

The Midwife's Touch

Sue Harrison

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A girl born with an uncommon gift faces ostracization and exploitation in the thrilling historical novel *The Midwife's Touch*.

For women in China's family, pale hair is a foreboding sign. It hints to a magical inheritance stretching back to the Queen of Sheba—one that puts those who possess it in continual danger. It's why China's mother came to the Ozarks while she was pregnant, hoping to evade the reach of those who would use her daughter for personal gain. It's why China cannot touch other people. And it's why their atypical mountain existence suits them just fine.

Then change comes in threes: China's mother dies in scandal; China and a fellow midwife, Jesse, chase demons from a woman, only to fall under suspicion of possession themselves; and a handsome doctor comes to town, threatening Jesse and China's livelihoods, but also bringing the possibility of romance. To escape a suspected witch's fate, China accepts his proposal in haste. It means leaving her humble existence behind for the glamour of New York City, whose promises may be illusory.

When it's centered in the untamed spaces of China's childhood, the novel is enchanting. It sifts through Ozark charms and oddities at a drawling pace, noting hardships but delighting in folk remedies, community unity, and Native American roots. Jesse's origin story is heartbreaking and gripping; China's mother reveals a past worthy of its own book. But when China is forced to flee, she leaves this earthiness behind her. The New York-set scenes are heady but dramatic, and though they hold attention well, their messaging is heavy-handed. Still, they open China to a new kind of sorcery: that which comes with authentic love.

A bewitching woman pursues a new kind of freedom in the exciting historical novel *The Midwife's Touch*.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (January / February 2023)

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