



## **A Hopeful Heart**

*Kim Vogel Sawyer*

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Dowryless and desperate, Tressa Neill applies to the inaugural class of Wyatt Herdsman School in Barnett, Kansas, in 1888. The school's one-of-a-kind program teaches young women from the East the skills needed to become a rancher--or the wife of one. Shy and small for her twenty-two years, Tressa is convinced she'll never have what it takes to survive Hattie Wyatt's hands-on instruction in skills such as milking a cow, branding a calf, riding a horse, and cooking up a mess of grub for hungry ranch hands. But what other options does she have?

Abel Samms wants nothing to do with the group of potential brides his neighbor brought to town. He was smitten with an eastern girl once--and he got his heart broken. But there's something about quiet Tressa and her bumbling ways that makes him take notice. When Tressa's life is endangered, will Abel risk his own life--and his heart--to help this eastern girl?

## **A Hopeful Heart Details**

Date : Published June 1st 2010 by Bethany House Publishers (first published 2009)

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Author : Kim Vogel Sawyer

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## From Reader Review A Hopeful Heart for online ebook

### Casey says

I have always loved a good prairie romance. A HOPEFUL HEART goes beyond good and into great!

A group of eastern girls being taught on the open prairie how to be good prairie wives-- that alone snagged my attention, but once getting into the book you are opened to a world beyond the setting. The characters are real and alive, worming their way into my heart. Tressa, the heroine is a young woman searching for her place in the world and through each circumstance she must learn to stand strong in God. I loved her journey on all counts.

I can think of nothing I did not like about this book. I truly believe it is the best book by this author to date. The setting was vividly described, bringing me right there. The characters danced upon the screen of my imagination with a real life persona and the love story was sweet and complete with a lovely sigh from this reader when the book was closed.

Even the secondary characters were vivid in their portrayal and I hope to someday rejoin a few of them in another book. Please?

A HOPEFUL HEART will definitely be going on my best books list for a long time to come and is highly recommended!!

Thanks the publishers through CFBA for my copy to review.

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### Nicole says

I wish I could give this book 6 or 7 stars for "it was truly and thoroughly amazing"! I wasn't sure if I'd enjoy it or not because of another book I'd read by this author that I thought was pretty slow, but I was pleasantly surprised!

I loved the whole idea of the Wyatt Herdsman School, and I so enjoyed watching Tressa's character grow. She had to learn some lessons about faith that I'm learning now. I was so happy that the hero was an honorable man who kept ending up the answer to Tressa's prayers for rescue. The romance was not overdone (by far) and yet I closed the book feeling like I'd just read the sweetest love story. I also really liked that there was an intriguing (and surprising) plot - there was excitement, comedy, mystery, love, frustration, resolution, and of course a few Hopeful Hearts ;)

I LOVE LOVE LOVE *clean* Christian Westerns, and this book was **right up my alley!**

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### Heather {JoshuasGirl.com} says

Wow! I don't even know \*where\* to start with this book. I had originally found an audio CD copy to listen to

on my way to work. I ended up listening to it every chance that I could. It kept me on my toes! "A Hopeful Heart" wheels theft, attempted murder, arson, deceit, and so many other heartbreaking issues. Read my full review [here](#).

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### **Amber Stokes says**

This book is wonderful all the way around! The story caused me to think deeply about spiritual truths, and I was encouraged by the hope that Tressa, Abel, and other characters found in the Lord. The secondary characters were real (even the cat, Izzy-B)--either very misguided, very intriguing, or very sweet. And Aunt Hattie's story, including the help and inspiration she offers to Tressa and the other girls throughout the book, is great!

The romance in this book was beautiful. I was drawn into the suspenseful moments, and I confess to looking ahead sometimes because I was just so excited about what would be coming up next! I loved seeing the growth that happened for Tressa and Abel, and there were some moments in the book that really made my stomach flutter due to Abel's protection of Tressa.

The ending is more than satisfying, and the message that is set up by the title and the verse at the beginning of the book is powerful and lasting. I love it when there are many elements to a story, but also one guiding message that is emphasized throughout the book--and A Hopeful Heart really touched me in that regard. I'll say it again: this book is wonderful all the way around!

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### **Carly says**

I have yet to experience a single moment of disappointment with one of Kim Vogel Sawyer's books, and I doubt I ever will. But there was something extra special about A Hopeful Heart that makes this book stand out. Perhaps it is in the innocence of Tressa as she appreciates the beauty all around her – a night sky filled with stars or the beauty of the wildflowers growing on the Kansas prairie. Maybe it is the small details of this story – the cat that becomes a treasured friend to Tressa or the feeling of community and fellowship. Perhaps it's the special woman and spiritual support Aunt Hattie is to Tressa and those moments during their heartfelt talks. I think it is all of those things and more.

A Hopeful Heart left me with a very warm and happy feeling. There was a perfect mix of romance, suspense, adventure, laughter, and grace in this book. Tressa was such a wonderful character. Even though she was hurting and Kansas was the last place she wanted to be, she made the best of it and I really admired her for that. I learned a lot about forgiveness and trusting God during life's difficult moments right along with Tressa. Her character was written so well and it was so easy to like her right from the start.

I just cannot find enough words to describe how much I loved A Hopeful Heart. Everything about it made me smile and just made me feel good and happy and any other positive word I can think of. This book is one for my all-time favorites list and I can hardly wait to see what Ms. Sawyer creates next.

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## **Mom says**

What a fun idea for a book. Setting is 1888 and Aunt Hattie brings 6 city girls to the ranch to learn ranch life. These girls are green - they are taught everything from getting eggs from the chickens, cooking for themselves and the ranch hands, branding cattle, riding horses, driving wagons, gardening, housecleaning...Then there is all the single cowboys in the area that want a chance to court the girls. At the end of the teaching period (which was 6 months I think), then each girl was hooked up with a cowboy. Only cowboys that qualified were those that could provide a home for the girls. So Cole, a ranch hand, loved Sallie and they snuck off to find a justice of the peace to marry them. Tressa came from back east and from high society. Abel didn't want anything to do with another eastern girl - his Amanda had already come and left and broke his heart. So he was trying to guard his heart. But every time something happened, it was Tressa and Abel that were thrown together. Abel is dealing with cattle rustlers and thinks he might lose the ranch and so he keeps telling himself that he isn't in a position to take on a wife. Vince - his ranch hand - is the one stealing from him and when his secret is revealed, he gets drunk and starts the house on fire and dies in the fire. Cage Hammond - from the next ranch over - was helping Vince but he turned himself in and was sentenced to 2 years in jail. The town rallies around Abel and is going to have a house built. Abel gives into his feelings for Tressa and asks her to marry him and start from scratch, just like his parents did. They would build the ranch together. Tressa loves Abel so there is an all ends happily ever after ending. Just a fun read.

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## **Sheri says**

I liked the idea behind this book, but it was so very preachy that it got to be a bit burdensome to read. The characters often seemed rather one-dimensional, and I also had a hard time believing the outcome of the whole cattle rustling business in the book.

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## **Alice says**

I should start by saying- this was NOTHING like I was expecting! I was expecting exactly what the synopsis on the back of the book explained. A simple story about a clumsy city girl learning the ways of the prairie and a hardhearted rancher turned soft. They lived happily ever after. The end...

Not so. :)

"A Hopeful Heart" was a touching story of trusting in God and forgiving those who have wronged you (seventy times seven).

The plot was really intricate and well written. Several times I was genuinely surprised, and at other parts I had to put the book down and think really hard about all the information I'd taken in and try and work it out, 'cause none of it was fitting together in my brain! So I couldn't really stop reading without finding out what happened, right? ...needless to say, I got through this one pretty quickly. :)

Tressie was such a great heroine!!! She made mistakes (like we all do) and had her characteristic issues (a bit clumsy when it came to farm chores, and very self conscience) but she didn't get bogged down by her problems and mope around until hope dawned miraculously! She recognized her faults and worked through them diligently (with the help of Aunt Hattie's Biblical advice), making her stronger and even sweeter. :)

Abel, Ethan, and Cole made a great trio and I loved reading about them! Abel was a great hero and I found it

humorous reading about how he "loathed" the idea of getting married while trying to keep his ranch from falling apart, knowing all along how things would end up. :)

Aunt Hattie was so amazing!!! I loved her! She seemed able to exercise all the fruits of the Spirit to those around her, without having a "holier-than-thou" air, or coming across as "too good". I was encouraged reading about her.

The salvation and reconciliation scenes were very well written and came across as sincere, realistic, and encouraging.

This book was really fun, entertaining, encouraging, and clean. (Lovely cover, too. :))

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### **Danni says**

I liked this book I have read better though.

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### **Amanda says**

What a wonderful book! Take six Eastern women, transport them to Kansas and put them in a herdsman's school. (What's a herdsman's school? A place where women learn the skills needed to be true helpmeets to ranchers.) Add in more than six prospective grooms, along with a man who's convinced that he's not ready to marry. And then, as if that weren't enough to guarantee a delightful story, toss in a bit of trouble ... or more than a bit of it. It all adds up to one of Kim's best books yet, one that will keep you up late, because you have to read 'just one more chapter.' I highly recommend A Hopeful Heart to anyone who enjoys stories of love and faith and real people facing real problems. It's a winner.

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### **Holly Weiss says**

Put your bonnet on, climb up into the buckboard and take a trip to the Wyatt Herdsman School in Barnett, Kansas. Tressa Neill travels west at her Aunt Gretchen's demands for a second chance at gaining a husband and family. The west is long on men and short on women. The small town of Barnett is all stirred up because Hattie Wyatt had concocted a plan to train women brought from the east everything they need to know about being a rancher's wife. The fun part will be matching them up with unmarried ranchers when they've graduated.

We wander amongst these young women as they brand calves, make butter, learn to keep a ranch house clean all the while anticipate being sparked by the ranchers. Tressa, flawed by the inability to forgive, eventually uncovers a secret, which gives her an opportunity to grow. Adam, soured on God for all the losses in his life and preoccupied with a ranch that barely sustains itself, resists marriage. Will his heart forever be held prisoner?

Especially endearing is prayerful "Aunt" Hattie, who, not blessed with children of her own, is full of hope about her house of young students. She is determined to teach them riding, roping, milking, gardening,

canning and any other rancher's wife duty she can come up with, all in preparation for preparing them for their duties as ranch wives. Hattie, too, eventually finds love.

*A Hopeful Heart* will immediately plunk you into its characters' lives and make you feel a part of the wide-open prairie. Using Abel's ranch as a place to teach her girls about birthing calves is a snappy plot twist. The dialogue reflects the time and culture perfectly. This book is a fascinating take on an experimental program to help populate the west. The story is original and the writing smooth and easy on the eyes. We learn that holding onto grudges helps no one. Forgive as God has forgiven us is hard for some, but not impossible. Highly recommended to those who love a subtle romance set the west when our country was young.

Reviewed by Holly Weiss, author of *Crestmont*  
<http://www.hollyweiss.com>

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## **Lyn says**

Kim Vogel Sawyer's classic mail order bride story takes wing and flies on its own! A delightful heroine and a mystery thrown in. A good summer afternoon by the pool read.

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## **Reianna says**

Title: *A Hopeful Heart*  
Author: Kim Vogel Sawyer  
Stars: 4.5

Take a look at the books I've read - it's easy to tell I love historical fiction. I don't know why, but that's one genre I never get tired of. I've read a ton of them. Needless to say, I've come across about every western romance plot out there. With that said, I was pleasantly surprised to find out I've never read anything similar to "*A Hopeful Heart*". Women moving west to attend a school with the sole purpose of training them to be rancher's wives was something I'd never heard of. (Surprising fact; these schools did exist, and are still in existence today!)

I loved the book; read it in a day. I really enjoyed the plot line, and the side stories that involved the other characters. All of them, however, came together in the end - creating a lovely mesh of characters and plots. I enjoyed how Sawyer wrote the book in third person and made sure to incorporate the feelings and personalities of almost all the characters mentioned (with the exception of a few). I felt like I'd met and had a conversation with each character, and had a much better understanding of their personality, hopes, dreams, past and struggles.

The pacing was impeccable, keeping you on the edge of your seat at all times. However, there were moments when something exciting would start to happen, but Sawyer would cut in a few pages about someone else entirely, doing something half way across the town. I was tempted to skip past a couple pages, read what happened to Abel/Tressa and then skip back! I resisted though, and it did all come together, even if it felt choppy at first. It was very well written, much better, in my opinion, than the other novel I've read of hers (*A Promise for Spring*). The whole book was in depth, not dealing with surface issues, but soul issues. You

really connected with the people and the town. It actually got me thinking about my own life a few times.

The romance wasn't the best I've ever read, but it was still great. You get to witness the transformation of Abel and Tressa, and see their hearts thaw out and connect with each other. Though, I must say, I wish there was more interaction between the two. Not to say there isn't a good chunk of it... It just seems like all of a sudden they're in love, and you aren't quite sure when it happened. Seems to me like falling love requires a good amount of spending time with each other and communicating. But, hey, I've never been there, so what do I know?

For those of you that enjoy an in-depth historical fiction/romance, this is most definitely for you!

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### **?lkim says**

Ne zamandır kitapları duruyordu bir türlü okuyamadım ama iyi ki okumuşum nihayet. Hikayesini çok beğendim, konusunda yazdığı gibi 6 köz kovboy okuluna geliyorlar ve kovboy e?leri olmak için eğitim alıyorlar Hattie teyzeden. Abel ise erkek karakterimiz, başka bir közle ilgili kötü bir anı? oldu?u için as?l köz?m?z Tressa'dan etkilenmemeye çalışıyor ama nafiye. Aynı zamanda Abel'in sürüsündeki hayvanlar azalmaya başlıyor ve bir süre sonra çalışm?ndan üpheleniyor. Onlar? çalan adam?n başka planları var elbet. Kitap akıyor, siz bu sırada aksiyon da yaşıyorsunuz, merak unsuru da var - ki tahmin edilmesi zor değil hayvanları çalan?n -, sonlara doğru ise tamamen kalbinizi şı?tacak romantizme dalıyorsunuz. Ben çok beğendim, elime aldığımdan beri de bırakmadım ve bitirmeden rahat edemeyeceğimi anladım. Güzel bir romantik hikaye okumak istiyorsanız bu kitap tam sizlik.

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### **Amy S says**

This was a sweet story. I had never heard of a Herdsman School before reading this. It was interesting and I'm surprised there hasn't been more stories written about it. Quite a twist at the end which was unexpected.

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