



# The Wisdom of Hair

*Kim Boykin*

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**Life can be beautiful, but it takes a little work...**

*“The problem with cutting your own hair is that once you start, you just keep cutting, trying to fix it, and the truth is, some things can never be fixed. The day of my daddy’s funeral, I cut my bangs until they were the length of those little paintbrushes that come with dime-store watercolor sets. I was nine years old. People asked me why I did it, but I was too young then to know I was changing my hair because I wanted to change my life.”*

In 1983, on her nineteenth birthday, Zora Adams finally says goodbye to her alcoholic mother and their tiny town in the mountains of South Carolina. Living with a woman who dresses like Judy Garland and brings home a different man each night is not a pretty existence, and Zora is ready for life to be beautiful.

With the help of a beloved teacher, she moves to a coastal town and enrolls in the Davenport School of Beauty. Under the tutelage of Mrs. Cathcart, she learns the art of fixing hair, and becomes fast friends with the lively Sara Jane Farquhar, a natural hair stylist. She also falls hard for handsome young widower Winston Sawyer, who is drowning his grief in bourbon. She couldn’t save Mama, but maybe she can save him.

As Zora practices finger waves, updos, and spit curls, she also comes to learn that few things are permanent in this life—except real love, lasting friendship, and, ultimately... forgiveness.

## The Wisdom of Hair Details

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Author : Kim Boykin

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## From Reader Review The Wisdom of Hair for online ebook

### Christine Bruns says

I wasn't exactly sure what to expect out of Kim's debut novel. But I was so pleasantly surprised. I found myself completely falling for the main character Zora, believing everything about her journey. I really love too, that the ending wasn't tied up neatly in a pretty little bow. And best of all after finishing this book I am hungry for more from Kim. Thank you Kim. Keep up the great work!

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### Kayla Edwards says

This was another one of those books I didn't think I would like but ended up getting really into. I went through this story so fast and got so wrapped up in it. I loved Zora. She was so honest and her flaws weren't sugar-coated. She was a real person that I could relate to - insecurities and all.

As an added bonus, Kim Boykin actually visited our book club when we discussed this book the other day. It was a very unique experience - I very much enjoyed hearing her talk about the characters and getting a more complete idea of who they really are!

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### Susan Clark says

This is a terrific read! I usually take my time with a book, but I zipped through THE WISDOM OF HAIR in two days. I just got so involved with the characters. It's very well-written, with realistic dialogue and beautiful description. Loved reading about the best-friendship between the two main characters and seeing how Zora grew and changed when she left her crazy home. The relationship with Zora and her college professor (male) landlord is excellent and kept me on the edge of my seat. The friends she meets in her new town are friends I'd like to know. (And of course I'm a sucker for anything that has to do with hair and style.) Highly recommended!

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### Susan says

This was a tender-hearted book about community and coming of age and falling in love with the wrong guy. I like books about nice people. Also, I learned a lot about hair.

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### Jan says

This is not a book I would have picked up on my own. I hate beauty parlors and only go to them out of complete necessity! But it was a group read so I decided to step out of my comfort zone and give it a chance. I'm so glad that I did because it was touching and delightful book from beginning to end.

It is narrated by the main character, Zora Adams. She has had a troubled life growing up with an alcoholic mother and even though it is one of the hardest things she has ever done she leaves her momma to go to

beauty school in another city. As the story unfolds, we are taken on a journey of how Zora becomes her own woman separate from her mother and in the process she discovers the strong bond of friendship and learns the importance of forgiveness with grace. This 18 year old mountain girl left home so she could understand and experience what it feels like to be loved and finds it in a completely unexpected place.

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### **Jim Mcfarlane says**

As a male, I was a little leery about the cover art and title of *The Wisdom of Hair* by Kim Boykin. But my qualms disappeared by page three. This is a well-written, astute, and intelligent novel about a nineteen-year-old girl--correction, an insightful woman, because she had been taking care of herself and her dysfunctional mother for years. Zora Adams reluctantly abandons her mother and her home in the mountains of Cleveland, SC, for the opportunity to create a life for herself, by way of the Davenport School of Beauty 300 miles away.

Recommended for anyone who loves good people, good stories, and good writing.

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### **werejumpinbooks says**

*The Wisdom of Hair* is a southern story of love, friendship, healing, forgiveness, courage, and learning to let go. You will learn that in life, we often deal with diseased and pained relationships in our lives, and some times, we just have to cut them out of our lives, as we do with haircuts.

Zora Adams, main character of the book, grows up in life in abandoned and despairs. Her mother is an alcoholic, and brings men in and out every evening of Zora's life. Zora finally had enough of her mom and called out for help; she embarks on a new life, and starts unfolding her own dreams. Zora becomes a best friend to Sara, and Sara adds that bright of color to Zora's life, and to the book!

There are two love stories within this book.

Zora and Winston, Zora feeds herself to Winston by fixing him meals, and through that Winston provided a place to live for Zora.

Sara Jane and Jimmy love at first sight, and their love blooms before your eyes as you continue to read the book.

I can tell you that the story is absolutely great, lovely read, through the writing and the reading. It is definitely necessary read.

We're Jumpin' Books

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### **Laura says**

I myself being a hairdresser, love books about the industry, so I knew I wanted to read this book when it popped up in my suggestion box. I love the south, and although am a northerner myself, have always been a southern girl at heart, so this book hit home for me. Zora Adams is a strong, witty, and independent character, who is raised by a not so present mother, whose long laundry list of men coming in and out of her life, and her mothers' fantasy world she lives in, leaves Zora dying to escape.

Heading into beauty school is that escape for her, and her school reminded me so much of the movie *Steel*

Magnolias, which has always been one of my favorite movies growing up. I loved the relationship between Zora and Mrs. Cathcart, and my only complaint was that I wish there was more hair-styling/salon gossip in the story, because that's really what I went into the book hoping for.

Although at times frustrating, I really liked the dynamic of the relationship between Zora and Winston and was strangely rooting for them, although Winston was reminiscent of the kinds of men Zora's mother brought home, I still was hoping for the glimpse of good in him to shine through.

I really enjoyed this book, and would love to see more from these characters. I think the hair industry needs more love in the literary-world, and as a stylist myself, and an avid reader, would never turn down a chance to read a hair salon-centric book. I loved Kim Boykin's southern charm writing style, and can't wait to read more from her.

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### **Courtney says**

A pink-bound story of a 1983 Southern woman with childhood of loss and neglect, who attends beauty school because she just wants her life to be beautiful, runs some risk of appearing quaint, in the silly-frilly-negligible sense. Cover praise describes it as "lovely" (Wendy Wax) with a "big, beating heart." Ann Napolitano continues, "It's hard to write a book about (mostly) nice people, but Kim Boykin has pulled it off." I agree with all of this, and I'd like to elaborate, because *The Wisdom of Hair* is no doily.

Kim Boykin gracefully weaves through the characters' battles with child abuse, postpartum depression, unexpected pregnancy, sex addiction, drug addiction, widowhood and grief, unrequited love, racism, and alcoholism galore. The nature of its *Ever After* is imperfectly and unconventionally Happy. It left me with aftershocks for days later.

The ever-vacillating love story defies formula and explores the depths of grief and guilt. An enormous, morally ambiguous opponent -- Zora's mother -- touches her every decision. She fights for the approval of wicked older women. She attends beauty school; her mother was a Judy Garland impersonator. She falls in love, but is he her mother's type?

Beauty does not come hand in hand with shallowness, and I have never read a book that so clearly explained why. Her mother finds inspiration in the beauty of Judy Garland. Zora finds redemption in the respect of the customers she beautifies. Textual elaboration to come.

A quick, powerful conclusion and poignantly tied ends leaves me hungering for more of this story, but I'll have to settle for Boykin's next work.

This Review appears on my blog, *Studies in Storytelling*. <http://studiesinstorytelling.blogspot...>

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### **Julie Valerie says**

It's always a great read when the main character is shaped in part from a childhood of extreme poverty in the Appalachian mountains, the 480 million year old North American mountain range that stretches from north Georgia in the United States into parts of southeast Canada. If you enjoy stories with roots in central and southern Appalachia, a nice complement to Kim Boykin's *The Wisdom of Hair* would be Elizabeth Flock's *Emma & Me*. In Boykin's book, the main character, Zora May Adams, moves away from the mountains to a

coastal town to attend beauty school, but is reminded of her mountain upbringing in a story-changing scene during a chance encounter that is so harrowing to Zora, I wanted to reach into the pages and pull her into a warm embrace. This, coupled with a visit to her childhood home give much for the reader to contemplate about life in Appalachia as well as the old adage, 'You can take the girl out of [Appalachia] but you can't take the [Appalachia] out of the girl.'

The Wisdom of Hair is a story about love, healing and forgiveness and shines a light on the devastating effects of alcoholism, especially when one particular character in the story is both an alcoholic and a narcissist who believes she is Judy Garland. Through the shadows of narcissism come intense shame and convenient distortions of reality making this a truly remarkable story of courage and letting go.

I sensed a tinge of a doppelganger, a literary device taken from the German language which means 'double walker' in which one character acts as a copy of another character. I saw a hint of this through the mother-daughter relationship between Mrs. Cathcart, the owner of the Davenport School of Beauty, and her mother - as compared to the mother-daughter relationship between Zora, the main character, and her mother. Ironically, both mothers in this tale, I believe, suffer from a form of Narcissistic Personality Disorder which brings with it warped realities (both mothers are "confused" about their lives as performance stars) and deep feelings of shame for the daughters raised in this mania. I found Zora's reaction (or lack thereof) to Mrs. Cathcart's upbringing quite interesting.

There's more than one character in the story that is tragic from beginning to end which gives the storyline an honesty that is needed for Zora to heal and I found it refreshing that those characters did not suddenly up and cure themselves by the closing of the book. Sometimes disease and pain do not simply go away, they have to be confronted, dealt with, and at times, cut from our lives - like a haircut.

Two love stories in the book, that of Zora and Winston, and that of Sara Jane and Jimmy served as good contrasts to each other. I found it ironic that Zora found herself literally feeding Winston through cooking that provided her with shelter and figuratively feeding Winston's many needs.

Readers will love the young women at the Davenport School of Beauty which serves as the portal for change, not just for the young beauticians seeking a different life, but the clients they serve. Book clubbers will enjoy discussing how Boykin's book compares with other books that celebrate strong sisterhood and the important role of having strong women in our lives.

NOTE: I read from a publisher's proof copy before the book was printed. Therefore, I cannot supply direct quotes from the version I read unless the quotes are then checked against the final bound copy. But trust me, there were many great sentences I highlighted while reading on my Kindle. Rest assured, you will enjoy both the story and the actual writing!

Complete book review is posted on my book blog, Chick Lit Chit Chat URL: [julievalerie.com](http://julievalerie.com) where I'm reading and posting book reviews for 52 books in 52 weeks.

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## **Jess (Gone with the Words) says**

Read this review on my blog! --> [The Wisdom of Hair by Kim Boykin](#)

I didn't know much about this book before it found its way to me, but something in its synopsis said to me, "READ ME! You'll love me!" I'm so happy I listened.

The Wisdom of Hair, for me, was a book about finding and knowing true love. Not just romantic love, but true love in family and friendship as well. I think when someone doesn't grow up with true love they don't know what it looks like sometimes, and they make a lot of mistakes trying to find it. But the important thing is that we learn from those mistakes and learn to recognize the difference. I think Zora makes a believable journey to finding the love she needs in the end.

The writing in this book was really lovely. I loved the feel of it and how genuine it was. It was melancholy at times, but there are also fun and witty moments that rounded it out so well. All the characters left a lasting impression on me. They were just so well fleshed out.

The Wisdom of Hair is considered Women's Fiction, but I think it has great New Adult crossover appeal. No, it doesn't have sexy half-naked models on the cover, but the issues our 20 year old Zora is dealing with certainly are New Adult as well as Women issues. If you want a break from the norm, pick up this wonderful book.

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### **Holly says**

I have to admit that I was undecided as to what to read next and as I was on Goodreads reviewing my last book read I saw an ad for this book pop up on the side of the screen. I quickly read the reviews for it, which were wholeheartedly good among many 4 and 5 star ratings, so on impulse I bought it. Well, it's fun and frothy and served to fill a brief afternoon but not anything more than that. If you're looking for a quick beach read this is perfect. My hand almost got tired clicking my Kindle so quickly to go from page to page...

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### **Samantha March says**

Kim Boykin is now on tour with CLP Blog Tours and The Wisdom of Hair. What a charming little read! The book is set in 1983 and follows the life of Zora Adams, who leaves her home in the mountains on her nineteenth birthday to escape her man-loving alcoholic of a mother. A teacher helps her get enrolled at the Davenport School of Beauty and her own place to live. Zora befriends the boisterous Sara Jane Farquhar almost immediately, and is accepted in Sara's prestigious family as one of their own. She also falls hard for Winston Sawyer, a young widower who is forgetting all the pain with his excessive drinking. Zora learns lessons during her time at the Davenport School of Beauty not only about hair – but about love, friendship, family ... and forgiveness.

The Wisdom of Hair was a cute read but also deeply explored the subject of self-discovery. Readers meet Zora when she is pretty low in her life, and watch her as she slowly becomes less and less shy and finds her backbone. The beauty school sections were a hoot to read about, and the whole novel really embodied what I envisioned the '80's to be like. I adored the friendship between Zora and Sara, and Sara's character in general was so fun to journey with. Sometimes I felt a little disengaged with the characters, in particular with Zora and Winston's relationship, I think just because it is so very complicated. Sometimes I just wondered what in the world she saw in the man – but I guess we can't choose who we love, can we? Overall, a very fun and spirited chick lit book!

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## **Laura Chapman says**

Steel Magnolias meets Jane Eyre in Kim Boykin's The Wisdom of Hair.

In 1983, Zora Adams turns 18 and moves away from the home she shares with her alcoholic, Judy Garland-obsessed mother in the mountains of South Carolina. She moves to the coast where she will study to fulfill her lifelong ambition of becoming a hairstylist.

While there she meets a few people who forever change her life: Sara Jane Farquhar and Winston Sawyer.

Sara Jane is the cherished daughter in a supportive family. A fellow student at the school, the girls become fast and close friends. Winston Sawyer teaches English and is an alcoholic widower still coping with the loss of his wife. She comes to love them both, and each shapes her life in a permanent way.

As Zora endeavors to become the woman she always dreamed of being, she also must deal with the demons of her past and learn to live with the cards life deals her.

The Yankee Girl in me kept making comparisons between this book and Steel Magnolias, as I mentioned earlier. Though I'm well aware these stories are set in different parts of the south, which does not make them the same, I likened it to the movie that I know and love well. This gave me an almost instant interest in digging deeper into this story.

More than the southern roots -- Zora is from South Carolina rather than Louisiana -- I kept making this connection because of the tight-knit community of women (and a couple of men) involved in hairstyling. Though Steel Magnolias was more of an ensemble cast story than The Wisdom of Hair, which has a clear-cut heroine, I loved that same element of seeing women (and, OK, a couple of men) be stronger than they appear and finding comfort and support from other each other.

I also made the connection to Jane Eyre, because like Jane, Zora is practically if not literally an orphan who finds herself drawn to people who can help or hurt her. She must also make tough decisions about the outcome of her life, which are especially difficult given the challenges she is issued.

It was an emotional ride to watch Zora navigate the best decisions for her life. I found myself constantly worrying about her welfare, because I genuinely cared about her. Her missteps were painful to observe, but they only made her movements in the ride direction all the sweeter.

Even without my finding connotations to other stories I liked, I would have enjoyed The Wisdom of Hair for its own sake. Filled with plenty of unique characters, placed in a well-described setting, told at a fast -- but smooth -- pace and complete with believable dialogue, this book was a solid read. I recommend it for anyone who enjoys stories about the complexities of family, love and life.

I received a copy of this book in exchange for a fair and balanced review. Originally published at [www.change-the-word.blogspot.com](http://www.change-the-word.blogspot.com).

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## **Tilara says**

You have no choice in the family in which you are born, however you can choose your friends, who will become your family of choice.

In Kim Boykin's new book, The Wisdom of Hair, I felt as though the main character Zora Mae Adams, was

in many ways, a part of me, as well as friends that I have known and met throughout my life. Like Zora, I too have friends that I love and hold close to my heart in the absence of family. This is an emotional story, of finding love (in many forms) when you least expect it.

Zora is a old soul, who has spent the large majority of her life without love, helping to care for an alcoholic and narcissistic mother. It is only when she closes the doors to that world that she finds the love that she was missing all along.

Kim, has written a story of love, forgiveness and grace. It is a beautifully written book with characters that are three dimensional and realistic. It has warmed my heart in many ways, and I am sure it will warm yours as well. Very Good!

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