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Carlson's "Christmas in Winter Hill" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Carlson, M. (2019). *Christmas in Winter Hill*. Grand Rapids: Revell. 164 pp. \$16.99. ISBN 9780800736101.

Melody Carlson is a prolific author of Christian fiction. She is also well known and received as an author of feel-good Christmas-themed fiction, and for those who enjoy this sub-genre of realistic fiction, this book will not disappoint. Krista Galloway, a single mother, accepts a job as the city manager of Winter Hill, known as the home of Christmasville – an annual celebration in which the whole town is involved. Everything in the town is also Christmas-themed; however, various complications threaten the annual celebration just as Krista assumes her position.

Another problem is that Krista's past has made her skeptical of the whole Christmas celebration. Her young daughter, Emily is determined to draw her mother into the spirit of Christmas. In the midst of the problems surrounding Christmasville, Krista is confronted with issues that threaten her position as town manager. Can the faith of a child restore Krista's own faith and instill in her a true love for Christmas and save her newly assumed position?

Carlson presents a well-rounded cast of characters. Krista Galloway is the competent, yet somewhat jaded town manager. She has recently been hired and has moved from Phoenix, Arizona to Winter Hill, Washington. Her upbringing, as a foster child, has given her a tainted view of Christmas and of birthdays since her birthday fell on Christmas Eve, neither of which gave her much cause for celebration. Emily is her, ever-hopeful daughter, who continually sees a silver lining behind every cloud. She is determined to give her mother a reason for embracing the Christmas season. Pauline, Conner, and Anna Harris provide much needed support as Krista adjusts to a new town and a new position. Pauline is her very capable assistant. Connor, a widower, is Pauline's son, and is a construction worker, who appears to have more than a causal interest in Krista. Anna, his teen-age daughter, becomes a friend and mentor to Emily. Mayor Richards is typical of small-town mayors but is frequently torn in his loyalties. The cunning Winston Palmer, the accountant for the town, presents a problem that may be Krista's undoing and may cost her the position that she just assumed. Other support characters round out the cast to create a fulfilling story.

Although the story seems largely predictable, it is an enjoyable read and has the feel of a Hallmark movie. Carlson has portrayed her characters well and in such a way that allows the reader to connect with them, e.g. they will sympathize with Krista, cheer for Emily, and disdain Winston. Carlson also communicates spiritual themes without overt didacticism such that although our past may leave deep and permanent scars, it doesn't have to dictate our future. This book will most likely find its place in collections which feature inspirational fiction as a part of the collection.

Reviewer

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