



# Open Country

*Kaki Warner*

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***How do you forgive a brother's betrayal? How far do you go to protect the family you love? Hank and Molly find out in OPEN COUNTRY, Book II of the 1870s family saga, the Blood Rose Trilogy.***

Molly McFarlane is as desperate as a woman can get. Forced to flee with her late sister's children, she must provide for her wards while outrunning the relentless tracker the children's vicious stepfather has set on their trail. Out of money and with no other options, she marries a man badly injured in a train derailment, assuming when he dies, the railroad settlement will provide the money they need to keep moving West.

But there is one small problem. The man doesn't die.

Hank Wilkins doesn't recall the accident he barely survived-and he certainly doesn't remember marrying Molly. But as he slowly recovers at the Wilkins ranch in New Mexico Territory, the idea of a real marriage takes hold...until his memory returns, and that fragile trust is shattered, and the tracker follows Molly to the ranch. Then things really start to unravel.

## Open Country Details

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Author : Kaki Warner

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# From Reader Review Open Country for online ebook

## Emery Lee says

Although I am a lifelong equestrienne, I am surprisingly not a huge fan of western romances, but then again, I'd never read Kaci Warner. This second release in the Blood Rose Trilogy had me completely riveted from beginning to end.

The heroine was a woman worthy of the title, strong, intelligent but also very vulnerable, and one who had completely given up on love, only to find it in a dead man- well, an almost dead man.

The romance between Molly and Hank that was borne out of tragedy and founded upon deception became genuine in every way. It was heart warming to see it unfurl in slow stages. Although as in most romances, there were a series of misunderstandings, the characters talked them out and handled each in a mature and reasonable way.

I absolutely loved this book and can't wait to read the rest in the series. It's firmly placed on my "keeper" shelf. Hope you enjoy it too.

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## Denise says

Molly's sister, who is on her death bed, begs Molly to take her two children immediately and run from their step father. Molly is running from some horrible men who include the step father, who are after a book that they want for nefarious purposes. Molly knows nothing about this book, but her little niece and nephew are filled with anxiety.

While on a train headed for California, there is an accident that leaves many injured or dead. Molly was raised in a hospital and battlefield helping and assisting her father who was a doctor/surgeon/genius but never gave her what she needed as far as affection or love but she is a nurse with tremendous medical knowledge. So naturally she finds herself helping the wounded. She overhears that there will be a 300 dollar payment to the widows from the wreck and makes a sudden decision to claim that she is the fiancée to Hank who has been so terribly wounded that he is not expected to live. The preacher's wife has a soft spot for Molly and the kids so she insists that her husband do the right thing and marry them even though Hank is in a coma. Brady shows up and when the Dr tries to amputate Hank's arm, Molly takes over and heals Hank. Brady realizes the whole marriage is a farce but blackmails Molly into coming to the ranch to take care of Hank and Jessica as she is pregnant again with twins and he fears for her life.

I will have to say that I liked this book even more than the first, Pieces of Sky

The characters were so well developed that you were totally immersed in the story. I will say though that I found Brady annoying in this story. I don't usually like books with kids in them but the two in this broke my heart. Molly, when we got to know her, broke my heart. Hank, broke my heart. There was a scene about 3/4 into the book, where Hank found out the truth to the marriage. The way he "punished" her was so heartbreaking for both of them that I actually cried for them. Something I rarely do.

All in all, this was a great story, with lots happening, a very bad, bad, sicko, bad guy, and an emotional twister.

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## **Mandi Schreiner says**

**Why I read:** Received from publisher for review and I had read great reviews from her previous book, *Pieces of Sky*.

**Favorite Quote:** Who would have guessed that beneath his sweet Molly's round, bouncy bosom beat a warrior's heart.

Molly McFarlane needs money and is willing to stoop to a low level to get it. After her sister's death, Mollie fled with her niece and nephew to get them away from their evil stepfather, Daniel Fletcher. Alone with the two kids, and out of money, Mollie finds herself on a train in Texas. The train derails and Mollie, having assisted her father for years as he practiced medicine, helps tend to as many victims as she can. She hears the railway is offering \$300 to families of the deceased. As she tends to an unconscious man who appears to be on his last breath, she declares that she is his fiancé. As he lay unconscious, she finds a minister and marries him.

Problem is, the man, Hank Wilkins doesn't die. Mollie of course can't in good conscientious let the man suffer, so she does everything in her power to help him live – and miraculously he does. Her troubles are just beginning – Hank's brother, Brady arrives, furious that this woman is out to get their money. The Wilkins's family are very wealthy ranchers, and supply needed water to the railway. Mollie tries to explain she would be happy to just take the money and be out of their life completely. But Brady realizes he may have need of a skilled nurse. His wife is pregnant with their third baby, and her previous deliveries have been life threatening. Having ulterior motives, Brady demands Mollie and her niece and nephew come to the ranch to further care for Hank, and of course be there for his wife.

As Hank gains consciousness, he has no memories of Mollie, Brady or even himself. As his memory starts to come back though, he remembers everything -but his marriage. Now he has a wife and two kids, and Hank's troubles are just beginning. Fletcher is after Molly, but not just because she ran off with the kids, but for much more sinister reasons.

A few months ago I read great reviews of the first book in this trilogy, *Pieces of Sky*. When *Open Country* arrived for review, I eagerly picked it up, very curious to see what Kaki Warner had in store for me. What she gave me was a book I could barely put down, a romance set in the wild west, and a boisterous family that I fell in love with.

As Brady describes his brother to Mollie, "You just married Hank Wilkins, the biggest, meanest, most elusive man in the territory." Hank is not a man of many words, nor is he good with women or children. But when he wakes up after his injuries, he is saddled with both. Problem is, he thinks he just has amnesia which is why he can't remember the three new people in his life. Mollie is so scared of Fletcher finding her, and after Brady threatens to turn her in for fraud unless she accompanies them to the ranch to also take care of his pregnant wife, she settles in – and finds a family, albeit a loud one. She feels at home, even with her burly, surly husband. I thought Hank, who is by no means stupid, would have been a little bit more intent on discovering the truth behind this sham marriage. Everyone knew about it, even the kids, and for Hank to be

left in the dark for so long, didn't always sit well with me. I did enjoy how Hank had to learn to court Mollie. with severe injuries, even though they were married, they couldn't jump into bed. Mollie is very much shy in the romance department, and their love story unfolded in a very nice, slow, rich pace. Having spent most of her years at her father's side tending war victims, when Hank finally touches her, as her husband her thought of - "This is what other women know. This is how it feels to be touched by a man," really moved me.

Besides the romance, Hank and Brady have a very fun relationship as brothers. They fist fight, annoy each other, but they also have a deep love for family and since they all live under one roof, they have plenty of time to egg one another on. We also get a lot of Brady and his pregnant wife Jessica, who were the leads in *Pieces of Sky*. They have to deal with an impending labor and delivery, full well knowing how close they came last time to losing Jessica. Their love and worry, over the upcoming birth really pulls at your heart strings.

Finally, the evil players out to track Jessica down are relentless. They not only want a mysterious book that Molly has never heard of, but she is pretty sure they played a role in her father's death months ago. They don't come into play until the end, but it comes with a very satisfying resolution.

***Open Country*** enthralled me from the start. Kaki Warner writes characters that are very warm, funny, and I felt a connection from the beginning. I can't say enough how much I enjoyed this one, and I really can't wait for book three, *Chasing Wind*, featuring the lost brother Jack.

**Rating: 4.5/5**

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### **Julie says**

Second in the trilogy of brothers living in New Mexico Territory in the early 1870's, this is Hank's story. Molly McFarlane, out of desperation, marries an unconscious Hank Wilkins because she believes he won't live after a train derailment and she needs the railroad widow's settlement money because she is fleeing her evil brother-in-law with her niece and nephew. Of course, this isn't right and she knows it, which becomes a major fly in the ointment when Hank lives after all. His amnesia doesn't help matters either as the lie is prolonged. Good story, with a truly scary villain who is tracking Molly and the children. I loved Hank who is the big, strong, silent type. Shy about his unusually handsome face, he hides himself under a beard most of the time. To say the least, Molly is devastated by the first time he sees him smile clean shaven. Wonderful story between the two, though I did have trouble with the deception going on for so long, but it was still great to see so much of Brady, who I really loved from the first book in the series, as well as Brady's wife, Jessica. Brady sees to Hank's safety while he is ill and barely gives Molly an inch. He's not a pushover when it comes to her, and I was glad of it. I'm becoming a Western lover and these books are great and keep me riveted and reading, reading, reading until they're finished. The character development and the plot lines are first rate.

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### **Sandra ~ ♥ Cross My Heart ♥ says**

Love this book & series! Great story, characters, setting, and writing! Authentic with sizzling chemistry,

suspense, action, laugh-out-loud humor, and the cutest kid scenes ever! A Must Read!

4.5 Stars

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### **Aoi says**

I've missed Kaki Warner's Westerns so much!! It felt much like greeting an old friend - to sink back into her patents of a warm 'family style' romance set amongst the harshness and desolation of the Old West.

Hank went a little too overboard with his feeling of being betrayed by his loved ones, but he pulled back just before he went into 'ass' territory. Besides, I loved how over - seriously he took his responsibilities as a husband and step- father, so it made it up for me.

Brady and Jessica play a central role in this book as well; and instead of giving them a rosy happily ever after cameo, I love how the author constantly evolved their relationship to include life's struggles.

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### **Summer says**

Holy shit, did gay people kill Kaki Warner's parents in an alley?

Check out the lisping, feminine bisexual child-molesting villain menacing our Good Wholesome Heterosexuals:

He was thin, almost cadaverous, and moved with a sensuous hip-rolling gait, like she imagined a snake might move if it had legs. When he spoke, he gestured in the exaggerated way of an actor on the stage, and his voice was a lisping hiss that made her wonder if the flames that had marred his face had damaged his vocal chords as well. There was a wrongness about him that went deeper than the scar.

From another character's perspective:

From this distance Hank couldn't tell who he was, but there was something about the way he moved. A lot of hand flapping. A weak sister. Molly didn't seem to like him either and tried to back away.

He is also described as "elegant, almost-feminine" and "languid" and his laugh is "a high-pitched trill that vibrated along the nerves". He spends his time giggling, torturing people, and threatening to rape men, women and children.

Stepping over her, he bent and peered through the gaps at Hank's retreating figure. He made that smacking sound with his twisted lips. "My, my. Isn't he delicious. Shall we call him back?" Molly rolled on her side and gagged. "Oh, pooh. You're no fun."

The children, of course, describe him as "the monster."

"She's under my protection now," he said to Charlie. "I saw the man you call 'monster' talking to her. I thought there was something strange about him, but I didn't go check. If I had, she wouldn't have been hurt."

But wait, homophobia isn't Kaki Warner's only specialty! She also has an escaped slave called Buck (WHY), a crew of "beaners" working on the ranch, and an interchangeable set of Garcia sisters absolutely delighted to do all the childcare for our white protagonists.

I know it seems like I'm nitpicking with the Garcia sisters, but it's the cherry on the shit sundae. Her rich white 1800s protagonists like to pretend that everyone's family and totally participates equally in family Christmas and stuff, but the people of color get like three lines between them, and the kids are always being shoved off on "a Garcia sister" so the white people can have tender intimate moments.

"Consuelo, bless her, had already arranged for another Garcia - Pilar, this one was named, and cousin to Lupe and Maria - to be available as a wet nurse. She also introduced Molly to Grandmother Oona, an ex-slave who had a gift with infants and who would be delighted to stay with the babies as long as she was needed."

So yeah, this book is a horrorshow, and I haven't even got the stomach to go into detail about our lovebirds' first sex scene, which the protagonist was pressured into and had to explicitly say wasn't rape, though she hated it and felt degraded and treated "like a whore". The love interest was terrifyingly violent and rapey towards the protagonist, and oh, nearly forgot to mention he was aghast when he heard of someone else hitting kids, then spent the rest of the book threatening to take an eight year old behind the woodshed for "discipline".

This was gross, and I regret reading it.

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## **J. says**

Open Country is the definition of a five star second book in a trilogy: tremendous spunky heroine, handsome wounded hero, characters from the first book woven seamlessly into the new story, and the same brilliant writing that captivated this reader in the first book, Pieces of Sky.

Interestingly, I read this book featuring a Civil War veteran nurse right before I started My Name is Mary Sutter, a historical Civil War medical novel creating a lot of buzz this summer. Open Country is just as vividly historic and humane, dealing with the after effects of war for the caregivers and the dangers of childbirth in women.

But Open Country is a true western historical romance with emphasis on the romance. Molly's need to protect her newfound love and family is a realistic one. Hank's struggle to trust Molly rings true. Their emotions and conflict are honestly portrayed with more than a few gut-wrenching scenes.

A more than worthy follow-up to Pieces of Sky, Open Country took everything I loved about the first book and topped it. If you have not read the first book, Open Country is still a stand alone read, but you will want to go back and catch up after falling for Kaki Warner's writing.

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## **Katie(babs) says**

Molly McFarlane comes to her dying sister Nellie's aid after their father killed himself a month ago. She's in shock to see how Nellie's second husband, Daniel Fletcher, has been mistreating her and her six-year old niece, Penny and eight-year-old nephew Charlie. Molly promises to take the children with her after Nellie dies because Fletcher may hurt them. But what she doesn't realize is that one of the children has taken top secret papers that will incriminate Fletcher and the man he works for regarding a new type of artillery that may help the South rise again and start a second Civil War. Molly and the two children have disappeared and Fletcher has no idea where they went. Now Molly maybe in grave danger because a very dangerous man is searching for her, and won't stop unless he gets those papers back, even if it means hurting everyone she cares for.

Things become very desperate for Molly because she has run out of money. While she is on a train near El Paso, Texas, it derails and Molly helps the victims due to her training in medicine because of the years she had helped her doctor father. When she hears that the railway will offer three hundred dollars to the families of the deceased, she spots a familiar man who kept eying her on the train and is now close to death. She does something very unethical and pretends to be his fiancée and marries him. But then his brother comes and figures out that Molly is lying. He is Brady Wilkins of the very profitable Wilkins Cattle and Mining Company out of New Mexico, and the unconscious man is Hank. Brady blackmails Molly where she has no choice but to keep up the rouse.

When Hanks comes to, he has no memory of Molly or their marriage ceremony, but takes Brady's word for it. They had out to RosaRoja Rancho, the Wilkins' family ranch. Hank wants to court Molly and get to know her all over again. Molly is torn because her feelings for Hank have grown, but he has no clue that she is deceiving him. As the months fly by and they become settled, Molly is being stalked by a man who is a true monster in face and in spirit. She has to come clean to Hank before he figures out her deception, where he may turn his back on her and refuse to give her his heart.

Fans of Western Romance will truly enjoy *Open Country* by Kaki Warner. The second book in her Blood Rose Trilogy is well-written, has wonderful descriptions of the frontier life in the early 1870's and characters you can really connect with. Hank has a reputation of being hard and mean, but this is never shown, especially in the way he treats Molly and her two charges. The interaction he has with Penny and Charlie are delightful and he takes on the role as their step-father seriously. He is very considerate toward Molly's needs and their courtship is very sweet.

The first part of *Open Country* is everything I could have hoped for in a romance, but then when the dastardly villain confronts Molly, that's when things slide a bit. The Wilkins' men are worthy warriors who can protect Molly and take down the bad guy, but all of a sudden they act unsure even though the villain lurks around with no real weapons and is vastly outnumbered. The way Molly handles this situation turned me off a bit, especially without any thought to her safety. Molly enters the TSTL (too stupid to live) territory and I had to hold back from rolling my eyes. That part of the story took something precious away from *Open Country* and went on a bit too long.

Ms. Warner can write great sexual tension and buildup, but for some reason when Molly and Hank finally act on their love for one another, it is a fade to black love scene. She does this a few times in the novel and I couldn't figure out why. Not that it is necessarily needed, but I would have liked to see a bit more descriptive passion between the two. Because of the fade to black, I would say *Open Country* could also be enjoyed by



older teens and those readers who aren't big on descriptive love making scenes.

Kaki Warner is really making a name in the Western Romance genre. Even with a few issues on my end, mainly with the way Molly handles her stalker, I found myself right in the middle of all the action and can't wait to read the third and final book in this lovely trilogy.

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## **Lisa Jo says**

If you are an avid reader, then you are probably familiar with a common phenomenon. There is usually that book...somewhere in between book 5 and book 500 where you just sit back and take it all in. The point where the story and the characters matter more than anything else...more than sleep, more than getting the laundry done, more than fixing supper. You can't think about anything else until you get to 'The End' and even then you still can't shake the story from your memory.

Open Country is one of those books.

Molly has just rescued her niece and nephew from their terrifying step-father after her sister passes away. Lost and penniless, she and the children board a train heading for California. Along the way there is a horrible accident. Now, Molly finds herself working feverishly to help injured passengers. One of those passengers is Hank Wilkins, who the doctor swears isn't going to make it through the week. Molly, being desperate and seeing an opportunity she cannot pass up marries Hank so she can claim the settlement money once he passes.

There's just one little hiccup in Molly's plan...Hank survives.

Hank wakes up to discover not only did he make through the train wreck but he's....married? Hank has no recollection of getting married or his wife. She feels like a stranger to him. Yet, she and his brother Brady confirm they are really wed, so Hank must be confused from the accident. This beautiful woman who saved his life and repaired his injured arm must mean something to him. After healing from the worst of his injuries, Hank and Molly head back to his ranch to make a fresh start and try to remember what they mean to each other. Molly is overwhelmed with guilt for the lies she's told Hank. But with her brother-in-law hot on her heels, and her niece and nephew's lives at risk, can Molly truly afford to be honest with the man she's falling in love with?

Open Country is book two in the Blood Rose Trilogy. Brady and Jessica from book one, Pieces of Sky, play a large role in this book. If you've read the first, you're going to love this continuation of their story. If you haven't, there is no time like the present to catch up! Will you be lost if you don't read the first? Not really, mostly because this is Hank and Molly's story and Warner does refresh the main points from book one when needed. (But that doesn't mean you shouldn't read it!)

What is so irresistible about Hank? It's his rough edges, the macho attitude, but underneath all of that is the most tender romantic hero ever put on paper. It's the grizzly man who responds to 'I love you' with 'Me too.' The man who jumps to anger and irrational thought when his female is in danger...the man who refers to pregnancy as 'being good breeders.' He's the kind of man who feels honor-bound to this woman and this marriage even though he doesn't remember anything about it. He doesn't question it, he just knows if they say it's true, it must be. He is the quiet hero that we easily swoon over. The shy individual who doesn't want

the acknowledgment from his good deeds, but he does them anyway, with the goal to come home at the end of the day feeling content. Being the invisible, hard working man...just like everyone else. But of course, he's not.

*"I would never try to control you," she said.*

*He snorted, "Hell, you already do."*

*Letting her hands fall to her lap, she frowned at him. "How?"*

*"By walking into the room. Saying good morning. Breathing." He grinned, "But I don't mind."*

Warner knows how to grab your emotional interest. She writes first kisses that steal your breath away and turn your mind to mush (much like the heroine in the story). There are moments of such tenderness you either can't help but smile or cry tears of joy. She also writes scenes with such great medical detail you nearly cringe at the difficult parts. It's that attention to detail that draws you in, that makes you care about these people. These characters are so carefully crafted you almost question whether or not they are real. It's not just reading a story, or adventure...it's investing time in the lives of the characters. The characters in this world Warner has created are intelligent, witty, and of course, hopelessly flawed. Those characteristics are what make them so perfect and so irresistible.

Open Country is a emotionally compelling story of passion, betrayal, family and the power of unwavering love. It focuses on an old-fashioned courting of an extraordinary and brilliant female by a independent and compassionate man. It also demonstrates the extraordinary bonds of family. This book is guaranteed to pull everything from you. You'll weep, blush, laugh, cringe and sigh...and once you finish, you'll want to go back to page one and experience it all over again.

Overall Review: 5/5

Heat Level: 3/5

Lisa @ Once Upon A Chapter

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## **Sandy M says**

I've once again found a new author whom I'm going to enjoy immensely with every book I read. Ms. Warner has given readers characters who are real, charming, desperate, and oh-so-human, living in a time when they did what they had to to survive. From page one I was very invested in the lives of Molly and her family, even her good-for-nothing brother-in-law. Then when Hank comes along, injured and unconscious, barely alive, well, needless to say I was a goner and couldn't put this book down.

When her sister finally succumbs to lung fever and not being taken care of her by her downright vicious husband, Molly flees with her niece and nephew, hoping against hope she can stay one step ahead of the man when he discovers his children missing. Moving again, always moving, their train derails and Molly finds herself out of money and nowhere to go if she had any. Learning the railroad will pay a huge amount to grieving widows, she decides to take on the role of wife of a man who isn't expected to make it through the night. God help her, but there's nothing else she can do.

The only problem Molly runs into once her decision is made is that Hank doesn't die. Most of it has to do with his constitution and will to live and a little has to do with Molly's doctoring, which she learned from her father, doing anything and everything just to get that approval all offspring want from their parents.

Fortunately for Molly, Hank doesn't remember the train wreck nor the time right before, so she continues on with her ruse, not knowing what will happen now but praying that all will work out as it should.

Hank is a man of his word, so if he gave his vow to Molly for better or worse, he's going to stick by it. Even if he can't recall a thing about their wedding, let alone the woman herself. Taking her home to his family ranch, he begins to learn about Molly and what he discovers, he likes. She seems to understand him as no one ever has before and that means almost as much as telling the truth and never deceiving those who mean something to you.

Which is now Molly's dilemma. She's wanted to own up and tell Hank what really happened and how they came together, but she's finally gotten in her life all that she's always wanted - family and love - and she's afraid she'll lose it all when Hank finds out what she's done. He definitely knows something doesn't add up, once his memory returns, but he's waiting for her to make the first move and make things right between them.

This is one of those heart-warming books that don't come around very often. While there is love and happiness in this story, Ms. Warner also keeps the way of life in the old west very real, tempering that happiness with heartache and betrayal. A man wears his gun to protect those who belong to him and he wears his pride right there on his sleeve, allowing his heart to make an appearance only when he's sure he won't be made a fool of. Hank does have to do some deep soul searching, looking for a forgiveness that anyone else would never receive. But his heart now belongs to Molly.

The emotion throughout this book will strike straight at your heart, just as it does at Hank's and Molly's. Especially when Hank has to take up fathering to Molly's young nephew, a boy who's holding a secret close to the vest and needs fathering up one side and down the other. Those scenes between man and boy, now father and son, are simply full of warmth, even when discipline is imminent. There's another scene between Hank and Molly that when he learns more of the truth from her, he hides behind that hardness a cowboy of that day and age wore as easy as he did his gun. I wanted to hate the man for his sudden turnaround, but I couldn't. I could feel the depth of his despair, the waves of helplessness and hopelessness of betrayal running through him, and I love him all the more for that vulnerability just as much as I did for his forgiving nature later.

This is the second book in this series about the Wilkins brothers, and I'm on a hunt to find the first one, *Pieces of Sky*. I want so much more of these brothers, as well as Ms. Warner's beautiful writing.

See my complete review at <http://www.goodbadandunread.com>

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**KatLynne says**

#### **4.5 Stars**

Once again Kaki Warner has captivated me with another romance centered around the Old West. The essence of the period is felt as she transports readers back in time with a plot that is executed flawlessly and a slow building romance between two richly drawn characters.

Here we get Hank Wilkins and Molly McFarlane's story. Their relationship began from a chance encounter and an act of deceit; a manipulation born of desperation due to Molly's dire need of funds.

A deathbed promise to her sister has Molly and her late sister's two children fleeing across the country as they are hunted by a vicious thug. When a train wreck leaves big, sexy Hank Wilkins unconscious and dying, Molly quickly steps in claiming to be his fiancé in order to collect the settlement money. After learning the funds are only disbursed to family, Molly continues her duplicity by marrying this unconscious stranger.

**Open Country** is the second release in Warner's Blood Rose Trilogy and I was hooked from the get-go. Of course, Hank doesn't die and as each layer is revealed, I found him to be delicious. He's strong, sexy, protective and had me laughing one minute while deeply touching my heart strings the next.

In classic Warner style, the author gives a heroine who is intelligent, brave, with the perfect balance of vulnerability. I adored Molly. Her medical and surgical skills added greatly to this tale as well as the inclusion of Brady, Jessica and others from the first installment. The children and secondary characters figured prominently while not detracting at all from Hank and Molly's romance.

If you enjoy Western Romance with rich characterizations, a dastardly villain and sparkling chemistry, you'll want to grab this series. While the bedroom door is closed, the chemistry is certainly felt. Once again you'll find a heart melting romance where the storyline and character development are front and center. I loved it!

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## Misfit says

Open Country is book two in Kaki Warner's Blood Roses trilogy and begins in 1871 as nurse Molly McFarlane finds herself between a rock and a hard place. Her father is dead after supposedly committing suicide, her niece and nephew are at the mercy of their dastardly step-father (an evil baddie with nefarious plots), and it appears there's some book he thinks Molly has and he's hot to get it at any cost. Molly flees west with the children where they end up in a horrible train accident. Molly hears that widows will receive \$300 for the loss of their husbands, and since Hank Wilkins is as good as dead anyway, she ups and gets herself married to an unconscious groom.

Long story short, Hank survives due to Molly's excellent nursing skills (her father was a doctor), but his memory's still a bit off so he believes he married her for love (older brother Brady is in on the deception since he wants a nurse for his pregnant wife Jessica). Molly, Penny and Charlie are brought back to the ranch to join the ever-increasing Wilkins clan at the RosaRoja ranch in New Mexico, where Hank determines to court his \*bride\* again, and it's beginning to look like everything might just work out...

*"And if he had to court a wife for the second time he didn't remember from the first time, well . . . he'd do it . . . and hope they got to that taking-off-the-clothes part before he was so old he started losing his memory all over again."*

That is until Hank's memory comes back (no spoilers, that's in the book description), and let's say he's not exactly amused. But don't forget there's still that evil baddie chasing her (he's a mean one) and if Molly doesn't have the mysterious book he wants so badly, just who does have it? And why are his employers so desperate to get it back?

I have to say I am loving this series to bits - especially the kids and the humor. Penny and Charlie are a perfect addition to older brother Brady's expanding household, most especially Penny. Lord love a sticky six-year-old with a constantly dripping nose asking questions that no adult wants to answer :D

*"Because Aunt Molly's hurt and you said you would keep us safe and now we aren't." She let her hands fall to the bed and glared at him. "But I'm not leaving until I get my kitty. You promised."*

Like a dog with a bone, Penny never lets go...

*"The kid must be part Apache the way she snuck up on a person. "Say what?" he asked groggily. "That I puked." He squinted up at her, trying to make sense of her words. Conversations with Penny were always a challenge. "Why not?" "Ladies aren't allowed to say 'puked.'*

I enjoyed watching the relationship between Hank and Molly, and while I understood his anger at her original deception, I think Hank's anger went a bit too far and it almost evolved into a Big Misunderstanding of the worst kind. The biggest plus for me though was getting to see more of Brady and Jessica from book one. Typically in series like these you're lucky to get a brief cameo appearance here and there, but Warner puts Brady and Jessica front and center - thumbs up for that. My only real quibble is the final twists with the baddie chasing her, and Molly's incredibly dumb stunt to save them all. I wanted to wring her foolish neck. Still, you don't want to miss these and I'm already on the last book, Chasing the Sun.

FTC, Kindle edition via library loan.

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## **Kristiej says**

A good Western romance is a rare thing these days and this is one of the best ones I've read. Both Molly the heroine and Hank, the hero are great characters. Molly is placed in an untenable situation. Her dying sister begs Molly to take her two children away from their evil stepfather, which Molly who has just lost their father does. She travels from city to city with her niece and nephew, trying to escape, and is in desperate straights when a train derailment occurs and she decides to marry a stranger who seems at death's door to collect the death benefit money. When his brother, Grady, the hero of the previous book in this trilogy finds out, he blackmails Molly into heading to the ranch, first to care for a very damaged Hank who doesn't die after all due to Molly's care, and second, as Grady's wife Jessica, is due to give birth soon and Grady is frantic for her sake.

But this deception does not sit well at all for Molly and even less so when her feelings for Hank deepen. She knows he will be angry when he finally realizes how he has been deceived. She makes for a great heroine. She's strong - she's had to be as an assistant to her physician father, she's never had a real chance to live a normal life. She is honest and loyal and she feels terrible about what she did to Hank and suffers for it, but she is determined to take care of her only remaining family. Yet she's also vulnerable too and afraid that she will lose Hank once he finds out.

And Hank. What a delicious hero he makes for. When he first recovers, he has no memory of who he is. But it doesn't take long for him to remember everything - except for Mollie and his step children. He's the strong but silent hero type as anyone who has read Pieces of Sky will remember. A shallow thing, but I'm glad Molly shaved his beard off very early in the story. Although he doesn't remember his 'wife' he slowly develops feelings for her, only to experience betrayal when the truth comes out. He doesn't talk a whole lot, and when he's upset, takes to doing rather endearing things while working it out in his head. He loves to tinker with things and is a bit of a loner and an inventor.

Brady and Jessica from the first book also play a large role in this book, though I don't think you have to have read *Pieces of Sky* to enjoy this book. Mandi didn't and she still really enjoyed *Open Country*. So often previous characters in series only make a token appearance and I'm glad they were more than that in this book.

This is a Western, and a gritty one at that. Both Molly and Hank do things that aren't necessarily easy to read about, but I thought the author did a great job in showing us why they did what they did.

This book has more of an epic feel to it and reminds me of the books of yesterday without the overblown writing that sometimes went along with them. If you are a fan of Westerns this is one that you must read and if you are thinking about reading a Western this is one you must read. If you've never read a Western, but like books with great characterization, a strong hero and a delicious hero, this is one you must read. In short, anyone who loves a good romance, this is one you should read.

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### **Lisa says**

The death of Molly McFarlane's sister Nellie forces Molly to assume responsibility for the welfare of her young niece and nephew. When it becomes clear the children's step-father Daniel Fletcher is involved in dealings that will ultimately endanger them, Molly takes the children and heads west, intending to put as much distance between Fletcher and the children as possible.

Molly, having served as her physician/surgeon father's assistant from a young age, is a capable woman who quickly realizes that the scant amount of money she has left will not provide for her and the children for very long. Fearful that Fletcher has sent trackers after them, Molly's quandary over how to keep them safe is met with an unusual solution in the form of a tragic train derailment. When Molly discovers the railway is paying a death benefit to families of those killed in the train wreck, she marries a man who is not expected to survive his injuries, planning to collect the settlement money when he dies.

Complications arise almost from the moment Molly sets her plan in motion: her husband turns out to be from a wealthy local family and he has a brother who is suspicious about the circumstances under which his confirmed-bachelor brother was wed. To make matters worse, Molly's years of training will not permit her to stand back and allow the man to die of his injuries when she has the expertise to save him. Molly applies herself to the task of saving the man's life, all the while fearful of what will happen when he recovers enough to expose her as a fraud.

When Hank Wilkins recovers from his injuries at his family ranch, he puzzles over the fact that he has no memory of his wife or his adopted children while Molly wrestles with how and when to reveal the truth about their sham marriage to Hank. The handsome, taciturn man who once represented nothing more than a cash settlement to fund her journey west becomes the embodiment of the dream for love and family Molly has long denied herself. Their fragile bond is shattered when Hank's memory returns before Molly finds the courage to reveal the truth.

As the trackers sent by Fletcher close in on their quarry, Molly and Hank struggle to find a way to begin again, unaware that Molly's nephew has evidence of a conspiracy involving Fletcher that Fletcher is willing to do anything—including commit murder—to recover.

*Open Country* offers more than the standard "woman and children fleeing danger" plot. Although Molly's

certainty that Fletcher's men are after them is mentioned often, no real sense of danger is instilled in the reader until Molly has an encounter with the most evil of their pursuers well into the story. Up to that point, the danger is talked about, but the leisurely pace of the novel stalls the element of suspense.

The heart of the story focuses on the unfolding relationship between Molly and Hank, with the author's gift for insightful dialogue and her ability to capture complex emotions lending credibility to the developing romance. *Open Country* is a well-written, satisfying read for those who enjoy themes about the redemption of trust and the capacity for mutual attraction to turn into love.

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