Berserker

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In the days of sailing and pillaging, the Norse gods gave the Vikings powers to help them raid and ransack, but these powers aren’t so useful in the late 1800s. Hanne’s family is one of the last with these powers. Her older brother can control the weather, and her younger brother is remarkably strong. Hanne, however, doesn’t think of her power as a gift, but rather a curse. After she kills the three men who murder her father, Hanne and her family are forced to flee to America in search of an uncle they’ve never met. As they travel to Montana with the help of their newfound cowboy friend, Owen, they are chased by two men who may or may not be out to hurt them. During their journey through the wild west, Hanne is forced to come to terms with her gift, protect her family, and learn to love her life despite her curse.

Laybourne creates a world for Berserker that stands out from all the other young adult books on the market today by combining Norse mythology and the American frontier. She does it artfully while not overpowering the book’s main messages: the importance of families and self-acceptance. Each of the four Hemstads—Stieg, Hanne, Knut, and Sissel—play vital roles in the story and in the family. Through the stress, danger, and fear of their journey, the family grows closer together, despite the trials and squabbles that arise. Hanne’s internal struggle to accept herself will strike a chord with audiences of all ages. The moment she embraces her powers and who she is, she unlocks tons of secret powers, inspiring everyone to be themselves.

*Contains mild language, mild sexual content, and severe violence