

Hard Road Home

by L. A. Dopson

Angel Fire Press

reviewed by Joe Kilgore

"He felt bad for the guy. Then he thought about his own dad and tripped on a lump of fear he hadn't known was there."

The time is now. The place is North Dakota. The story is about life—the life of a twenty-something girl named Amanda. On the surface, things seem relatively stable. She has an apartment and a job. Though without a car, or excess money for cab fare, she has to walk back and forth to work. When it comes to personal relationships, she appears to be stuck in place. Most people, except for her father, seem to take her for granted when they're not taking advantage of her—particularly her brother, her mother, and especially her coworker.

Things begin to change, however, when Amanda meets Clayton. He's a hard-bodied hunk who drives an oil transport truck so he can earn enough money to keep his family farm alive back in Kansas. Through a series of interesting and atypical situations, they find themselves involved with one another and wondering whether that's actually good news or bad. You'll probably hope it is good because these are two salt-of-the-earth protagonists most readers will definitely root for.

In this, her second novel, Dopson captures the boomtown atmosphere that the hunt for oil and gas has engendered in the upper Midwest. While her story is replete with specifics about the dangerous and often lonely existence of those who work there, it's her examination of the personal relationships between siblings, parents and children, and lovers which makes her book come alive with emotions that are universal. She writes well about the desire for personal respect, the weight of responsibility, and the pain of longing. There's a lot of love and truth to be found along this author's *Hard Road Home*.

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