

Hooks: Prodigal heroine, cowboy/cowgirl, horses, ranch, rodeo, reunion romance, wounded heroine, small town, homecoming, second chances, forgiveness.

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6 KJV

SYNOPSIS

The Cowgirl Returns...

Kate Rainbolt, is the youngest living Rainbolt sibling. The last ten years she been on the rodeo circuit, first as a barrel racer and then as a rodeo clown hoping to find the father that walked away from her when she was eight.

Though all five Rainbolt children have inherited their grandfather's ranch, Kate is a partner in the guest ranch in name only, choosing to leave the ranch management to her brothers while she chases her dreams.

It's almost exactly ten years later that Kate returns to the family ranch convinced she is a failure. She's lost everything but her horse, including her pride. She is back to heal and accept a position on the ranch after a devastating accident that has in all likelihood ended her rodeo career. While attempting to mend her injured body and the shattered pieces of her life, Kate comes face to face with the painful memories of her past in Rebel, Oklahoma.

No one is more surprised than Rebel Ranch foreman, Jess McNally when he runs into the woman who broke his heart, Kate Rainbolt. He's blind-sided to discover that he's still drawn to

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the rodeo queen. The cowboy knows the rodeo itch runs deep and his head is telling him to be wary.

Jess has moved back to Rebel, due his mother's failing health. The once robust physician's wife is deteriorating and is on a donor list for a kidney transplant. Accepting the position of foreman at Rebel Ranch is an answer to his prayers, as it keeps him close to his family and enables him to offer his mother financial assistance, along with a home-health aide.

Kate too is surprised to run into Jess. He was her first and only beau and they dated through college. Though they were close, in reality their backgrounds were very different. Jess was the son of a physician and Kate lived most of her life in a trailer on the wrong side of Rebel.

On graduation day, Jess proposed and Kate walks away. She's a Rainbolt and his father was eager to remind her that she would never be good enough for his son.

Kate reminds herself that he's right, besides, she has her own mission to find her own father. Now, ten years later, and she has traveled most of the Western United States but is unsuccessful in locating the man who left when she was eight-years-old.

Returning to Rebel, she discovers Jess has been offered the job that she was counting on. But when Kate was injured at the Tucson rodeo six weeks ago, she limited her communication with her brothers so they wouldn't find out how serious her injuries were. With no word from his sister, her brother Reece, assumes Kate isn't interested in the position of foreman, and he finds a suitable and willing candidate in Jess McNally.

Though the foreman position is taken, Kate is offered the position of equine manager once her the cast comes off her arm, which she leads Reece to believe is soon. She'll report to Jess.

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With the death six years ago of her brother, Levi, Kate is very careful not to worry her brothers. She's the youngest child now, and the little girl her brothers all protected growing up. She's determined to continue to be independent now that she's in Rebel, just like she has for the last ten years.

That is the reasoning behind why she fails to share the details of her arena accident six weeks ago, where she was stomped by a bull as she saved the life of a bull rider. She had surgery to place the screws holding her fractured arm together and suffers the side-effects of a concussion, cracked ribs and a healing six inch wound.

Jess finds out the truth about her accident and she begs him not to tell her brothers. He won't go to them, but neither will he lie for her. But her brothers do find out and they ground her like she was sixteen. She's forbidden to go into the stables or to do anything physical on the ranch until she has a medical release.

She's devastated. There are mounting medical bills and her beloved horse Einstein must be boarded. Her brothers offer to pay her bills, but her pride won't allow that.

Kate is accustomed to sweet-talking her way around her big brothers, but she's surprised when they stage an intervention and turn the tables on her with a plan to keep her employed at Rebel Ranch. She has no choice except to agree to the arrangement for her to use her business administration degree and take over the ranch books.

A loathed desk job. But a job that will free up Reece for other important projects and provide Kate with a paycheck.

She grudgingly agrees but blames Jess McNally for telling her brothers about her injuries in what she can only assume is retaliation for walking away from him ten years ago. The rub is that she's forced to interact with him as bookkeeper and she knows that eventually she must find

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a way to make peace with the cowboy, because in six weeks, her cast will be off and he'll be her boss in the stables.

But six weeks is a long way off and until then she's steering clear of Jess and ignoring the way her pulse quickens when he is near. Jess sabotaged her and she won't forget it anytime soon.

For now, she has a new job and an uncertain future. Her life for the last ten years has been defined by the rodeo. She's picking up the pieces and trying to figure out God's plan for the long haul.

Despite the fact that Jess still harbors feelings for Kate, he avoids her at every turn. He's not willing to be collateral damage once again when she packs up her bags and leaves, which he will most certainly do.

Everyone employed at Rebel Ranch must work together once tourist season begins on Memorial Day, and that means Jess and Kate as well. The annual ranch hoedown, and the fishing derby are events that unite the two, forcing them to put aside their differences.

Though she isn't certain what the future holds, Kate begins to heal spiritually and emotionally as her body heals. When Kate's cast comes off mid-May she's allowed to start to work in the stables while still handling the books for Reece.

At a low moment for Jess, his mother is hospitalized and Kate steps in to handle his duties. She recalls the long year that her mother battled cancer and makes amends with the foreman. Ignoring Jess's father's disapproval, Kate renews her friendship with his mother who shares stories of Kate's mother, who was once her best friend. The stories go a long way to help Kate heal in spirit and let go of her quest to find her father.

The more time Jess spends with Kate, the more his heart overrules his good sense, and he realizes that he never stopped loving her. It's during a horseback ride together that Jess and Kate

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open up about their fears more and more. An almost kiss ends the day and leaves both cautious, concerned and yet anticipatory about their growing feelings.

The closer Kate gets to Jess, the more the fear inside her grows. Can she give him what he wants? A family, roots and a home? Or is she just like her father, a wild weed destined to blow away with the next storm.

When Kate gets a call from a close girlfriend and rodeo companion, she asks for a week off to travel to Wyoming for Cheyenne Frontier Days. Kate calls to share her excitement that she's been offered a job with the rodeo. Maybe she isn't a failure after all.

Jess fears he has lost Kate to the rodeo once again, but he hides his fear and encourages her to take the job if it's what she wants.

But is it what she wants? Or is it ridiculous that she wants to turn back the clock and have a second chance to say yes to Jess's marriage proposal.

When Jess's mother takes a turn for the worst the search for a donor is fast-tracked. Kate insists on being tested and finds she is a match. Jess is torn. Is Kate well enough for such a surgery? Is he willing to risk the woman he loves to save his mother?

Kate takes the decision out of his hands, and gets cleared for surgery. Though the transplant is a success, his mother has a long haul to recovery. Kate too is recovering on Rebel Ranch. While she is, Jess's father visits to apologize, setting the stage for Jess to make a bold move.

He tells Kate he loves her. She's certain he's simply overwhelmed with gratitude because she helped his mother. But he's determined to lasso a second chance at happiness and prove to Kate that their future is together.

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He formulates a detailed plan and goes to Reece for approval, then presents the idea for an annual rodeo at Rebel Ranch to Kate. Kate is stunned and more than excited about the idea.

Kate realizes how much Jess is willing to give to ensure that she's happy at Rebel Ranch but it's not necessary, she's come to appreciate that she doesn't need to chase her dreams anymore. Nor is her life over now that she's left the rodeo circuit. It's just beginning. Everything she ever wanted, her brothers and their families, a man who loves her unconditionally and will never walk away is right in front of her at Rebel Ranch.

A year later, Kate and Jess are married in the arena of the First Annual Levi Rainbolt Rodeo at Rebel Ranch. The Rainbolt siblings have come full circle and found happiness in Rebel, Oklahoma.