

## The Way of the Brave

**Susan May Warren**

Revell (Jan 7, 2020)

Hardcover \$29.99 (352pp)

978-0-8007-3783-2

Susan May Warren's Christian romance *The Way of the Brave* applies a razor-sharp eye to a suspenseful climb of Denali and its characters' private wars.

Orion is a former pararescue jumper who served in Afghanistan. Jenny is a psychologist and former CIA profiler who once posed as Jacie, a reporter embedded in Orion's unit. They were falling for each other when a failed mission—in which Jenny shared blame—led Jenny to flee in guilt.

When Jenny and her friends decide to scale Denali to prove their strength, Orion, with fellow veterans Ham and Jake, is tasked with rescuing them. Injuries, falls, altitude sickness, and avalanches become a powerful metaphor for Christian faith: here, there's no guarantee that life won't bring sorrow, and there's absolute belief in God's character and goodness.

Tension mounts around the inevitable disclosure of Jenny's role in the mission that injured Orion. Alternating perspectives, cliffhangers, and new challenges add up to a wise plot in which most of the climbers learn how to accept God's help. With fluid character progressions and themes of releasing anger and fear, the novel frames its message in a natural way.

Harrowing background stories—including a parent's murder—spring into the plot as added fuel to the characters' troubles, but are not always integrated well. A subplot regarding terrorism pulls the focus away from Denali, though it brings out Orion and his friends' military instincts and desire to protect others. Ham is a standout character—the book's voice of reason and unwavering faith.

In *The Way of the Brave*, Denali's glittering wilderness is lucidly described; it's a heartening backdrop for a tale of bravery whose characters confront the hidden sides of themselves and work toward honesty.

KAREN RIGBY (January / February 2020)

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