AuthorHouse
Softcover $24.95 (548pp)
978-1-4107-8076-8
★★★☆☆
(Sep 3, 2003)

Having Hope is Sherry Burkett's debut novel and the first book in a planned series about Hope Logan and Tim Richards.

Tim has lost his wife to breast cancer, and readers meet him in a dark moment when he prays a desperate prayer. Hope is struggling to mend her marriage following the death of her four-year-old daughter. Hope's husband, Charles, is a high-power businessman; his career and the couple's grief have driven a wedge in their relationship.

Tim and Hope meet, and their grief gives them an instant connection. When they later reconnect after they've undergone physical and mental transformations, a spark kindles. Tension between Tim and Charles builds, as Hope develops confidence and a sense of self. Tragedy at the end of the novel opens the door for romance in the next book in the series.

The double meaning of the book's title fits the story—Tim and Hope are fighting for hope through grief, Tim and Charles are fighting to be with Hope—but it may strike some readers as hokey, especially readers who are averse to the cheesiness that sometimes comes with Christian fiction. Many of the characters and relationships feel like stereotypes, especially at first: an angry, high-stress business man; a wife who doesn't understand numbers; conniving women in the office who are gaming to start an affair and break up a coworker's marriage.

The writing and dialogue are clean and clear. The pacing is fairly uniform throughout the book, missing the opportunity to heighten tension and suspense through variation. The book's cover design and interior are adequate; however, the two character spaces after each sentence flag this book as amateur, which truly does the story a disservice—it's a better book than this visual cue suggests.

Readers from nearly all walks of life will relate to Burkett's themes of the pervasive powers of grief and hope. People who've lost a spouse or a child will have the strongest connection with the characters. Readers who've been through struggles in marriage will find Charles and Hope's relationship realistic.

Faith in God is a constant throughout the story, though it doesn't overwhelm the book. Instead, it grounds the narrative, as it does the characters' lives.

Melissa Wuske