



For Time and All Eternities (A Linda Wallheim Mystery)

By Mette Ivie Harrison

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The Mormon church may have disavowed the polygamy it became so infamous for in the 19th century, but for some Fundamentalist Latter-Day Saints, "plural marriage" isn't just ancient history.

Mormon bishop's wife Linda Wallheim is stunned to learn her son Kenneth has gotten engaged to a young woman from a polygamous family. Naomi Carter may have left the religion she grew up in, but the Carters will still be the Wallheims' in-laws once Kenneth and Naomi are married.

Stephen Carter, Naomi's father and the patriarch of the Carter clan, invites the Wallheims over to the Carter family compound in the remote foothills of the mountains outside Salt Lake City. Stephen Carter wishes to extend an olive branch to his future in-laws, and introduce them to his five wives and twenty-two children. But Linda suspects he also wants to try to persuade the Wallheims that his way of life is truly righteous.

From Linda's point of view, polygamy is an abhorrent practice, one that dehumanizes women and makes children vulnerable to unhealthy family structures. She and her husband, Kurt, arrive at the Carter compound braced for trouble—Linda has her eyes peeled for signs that Stephen's wives and children are unhappy or abused. Although she can't find concrete evidence of mistreatment, Linda's gut instinct tells her that something on the Carter family compound is deeply wrong. She can't quite put her finger on what—until it's too late, and one of the family members is found murdered.

Afraid that Stephen Carter's unworldly, sequestered wives and children might suffer at the hands of investigating police, Linda vows to stay at the compound until the murderer is found and the survivors are safe. But even if she manages to do more good than harm with her snooping and interfering, Linda can't unsee what she has seen during her time at the Carters'—now, confronting the legacy of polygamy in her own Mormon family raises even more questions about her already shaky faith.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for *For Time and All Eternities*

"An intriguing murder mystery, as alluring and confounding as the inscrutable history of polygamy itself—told with refreshing honesty and a ton of heart."

—**Jamie Ford**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*

"A provocative piece of work."

—**Salt Lake City Tribune**

"Harrison's mystery also offers a fascinating insider's look at a faith that is strange and mysterious to outsiders. Linda's struggle to accept church doctrines is an issue to which many readers can relate. Highly recommended."

—**Library Journal**

"Totally spellbinding! I couldn't read quickly enough."

—**Fresh Fiction**

"A very talented writer. She's also very rare for writing these books."

—**Kittling Books**

"Plural marriage in Harrison's hands is not like it is on *Sister Wives* or *Big Love*; nor is it like reading about the Jeffs family or other extreme fundamentalist Mormon families (despite the compound; I guess they all need compounds). It's a nuanced imagining of what it might be like to have made that choice; each wife has different reasons for living in a plural marriage and a distinct personality."

—**LitHub**

"An exciting and well-crafted mystery."

—**MysteryPeople, Pick of the Month**

Praise for the Linda Wallheim mysteries

"*The Bishop's Wife* has good reason to draw a large readership . . . Ms. Harrison's Linda is such a welcome character."

—**The New York Times**

"The issues the book raises will make readers hungry for more of Linda and her close-knit community."

—**Los Angeles Times**

"A fast moving crime story, but also far more than that. Deep social and moral issues dealt with, and made real with compassion and honesty. I couldn't put it down!"

—**Anne Perry**

"Absorbing . . . Rich with real-life details that often get lost in stereotypes."

—NPR's *All Things Considered*

"Sane, wise, likable . . . [The] solution is nicely surprising, and Linda has an engrossing voice, at once modest and assured."

—Charles Finch, *USA Today*

"A heartfelt story that opens outsiders to a fascinating world."

—*The Boston Globe*

"Edgy and engrossing . . . Harrison delivers a provocative tale that doesn't shy away from timely social issues."

—*Ft. Worth Star-Telegram*

About the Author

Mette Ivie Harrison is the author of two other novels in the Linda Wallheim mystery series, *The Bishop's Wife* and *His Right Hand*, as well as numerous books for young adults. She holds a PhD in German literature from Princeton University and is a nationally ranked triathlete. A member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, she lives in Utah with her husband and five children.

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Chapter 1

My fourth son, Kenneth, pulled into the driveway as I was cleaning up the breakfast dishes. I had a sense of foreboding at the troubled look on his face and guessed that he'd waited until my husband, Kurt, was gone to work and I was alone. Kenneth had been distancing himself from the Mormon church lately, which had put a serious strain on his relationship with his father, the bishop of our ward.

"Mom? You home?" he called out, not bothering to knock on the door.

"In the kitchen!" I answered. I wiped my hands off and wished that I looked better, but he was my son. He'd seen me in my pajamas before, and without my hair done.

He came over and gave me a big hug. "I love you, Mom," he said. He smelled like he'd been sweating on the drive over. "You know that, don't you?"

This only made me feel more nervous about whatever Kenneth had come over to tell me. Of my five sons, he was the one I worried most about—well, after Samuel, my youngest, who had come out as gay last year and was currently far away in Boston on a Mormon mission.

"What's up?" I asked cautiously.

"I'm getting married," he said simply.

"What? How? To whom?" Was he so estranged from the family that he had gone as far as to get engaged without even introducing us to the woman?

"Her name is Naomi Carter," Kenneth said.

"That's a lovely name," I said, trying to act normal about this. If he loved her, I was sure the whole family would love her, even if I had to make them do it.

"She's great, Mom. I'm a lucky guy."

I wished that I knew anything about her. I wished I could see them together, make sure they seemed happy together, right for each other. But I trusted Kenneth, and in the end, I hugged him fiercely. "Oh, sweetheart, I'm so happy for you." He wasn't hugging back, though. Something was wrong. "So?" I said, when I released him.

"So what?" said Kenneth.

"Well, what aren't you telling me? Why did you make sure I was alone to spring it on me? Does she have two heads or something? Is she a felon?" I was trying to joke, but I could tell it wasn't going over well.

He sighed. "Naomi's part of—well, her family is only kind of Mormon."

“Kind of Mormon? What does that mean?” With Kenneth’s doubts about the church, I really hadn’t expected him to marry a devout churchgoer. But that was obviously why he was nervous about telling Kurt. He must want me to act as an intermediary, to get Kurt used to the idea that they weren’t going to get married in the temple—sealed as Mormon couples are in an eternal family in this life and the celestial kingdom, not just married till death, as in other religious traditions.

Kenneth sighed again, and rubbed at his head in a way that reminded me of Kurt, if Kurt had had more hair. “I guess there’s no easy way to say it, Mom. Her family is polygamous.”

I was so shocked I had to gather my thoughts. Of all my sons, Kenneth was the last one I would have expected to be interested in a polygamous branch of Mormonism. I was really not sure how I was going to handle it if Kenneth were about to tell me he’d be having multiple wives, if that was what he planned for the future with this Naomi Carter. I’d never really accepted the polygamous past of the Mormon church and had always assumed I’d never have to. I thought I’d raised Kenneth to think the same way.

“Are they FLDS?” I asked slowly. The Fundamentalist Church of Latter-Day Saints was the most infamous polygamist branch of Mormonism, led by the now-jailed “prophet” Warren Jeffs, who had been indicted for statutory rape after he married dozens of barely teenage girls, some of whom were also his close blood relatives. Just the idea of Kenneth sitting down for Sunday dinner with men who did that made me sick. I suddenly wished that Kurt were here, after all.

“Not the FLDS, Mom,” Kenneth said. “Her family is independent. And very modern. Her dad is an OB/GYN at Salt Lake Regional. One of the wives is an investment broker and another is an artist. Naomi is in med school, too. She wants to be an OB/GYN like her father.” He held my gaze as if he were begging me not to judge him just yet.

I struggled not to make a remark about it being a lot cheaper to have a lot of babies if you were a baby doctor yourself.

“Okay,” I said, hoping I knew my son as well as I thought I did.

“Are you two planning to be polygamous?”

He snorted. “Of course not. Mom, I’m just trying to make sure you understand her history. And when you meet her parents—her father and her mothers—you aren’t caught by surprise.” I felt an enormous wave of relief. Mormons hadn’t been polygamous since the late 1800s, when the prophet and president Wilford Woodruff had ended the practice. Sometimes I heard older Mormons say that God was polygamous or that polygamy was still going to be required in heaven, but it wasn’t a topic I’d heard mentioned in General Conference and I figured that was clear evidence that it wasn’t part of the modern church anymore.

“How did you meet her?” I asked, glad to get back to being a nosy mother.

There was a long pause and I realized we weren’t done with the difficult part of the conversation. “We met at a former Mormons group. We call it Mormons Anonymous.”

Mormons Anonymous—like Alcoholics Anonymous or Gamblers Anonymous? As if my religion were some kind of addictive behavior that you had to recover from?

“I knew you were having trouble with the church,” I said carefully, waiting for him to explain.

“Mom, the final straw was the exclusion policy.”

I felt a gut punch at this and found myself holding onto the kitchen counter to keep from sinking to the floor. The exclusion policy had been leaked to the press in November of 2015, and it directed that all same-sex married members must be excommunicated and their children disallowed saving ordinances like baptism, as well as participation in other church activities. I had always loved my church, but this was the one thing about it that I simply could not defend. Samuel had struggled with the policy right after he turned in his mission papers, but he had decided to go anyway. Kurt and I had argued viciously about the policy, especially its consequences for Samuel.

I had never even considered that the new policy might have affected Kenneth, as well. I must have been too wrapped up in my own anger and pain.

“You weren’t one of the people who went to that mass resignation event, were you?” I asked Kenneth. It had been all over the news. Ten days after the leak, thousands of people had lined up in City Creek Park in

Salt Lake City to have their names struck from the Mormon church's register in protest.

I hadn't thought seriously about resigning, but I hadn't known how to go to church the next week, or the week after that. My marriage had been on edge ever since because Kurt, who was the kind of man called to be bishop, would never admit that he thought the policy might be a mistake, that it could be anything less than a revelation from God. Kurt hoped that Samuel could find a nice woman to marry who could accept him as he was—that Samuel would reject his sexuality and live a heterosexual life. This had infuriated me on my own account as well as Samuel's—Kurt knew that I'd been married to a gay man—my first marriage, to Ben Tookey—and he knew how awful that experience had been for me. How could he want that for his own son, or for the poor woman?

I'd also argued with my best friend, Anna Torstensen, who had defended Kurt. We hadn't spoken since. I couldn't get her words out of my head—she'd told me I should be open-minded about the idea of Samuel's marrying a woman, that I had hit the jackpot with Kurt as a husband and didn't understand that other women accepted much less in marriage in order to find someone to be sealed to for time and all eternities. But how could I hope anything less for my sons than a loving marriage to a partner they were actually sexually attracted to?

So over the last few months, as I struggled to accept what was happening in my church, I couldn't share my pain with my husband or with my best friend. The only thing that had saved me had been joining a closed Facebook group called "Mama Dragons," a group of Mormon women who were fierce in defending their LGBTQ kids. I could say anything I wanted to them and no one else (including Kurt) would see it. Some of them had left the church, but others were trying to stay, like I was, and change it from the inside.

"We didn't go to the mass resignation," Kenneth said. "Actually, Naomi and I hadn't met yet in November. And I didn't want to do anything rashly that would affect the rest of my life and my relationship with all of you. But ultimately, I felt sick about having my name connected to the church in any way. So I looked for a support group and started going to the Mormons Anonymous meetings. Naomi was there, too."

"But you've officially had your name removed since?" I had to ask. It would hurt Kurt deeply, and even though I understood Kenneth's choice, it hurt me, too. It meant our eternal family now had a Kenneth-sized hole in it, since he would not allowed to be part of our family in the celestial kingdom of heaven. The covenant that sealed us forever to our children even before they were born had been broken by the resignation.

"I knew you were busy getting Samuel on his mission, Mom, and I didn't really want to open it up for family discussion. But yeah, I went to see a lawyer who said he'd file the letter officially, so I didn't have to go through the harassment and the waiting period the church wanted to set. It was official in March

Users Review

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