

Converso (Western Sephardic Traditions)

Mario X. Martinez



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Converso is a story of crypto-Jewish life in a small town in northern New Mexico during the 1870's, the time of Bishop Lamy. Abran Espinosa along with his uncle, Don Moisés Espinosa, discover their Jewish birthright through an old family journal. The newly-appointed priest, Father LaSalle, mistakenly suspects them of sorcery, leading to a confrontation and Abran's exile from the local church. The resulting story is compelling and surprising. Mario X. Martinez uses stories from his family to create this historical novel of powerful Dons, dashing young men, beautiful women, and the foreign priest who did not understand New Mexican life and culture. This combustible mixture leads to conflict, revenge and the suspicious demise of the priest as he was conducting mass. This is a story that Willa Cather would have understood about life and death and the secrecy by which crypto-Jewish families lived and protected their identity.



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