FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ SPIRITUAL

The Vigilante's Bride

Yvonne Harris
Bethany House
Unknown $0.00 (pp)
978-0-7642-0804-1

An orphan girl begins a new life, a vigilante attempts a fresh start, and a corrupt rancher plots their destruction in *The Vigilante's Bride*, a pleasant read by Yvonne Harris. This western combines the spirit of Christian romance with a captivating plot. Like its female protagonist, it's wholesome with a bit of spunk.

Set in the late 1800s, this book highlights a wild Montana territory settling into a tamer way of life. It explores how western living and difficult economic times limited people's choices, forcing them to find inner strength. And it addresses the challenges love faces when people undertake major life change.

In Harris' novel, Emily McCarthy journeys to Montana as a mail-order bride. There, former vigilante Luke Sullivan whisks her away from her unscrupulous intended husband, Bart Axel. Once Luke and Emily settle in to work at an orphanage, they encounter Bart's wrath. Bart seeks to destroy Luke and the orphanage through theft, arson, assault, and murder. And Luke must stop him without returning to his former ways: "After that beating it had been all he could do not to go gunning after Axel…and now this…Enough was enough." As Emily and Luke protect the orphanage, they discover their love. But those feelings must wait and the danger mounts when Luke discovers that Bart's land belongs to the orphanage.

Although Harris, a three-time finalist for the Golden Heart Award, teaches writing at the University of Hartford, this is her first novel. And it does her credit. *The Vigilante's Bride* won the Faith, Hope and Love unpublished contest in 2008. Her writing reflects both her newness to publication and her writing prowess.

Skillful suspense and creative plot devices keep the story captivating. However, the romantic tension, artfully executed at first, fades halfway through the book. And while Luke's struggle with loving Emily shines, her quandary regarding him seems weak. Similarly, Emily's character lacks the same degree of depth, struggle, and growth that makes Luke's character so rich. The novel seems typical for the genre—even a bit cliché with a bad-boy-gone-good and an orphanage thrown in to boot.

Nevertheless, the reader cares for Emily, Luke, and the orphanage, and will find it difficult to put the story down. In all, *The Vigilante's Bride* serves as a debut to make Harris proud. And it offers a solid read for anyone who loves historical, faith-based romance.

DIANE GARDNER (September 10, 2010)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have his/her book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Review make no guarantee that the author will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.