

Hella's Book Review



Kristin Hannah, author of *The Nightingale*, wrote a powerful historical fiction titled ***The Four Winds***. It is a story of the Great Depression and how one woman showed unbelievable strength to help her family survive the terrible dust storms that swept through Texas and throughout the Great Plains for more than ten years.

At the beginning of the story the reader is introduced to twenty-five-year-old Elsa Wolcott. At age fourteen Elsa had a childhood fever and ever since, her parents have insisted she was too weak to endure any social interaction. She was also told that she was not pretty like her sisters and that no man would want to marry her. So, Elsa spent her much of her time much in her room reading, especially romantic novels, while her parents showed no love for her at all.

One day, as Elsa was growing tired of the treatment she was receiving, she decided to sew a red dress for herself and sneaked out in search of a romantic adventure. She meets Rafe, who is charming and sweeps her of her feet. But Elsa becomes pregnant, and her parents banish her from their home forever. She is taken to the farm owned by Rafe's parents, Tony and Rose Martinelli, who accept her into their family and urge Rafe marry her. The only thing Elsa wants is love, and be loved, and when her daughter Loreda is born, Elsa loves her with all her heart and soul.

Elsa learns everything she can about farm life. She works very hard right alongside her in-laws and Rafe. She forms a special bond with Rafe's mother, Rose, who teaches Elsa all there is to know about living and surviving on a farm. Elsa and Rafe have a son, Lorenzo, who sadly dies shortly after his birth. Another son, Ant, short for Anthony, is born and Elsa feels so much love for him.

In 1929 the Stock Market crashes and the Great Depression begins. Dust storms that last for days destroy the land, bury homes and fill people's lungs with dust. Even the rains have stopped coming, but through all the disasters, Elsa stays strong and determined.

Many people leave everything behind and head for California, *the land of milk and honey*. Rafe, too, wants to leave for California in search of a better life, however Elsa refuses to leave the farm, so Rafe packs up and eventually leaves without his family. But when their son, Ant, because very sick from the dust storms, Elsa decides to pack up her children, Loreda and Ant, and travels to California.

The family experience severe hardships on their journey, but with Elsa's strong will they finally make it to California, only to be looked upon as "Okies" and outcasts. Elsa tries very hard to find work, shelter, and food for her family but Californians blame the migrants for increased crime and disease. Elsa struggles to be brave, and is a "warrior" when it comes to fighting for better treatment by the land owners. Through all her hardships Elsa finds strength and resilience, making this a very inspiring story. ***Happy Reading!***