



## Purple Like the West

*Virginia Carmichael*

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Margaret Gilbert, a railroad executive's daughter, is a pampered princess of San Francisco's wealthy elite. She chafes under the expectation that she will marry for status and dreams of independence. When she joins the local Ladies' Aid Society, she's horrified by the treatment of the Chinese immigrant laborers. Vowing to expose the abuse, she begins to investigate the complicated system of slave labor provided to the railroads, but no one will listen to a woman like her.

When she meets Ezra Pendleton, heir to a newspaper empire, she concocts a plan to tell the world- without incurring the wrath of her father. Ezra is the perfect cover. She'll make her family happy by feigning interest in a very eligible bachelor, become an undercover reporter, and keep her identity a secret.

At least, that was the idea. Margaret starts to wonder if Ezra will turn out to be her plan's fatal flaw. He is not the sort of man you can string along with flattery. He's smart, wary, and is hiding a secret of his own. As the city falters under the stress of the Chinese mobs, the situation turns more dangerous than they could have imagined. Racial tensions in the city hit a breaking point and arson hits close to home. By the time there is an outbreak of the plague in Chinatown, it seems as if all the darkest parts of the city will be revealed at once.

Margaret and Ezra are thrown together in a common cause, but will their secrets destroy the love that is growing between them? A story of faith, honor, and forgiveness.

This is the second book in the Colors of Faith, a Christian historical romance series by Virginia Carmichael. The first, All the Blue of Heaven, was published February 2013.

## Purple Like the West Details

Date : Published September 20th 2013 by Gumbo Books

ISBN :

Author : Virginia Carmichael

Format : Kindle Edition 218 pages

Genre : Christian Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Romance, Christian

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## From Reader Review Purple Like the West for online ebook

### Patricia Ibarra says

Margaret Gilbert is the wealthy daughter of a railroad executive. Her family is concerned because she has not shown any interest in getting married. Instead, she has joined a Ladies' Society to help the poor. It is then when she is shocked by the treatment given to Chinese immigrants. She has to do something to help them. When she met Ezra Pendleton, the heir to a newspaper empire, she knew where to turn to, but she has to do it without him knowing it for fear of his refusal. Her actions will have significant repercussions.

I would have loved to read this book when I was a teenager, as it seems to have been written by one. The language is too simple, the plot totally foreseeable, and it was until I learned that it was based on a true story that I gave some credit to the author.

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### Ellen says

This was a decent continuation to the Colors of Faith series and includes an extended visit from the characters we grew to love in All the Blue of Heaven. I always appreciate when an author does that and allows us a glimpse into the continuing stories of the characters' lives while introducing us to new characters and settings for us to enjoy. This time, we meet Margaret who was born into a prosperous railroad tycoon's family. Everyone expects her to be content with a life of entertaining and eventual marriage, but a life of velvet and lace threatens to strangle this independent-minded woman. Mere blocks away from her comfort, thousands of Chinese laborers live in plague-ridden poverty and are treated like chattel by their own people as slaves. Her voice seems destined to fall on deaf ears until she stumbles on an idea of clandestinely writing for a newspaper that seeks to be an independent voice. If her connection to the railroads is discovered, it may cast doubt on her credibility and ruin the only man she might consider marrying. Worse yet, it might cause people to turn a blind eye to the needs of those who are dying just outside their own back yards.

Carmichael's story provides a believable look into San Francisco history in the time of the railroads. There were a few parts of the story that I wondered if it could really happen given the climate of the time, but the author herself admits to this in her afterward. I could have done without the reference to Mary above the altar at the wedding, but it was minute and easily glossed over.

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### Lorraine says

**SUMMARY:** Margaret Gilbert, a railroad executive's daughter, is a pampered princess of San Francisco's wealthy elite. She chafes under the expectation that she will marry for status and dreams of independence. When she joins the local Ladies' Aid Society, she's horrified by the treatment of the Chinese immigrant laborers. Vowing to expose the abuse, she begins to investigate the complicated system of slave labor provided to the railroads, but no one will listen to a woman like her.

When she meets Ezra Pendleton, heir to a newspaper empire, she concocts a plan to tell the world- without incurring the wrath of her father. Ezra is the perfect cover. She'll make her family happy by feigning interest in a very eligible bachelor, become an undercover reporter, and keep her identity a secret.

At least, that was the idea. Margaret starts to wonder if Ezra will turn out to be her plan's fatal flaw. He is not the sort of man you can string along with flattery. He's smart, wary, and is hiding a secret of his own. As

the city falters under the stress of the Chinese mobs, the situation turns more dangerous than they could have imagined. Racial tensions in the city hit a breaking point and arson hits close to home. By the time the time there is an outbreak of the plague in Chinatown, it seems as if all the darkest parts of the city will be revealed at once.

Margaret and Ezra are thrown together in a common cause, but will their secrets destroy the love that is growing between them? A story of faith, honor, and forgiveness.

**REVIEW:** The background of the San Francisco import of Chinese workers for the building of the railroad was well researched and woven into the storyline in an interesting manner. Margaret was definitely a strong, daring woman who was probably a little beyond the pale for women of that time. The connection between Margaret and Ezra played well and kept you hanging until the very end of the story. Harry, Margaret's brother, and Rufus, her dog fit well into the storyline too. My favorite part was Margaret's assist to the young Chinese woman and the following events.

**FAVORITE QUOTES:** 'If you ask for help, God will direct your steps.'

"Forged by God's love and molded in His image, she had survived chaos and destruction."

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### **Joleen says**

Determined to do more than handing out bread, Margaret goes beyond the ladies' society offerings and meets covertly with Chinese immigrants of San Francisco to see what truly can be done to help them. She discovers starvation, slave trading and more. Margaret begins undercover reporting to a newspaper who publishes her news articles. A bond between editor and she grows, even though Ezra doesn't know its Margaret writing the articles.

Well written and only one missing word error that I saw gives it a solid 4.0.

Update: (Feb 1, 2015)...silly side note...

I had finished All the Blue of Heaven (which sequentially comes before this one), not knowing I had already read this book (out of sequence, but it doesn't matter as they're totally unrelated and the setting is in Colorado, not San Francisco). In my review of the other book I actually said I didn't think I had read a book by Ms. Charmichael. But as I was reading the other book recently I was thinking....why on earth is it called that? ....all the Blue of Heaven...

Then I started this book today, not realizing I had read it not even a year ago.

Now I realize why. The title, as far as I can see, has nothing to do with the story. Cute, using colors, but in my opinion, humble though it may be, I don't see why someone would title a book in a way that the reader won't remember what it's about. Titles should reflect the story in SOME way so it brings back to the reader what it was they read. The only purple in this book are the dress Margaret wears at the very beginning, (which she has to remove right off the bat because she ruined it), and the black eye Ezra gets during a scuffle later in the book.

Same with the "Blue" book. I don't think blue has much if anything to do with the book. Very confusing. The latest edition of the purple book has a different cover, and I'm glad. The old one almost made me not want to read it. Yikes! Sounds shallow, but honestly, book covers can actually cause someone to pick up a book or not.

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## **Etha Carson says**

### **Enjoyable light read**

I enjoy light-hearted historical fiction/romance, learning while reading light fiction. Virginia develops her characters and plot to include some twists. Some character carryover from the first book of the series does not affect the stand-alone ability of the book. I plan to read more books by Virginia Carmichael.

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## **Ann Miller says**

My favorite Carmichael title so far! If you like strong-minded, strong-willed heroines who fight injustice, this historical romance is the book for you.

Favorite quotes:

"She'd never been a good liar, and she was even worse at tip-toeing along the crumbly edge of lying by omission."

This one made me laugh. Hellen is wearing a striped outfit that make Margaret a little dizzy looking at her.  
"...his gaze seemed to linger over Helen. Margaret wasn't sure if he was distracted by her beauty or the stripes."

Historical Christian romance at its best. Bravo, Virginia Carmichael.

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## **Patricia says**

### **Lovely**

A true masterpiece of faith, love and devotion. It tells the many struggles of the Chinese workers in the early stages of their introduction to America. Giving voice to the corruption in the railway, the police force, government and newspapers.

It also shows how women were still being thought of more as a decorative item or fragile thing with little to no intelligence and must remain in the house be married away.

This writing is a true inspiration for teaching love for others and the dangers of racism and intolerance. It inspires hope and charity from the HEART.

Definitely one that will be recommended

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## **Vicky Connolly says**

Interesting historical fiction romance set in San Francisco during the building of the railroad by Chinese slave laborers. I was impressed by the sharp contrast between the wealthy and the sad living conditions of the poor which the main character came to realize as unjust.

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## **Jeffrey says**

This faith-based historical romance takes place in San Francisco just following the earthquake and fire of 1906 so it held special interest for me since I was born and raised in San Francisco myself.

Margaret Gilbert is the privileged youngest daughter of the wealthy magnate who owns the Southern Pacific railroad but her heart is not in fashion, high society or the idle pleasure of the rich. She is burdened by the plight of the Chinese 'coolies' whose backs the railroads are being built upon.

They are terribly mistreated by the labor companies who hold them like slaves and barter them back and forth like commodities. Is Margaret's father aware of their plight or is he complicit in the scandal?

Ezra Pendleton owns and manages one of the growing newspapers in the city and Margaret desperately wants someone with a voice to enlighten the citizens of San Francisco to the injustices of the despised Chinese immigrant workers.

Risking life and limb, Margaret gathers information throughout Chinatown late at night risking the retaliation of the infamous "Six companies" who hold the Chinese 'coolies' captive.

Initially, Margaret slips articles on the illegal activities under a the false name of "Josiah" to Ezra who thinks she is a male activist. Gradually, strong romantic feelings emerge between the two which complicate the relationship as Margaret seeks to keep her real identity a secret. What would happen if her father discovered she was possibly working against his interests? How would Ezra react to her deception?

The story is told with colorful historical detail and it is laden with hair-raising danger, suspense, and yes, some appropriate but wild humor. For instance, without delving into spoilers, Margaret sends a note to her family telling them she is staying in a Catholic convent due to her exposure to a plague outbreak in Chinatown. Not knowing the details, the responses from her family as to why she is there are downright hilarious.

I've just scratched the surface of this tale but there is much-much more within its pages, not the least being the Godly divine appointments that are woven throughout this gritty but wholesome romance. Highly recommended? You bet!

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## **Shari Larsen says**

You can't always judge a book by it's cover, or the title, and it's certainly true of this book. At first glance, it appears it might be just a "light and fluffy" romance, but there is so much more substance to this story than that.

This story is set in Francisco, in the early 1900s.

Margaret Gilbert is the daughter of a wealthy railroad owner, but she repelled by the thought of marrying for status, and when she joins the Ladies Aid Society, she is appalled by the treatment of the Chinese immigrant laborers. She vows to expose the abuse, but she also knows that no one will listen to a woman like her.

When she meets Ezra Pendleton, editor and heir to a newspaper empire, she concocts a plan to expose the

truth without incurring the wrath of her father, but she does not expect to fall for Ezra, and she has no idea that he is also hiding a secret of his own.

This was a well paced story and quick read; I really enjoyed it. I liked the quotes about newspapers and journalism at the start of each chapter, and how they related to what happened in those chapters. The author did her research well; even though this story is fiction, sadly, the abuse of the Chinese immigrants described in the book was true. The character of Margaret was also based on a real person, a social activist named Donaldina Cameron who fought for the rights of Chinese women and children.

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### **Barb says**

“Purple Like the West” was written by Virginia Carmichael as one of the novels in the Colors of Faith Series. The novel takes place in San Francisco in the early 1900’s after the Great Fire. The mighty railroads are using Chinese laborers to build the railroads and the Chinese gangs or tongs contract with the railroads to provide the labor. Supposedly the men are paid a wage and provided with room and board; however the tongs take two thirds of the wage and make the laborer pay for food and lodging. The lodging consists of being shackled together in a warehouse.

Margaret Gilbert, the daughter of the head of the Southern Pacific railroad is trying to bring the injustices to the attention of the city. During the dead of night she goes to Chinatown to find out about the atrocities and to see how she can help. Ezra Pendleton is the editor of the The Daily newspaper. He has been sent to the San Francisco paper by his father whose newspaper empire is based in Chicago. Ezra is tired of having to kowtow to his father to keep his position.

Margaret decides to write a column for the newspaper anonymously about the Six Companies and their slave trade labor. Ezra, against his better judgment, decides to print these articles even though he does not know the source. This causes untold problems within the city of San Francisco and among the railroad companies. The story is interesting because of a few things: the plight of women who are expected to be nothing more than an ornament on the arm of her husband, the idea that all women are to be married and have a family, and the idea that higher education is not something women should aspire to.

I enjoyed this book. The only thing that I need to point out is that the title of the book does not remotely indicate what the story is about. I kept trying to reconcile the fact, but did not see any connection. Otherwise, the novel was very enlightening.

You can find this review on my blog at <http://wp.me/p2pjIt-8Y>.

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### **Jane says**

Margaret Gilbert, daughter of a railroad owner in the late 1890's spends her time investigating the plight of Chinese immigrants in San Francisco; she finds a helper in Ezra Pendleton, the owner's son of 'The Daily' newspaper, who is also the editor of the paper. She ventures into Chinatown and secures information for the articles she writes in secret with her wolfhound, Rufus and her brother as an escort.

The more the newspaper prints the more reaction they get from public officials, the Chinese community

leaders and their fathers. This is a Christian historical romance with two strong characters, a great plot and partially based on true events although all characters are fictional. *Purple Like the West* is interesting, has criminals that need to be exposed and is worth reading.

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### **Marie says**

Margaret Gilbert chooses to eschew marriage, status & wealth & the expectations of those around her that she will follow society's norms as a daughter of a railroad magnate. Instead, because of her involvement in a Ladies' Welfare Committee, she learns that the Chinese Immigrants imported to rebuild the railroad after the San Francisco fire, are not being paid and in fact are living in total degradation. She writes anonymous protest columns for a local paper, whose editor is also fighting his father's control and wants to follow his conscience in helping the Chinese cause....

The story-line of *Purple Like The West* is gripping and fresh. The author has well-read her history and the background is well set. I recommend this book as a stimulating, yet quick read.

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### **Louise Phillips says**

#### **Purple Like the West**

I chose this rating because I love history and this book held my attention to the end. I would recommend this book to anyone who loves history and loves the Lord

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### **Beth says**

Not special but a fast historical fiction read that brings up the unconscionable treatment of the Chinese workers brought into California to build the railroad. The consciousness of the problem is brought to light through the tension of two children of magnates, one father owns a newspaper in Chicago, the other father owns a railroad. The children do not realize they are cooperating on an exposure of Chinese living and working conditions but do fall in love through their social connections. Clever enough and an easy read.

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