



Secrets of My Heart

Tracie Peterson

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In Tracie Peterson's engrossing historical romance *Secrets of My Heart*, dangerous truths threaten a city's future as a widow discovers her late husband's misdeeds.

Nancy married Albert to escape her rural, religious upbringing, but she appreciates that background more now that Albert is gone and her faith is reviving. Meanwhile, the Bureau of Indian Affairs recruits Seth, a childhood friend of Nancy's, to investigate Albert, who planned to supply Native Americans with whiskey and guns, hoping to ignite a rebellion. Seth poses as a lawyer who's settling Albert's affairs, but reuniting with Nancy leads to romance. Their connection is threatened by Seth's secret role.

Villains, including an aspiring politician, Gerome, bully Nancy, and the tension escalates as characters race to find Albert's cache. When Nancy learns about Seth's lie and his involvement as an investigator, she considers it a deception. But Gerome's dastardly scheming, and Nancy and Seth's maneuvers to keep Gerome away, may lead to a reconciliation.

The text's historical views on white settlers' racism have eerie contemporary counterparts. Nancy and Seth, because of their faith, are repelled by such racism, and Nancy's efforts to trust God despite her disappointments bring focus to themes of family and personal healing as well.

Amid the book's charged circumstances, domestic scenes have a lightening effect. Nancy—who runs a boarding house—has entertaining conversations with her boarders, who include a reclusive Southern widow, Seth's sister, and Bedelia, who's a stickler for moral conventions. They're all supportive of Nancy and help her to hone her wavering faith. Nancy's vulnerability mixes in a potent way with the other women's pioneering resolve.

In *Secrets of My Heart*, love flourishes with the help of a close-knit community.

KAREN RIGBY (March / April 2020)

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