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Willis, Meredith Sue. Out of the Mountains

All of the stories in this slender collection are set in the same part of West Virginia, high in the Appalachian mountains. Willis, herself a native of the region, brings a decidedly modern, contemporary voice to the genre of small-town Appalachian life. Her stories lack any hint of the saccharine over-sentimentality so common to stories set in this region, being instead focused on the very real problems faced by convincingly textured and flawed characters. Many of the stories feature the same characters at different points in their lives, showing how things have changed?or not?and interweaving the lives of these diverse, three-dimensional people in intricate ways that reward careful reading. Stand-outs include the first story, ?Triangulation? and the interlinked duology of tales ?Pie Knob? and ?On the Road with C.T. Savage.? Highly recommended.

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