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Gabhart's "The refuge" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Gabhart, A. (2019). *The refuge*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell. 390 pp. \$15.99. ISBN 9780800736279

Fleeing a cholera epidemic, Darcie and Walter Goodwin join the Shaker Community in 1850. The Shakers are a unique group forbidding matrimonial relations, housing men and women in separate locations. Children who arrive with their parents are likewise kept in housing for children. Walter meets death in a tragic accident, and Darcie subsequently discovers that she is expecting his child, who was conceived prior to their entrance into the community. As Darcie adjusts to Shaker ways, including the rigid rules for community living and the frequent required accountability and confession of sin to an older sister, she begins to find her way among the Shaker maze. Just outside of the Shaker community, Walter Keller lives with his daughter, Leatrice and father-in-law, Silas. Through a series of events, Darcie meets Walter and Leatrice, who is struggling with the loss of her mother and grandmother. When her grandfather remarries, there is trouble between his new wife and Leatrice, and Leatrice is removed to the Shaker community for her own safety. Eventually, it becomes apparent that Silas' wife, Irene wishes him dead so that she can marry Walter. Silas joins the Shaker community, and Irene, refusing to do so, leaves for town. As Darcie and Flynn become better acquainted, it becomes evident that she was never destined for life among the Shakers. She takes her child and marries Walter, who also takes Leatrice, and they leave the Shaker community for good.

Gabhart paints a graphic picture of life regarding a little-known sector of American history with *The Refuge*. She presents many twists and turns, and at times the reader can feel bogged down. I may have experienced this, because I jumped in much later in the series – this is the eighth book in the series which spans over 40 years. Gabhart appears to be historically accurate and thorough in her presentation of the setting and her characters. The facts woven throughout the story are fascinating and will inspire those interested in United States history to investigate further. This will most likely be appropriate for libraries with sections dedicated to inspirational fiction. It is recommended that the entire series be purchased, rather than jumping in at later volumes.

Reviewer

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