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Hope was Here

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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It's a miracle how this story of ordinary folks against political chicanery avoids a stomach turning descent into the homespun and the maudlin. Orphan girl, Hope, and her spiky Aunt Addie arrive to help out at a diner in a small town in the American mid-west, just in timer to help its cancer-suffering owner challenge the corrupt mayor. Yes, the good guy wins. Yes, he marries Aunt Addie. And yes, he dies, having dispensed much wisdom about life on the way. We've seen this kind of miracle before. Frank Capra, Jimmy Stewart and cast did it in **It's a Wonderful Life**. It's a triumph of conviction, wit, and style over social and political naivety. Bauer's heart is in the right place. Who wouldn't warm to a writer who can celebrate the hard work and skill that goes into a thankless job like waitressing? In the age of spin, the Florida recount and electoral apathy and cynicism, who wouldn't like to see young people organising and marching for honest and open politics and a better society? This was a Newbery Honor Book in 2001; and Bauer is funny and moving, even when you can see how the trick's done. She has the touch to make you believe in an American dream that's about community, decency and justice, rather than power, privilege and wealth; even when you know it is, for all that, just a dream.

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