

Healing Hearts

Sarah M. Eden

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Sarah M. Eden's masterful romance *Healing Hearts* is a story of love, forgiveness, and friendship in which dangerous secrets prove impossible to keep.

It's 1876 in the small, tight-knit frontier town of Savage Wells, Wyoming. Miriam Bricks arrives in town hopeful about her new job as the town's nurse. Hope becomes alarm when she discovers that Dr. Gideon MacNamara, her new employer, had requested a woman to serve as both a nurse and a wife. The impending wedding is called off due to the misunderstanding, but Gideon still offers Miriam the nursing job she desperately needs, though he won't have the companionship he longs for.

Now living in a town that outright disdains her, Miriam nevertheless begins her work. Some detect that Miriam is not being completely forthright about her past, and Gideon authorizes his US Marshal friend, Hawk, to investigate her professional history. Miriam's past barrels toward her, threatening her security and the newfound spark between her and Gideon.

Dialogue flows naturally and with purpose. Details of maladies, epidemics, and treatments are captivating, and Miriam's and Gideon's formalities toward each other as they tentatively begin a professional work relationship are elegant.

Townpeople are portrayed with empathy and with attention to their unique traits, backgrounds, and anecdotes. Most relationships feel authentic. For a short and confusing time, Hawk's contrived behavior casts him as instigator and traitor; he simultaneously courts Miriam and divulges dubious details of her past to Gideon.

The story does not rush itself. It instead allows Savage Wells to blossom to life and enthrall with its everyday occurrences. The twist that endears Miriam to many of the townsfolk works well to build suspense, and the story's climax is complex.

Healing Hearts is transporting; Savage Wells will surely claim many hearts.

TANISHA RULE (January/February 2019)

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