



The Ways of Heaven

Lindsey Barlow

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Loaded with action and intrigue, *The Ways of Heaven* fields multiple stories at once—an engaging secondary love story, a murder case, a love triangle, and the racism of the West in the late 1800s.

Rose Walker defies convention when she leaves her gambling husband and adopts her deceased cousin's biracial baby. The racism and sexism of her contemporaries become driving forces in the events of the book.

Rose returns to her hometown of Tall Pine, Colorado, and to her parents' dairy. En route, she meets Meg, a battered cook who is eager to escape her abusive and lascivious stepfather. Rose's parents immediately hire Meg; Rose settles into life with a new baby—until her abandoned husband, Cade, arrives in town unexpectedly after a pair of mysterious murders.

Cade is a deeply flawed but engaging secondary lead, able to learn and recover from his errors. Rose's deep faith gives her the confidence to assert herself as a woman of purpose, foreshadowing the state's women's rights movement. Other characters have interesting backstories and a lot of agency in their own plots. The villain, though, is a fairly classic devil. His crimes resolve a bit too easily.

Barlow sets a galloping pace. Her characters are developed with a modern touch that makes them more accessible to contemporary readers. Reactions to Rose's biracial child become a lens to examine post-Civil War bitterness, as well as the role of women and society in the mountain states.

With its dense plot and multiple engaging story lines, this Christian historical romance offers not only a compelling reunion between lovers but also a glimpse into the social issues swirling in the newly developed state of Colorado.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (March/April 2018)

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