

Ann Tatlock. *Travelers Rest*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2012. 344 pp. \$14.99. ISBN 978-0-7642-0810-2.

In *Travelers Rest*, her ninth novel, North Carolina-based author Ann Tatlock reminds readers that hope can be found in the midst of the most difficult struggles.

Young schoolteacher Jane Morrow was planning a life with her fiancé, carpenter and National Guardsman Seth Ballantine. But while stationed with his unit in Iraq, Seth's spine was damaged by a sniper's bullet, leaving him without feeling in his arms and legs and with little hope of recovering their use. When Seth arrives at the Veterans Administration Medical Complex in Asheville, Jane is determined to support him in his rehabilitation and in charting a new course for their lives together. But Seth's injuries force him to question everything about his life, particularly his future with Jane. Jane remains committed to her fiancé, and when Seth breaks off their engagement, Jane is left adrift, questioning love and faith and turning to alcohol in order to forget her problems. As she continues to visit Seth in the VA hospital and tries to make sense of her situation, Jane crosses paths with retired doctor Truman Rockaway and blind lawyer Jon Paul Percy. Both men provide Jane with needed perspective and insight, and by the story's end all of their lives become further intertwined. The setting is contemporary, but a secondary storyline deals with repercussions from the racial turmoil of the 1960s and the question of forgiveness. Throughout the book the characters face serious struggles with faith, love, forgiveness, and grief, but this is ultimately a gentle and uplifting Christianity-infused story, tinged with some romantic elements.

Readers of inspirational fiction may already be familiar with Tatlock's work through her previous novels, including *Promises to Keep* and *The Returning*. With *Travelers Rest*, Tatlock sets a novel in the Carolinas for the first time, with several North and South Carolina locales featured prominently. The bulk of the story takes place in and around Asheville, and readers may recognize locations and institutions such as the Veterans Administration Medical Complex, Pritchard Park, the Basilica of St. Lawrence, and Grove Arcade. The book takes its title from one of its secondary settings, Travelers Rest, South Carolina, while Troy, North Carolina also plays a minor part.

While Tatlock does not proselytize, the story strongly espouses Christian ideals and will likely not be a suitable book for readers whose beliefs fall outside that spectrum. It is recommended for public libraries with readership interests in contemporary Christian fiction and it would certainly provide many avenues for discussion within a reading group.

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