



Sing Them Home

Stephanie Kallos

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The eagerly anticipated second novel from the author of *Broken for You* - a national best seller and selection of the Today Show Book Club - is a sweeping, gorgeously crafted family story set in the American heartland.

With her best-selling debut novel, *Broken for You*, Stephanie Kallos earned comparisons to John Irving, Anne Tyler, Margaret Atwood, and Carol Shields, establishing her as a writer of uncommon “wisdom and soulfulness” (Sue Monk Kidd).

Sing Them Home is a deeply moving portrait of three grown siblings who have lived in the shadow of unresolved grief since their mother’s mysterious disappearance when they were children. Everyone in Emlyn Springs, Nebraska, knows the story of Hope Jones, the physician’s wife whose big dreams for their tiny town were lost along with her in the tornado of 1978. For Hope’s three young children, the stability of life with their distant, preoccupied father, and with Viney, their mother’s spitfire best friend, is no match for their mother’s absence. Larken, the eldest, is an art history professor who seeks in food an answer to a less tangible hunger; Gaelan, the only son, is a telegenic weatherman who devotes his life to predicting the unpredictable and whose profession, and all too much more, depend on his sculpted frame and ready smile; and Bonnie, the baby of the family is a self-proclaimed archivist who combs the roadsides for clues to her mother’s legacy, and permission to move on.

When, decades after their mother’s disappearance, they are summoned home after their father’s sudden death, they are forced to revisit the childhood tragedy at the center of their lives. With breathtaking lyricism, wisdom, and humor, Stephanie Kallos explores the consequences of protecting the ones we love.

Sing Them Home is a magnificent tapestry of lives connected and undone by tragedy, lives poised—unbeknownst to the characters themselves—for redemption.

Sing Them Home Details

Date : Published January 6th 2009 by Atlantic Monthly Press (first published 2007)

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Author : Stephanie Kallos

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From Reader Review Sing Them Home for online ebook

Julie says

Okay, maybe I am too picky, but editorial errors make me crazy and can even stop me from reading any further! In like the second chapter, a minor character, Kris, is introduced. Just a few paragraphs later, and from then on, the same character is referred to as "Chris". Why why why would no one have caught this? I am only reading on because of all the other great reviews that promise a terrific story... Grrr!

... So I finished the book, but the editorial errors continued. For example, the stage is set for 1977, when Larken is 14 and going to get her driver's permit early. But a few sentences later, the author says something to the effect that Larken needed to be able to drive in 1997 because her mother could not. Hello? Also, after her father dies, Larken is supposed to be settling up some of his affairs. Fair enough. However, the author explains that Larken is the one who has to do these things because she is her father's power of attorney. With very little research (and perhaps just a small poll of relatives or neighbors), you could find out that power of attorney is valid only while the individual is alive. Once you die, your power of attorney is void, and wishes must be carried out by an executor of the estate, or someone else named in a will. Being from Nebraska, I know that her other references to the area are spot-on, so I am disappointed that these details are so incorrect.

RNOCEAN says

Sing Them Home is a moving portrait of three siblings who have lived in the shadow of unresolved grief since their mother's disappearance when they were children. Everyone in Emlyn Springs knows the story of Hope Jones, the physician's wife whose big dreams for their tiny town were lost along with her in the tornado of 1978. For Hope's three young children, the stability of life with their preoccupied father, and with Viney, their mother's spitfire best friend, is no match for Hope's absence. Larken, the eldest, is now an art history professor who seeks in food an answer to a less tangible hunger; Gaelan, the son, is a telegenic weatherman who devotes his life to predicting the unpredictable; and the youngest, Bonnie, is a self-proclaimed archivist who combs roadsides for clues to her mother's legacy, and permission to move on. When they're summoned home after their father's death, each sibling is forced to revisit the childhood tragedy that has defined their lives. With breathtaking lyricism, wisdom, and humor, Kallos explores the consequences of protecting those we love. Sing Them Home is a magnificent tapestry of lives connected and undone by tragedy, lives poised—unbeknownst to the characters—for redemption.

**Rate this one 2/5. While I loved the author's first novel, I was disappointed in her second book. The book was way too long in telling the story and I couldn't establish any bond with any of the characters like I did in her first book.

Nette says

"Read" is cheating -- I read about 100 pages and quit. I would have thrown it against a wall but 1) it was a library book and 2) it's pretty fat, so it would have left a dent. I'm sure people who like magical realism will adore this book, but I thought it was goopy and annoying. Just as I'd become interested in a "real" character, some random dead person would appear and the author would waste five pages on a lot of woo-woo

philosophizing about the dead and their opinions. Dead people, apparently, do not want us to sweat the small stuff! Which made me feel much better about giving up after 100 pages.

Susan says

If I fell in love with Stephanie Kallos's first novel, *Broken for You*, and then again with her third, *Language Arts*, imagine my delight when I discovered her sophomore novel, *Sing Them Home*, and went head over heels a third time. There are very few authors, and only Barbara Kinsolver comes to mind, whose work is so consistently amazing that it is, indeed, like falling in love to read their work. Fresh writing, still fresh. Deeply imagined places, characters and themes. *Sing Them Home* is one of those rare books that I find myself slowing down to read, savoring every word. Sometimes laugh-out-loud funny, *Sing Them Home* is also downright capable of bringing tears to this old cynic's eyes.

Julie says

Amazingly layered, so many complete characters. One of those books that you must immerse yourself in, and then feel panic when you realized the end is near.

Stephanie says

This book rocked my world. The writing is superb and I couldn't put it down. I usually stick to shorter novels, but had no trouble staying interested in this work. I might have to buy my own copy so I can underline the innumerable insightful passages in the book.

Amy says

This was so disappointing. I loved Kallos' first novel, *Broken For You*. This was 540 pgs that never really got to a climax and never resolved/worked thru the big issues. Finished feeling disappointed and wondering how the main characters came to their 'happy' ending. You never seem them work thru their challenges to end up with a happy ending! Sad that after anxiously waiting for her 2nd book, this was such a let down

Diane says

I anxiously awaited the release of this book as I loved the author's first book: *Broken for You*. This book was scheduled for a January 2009 release but hit the stores and libraries earlier.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Sing Them Home is a moving portrait of three siblings who have lived in the shadow of unresolved grief since their mother's disappearance when they were children. Everyone in Emlyn Springs knows the story of Hope Jones, the physician's wife whose big dreams for their tiny town were lost along with her in the tornado of 1978. For Hope's three young children, the stability of life with their preoccupied father, and with Viney, their mother's spitfire best friend, is no match for Hope's absence. Larken, the eldest, is now an art history professor who seeks in food an answer to a less tangible hunger; Gaelan, the son, is a telegenic weatherman who devotes his life to predicting the unpredictable; and the youngest, Bonnie, is a self-proclaimed archivist who combs roadsides for clues to her mother's legacy, and permission to move on. When they're summoned home after their father's death, each sibling is forced to revisit the childhood tragedy that has defined their lives.

I usually love books about family sagas, family secrets and, stories with quirky dysfunctional characters. This book certainly contained those elements, but I found this book to be a HUGE disappointment. The only part I really enjoyed was reading the entries in Hope's journal right up to the time of her disappearance. The other criticism I have was that at 500++ pages the ending seemed to be rushed.

In summary, I found the book easy to put down and harder to pick up afterward. I am glad I borrowed it from the library.

Sarah says

The book was just okay. The editing seemed to be non-existent. There were spelling errors, names were spelled differently from one page to another and some parts just went on for way too long. Any good editor would have chopped a few paragraphs, took out a few adjectives, made sure the names were consistent throughout and corrected the spelling. These errors made the book much less enjoyable.

Jennifer says

I just don't know what to say about this one. At the core, this book is a family drama, in which 3 vaguely dysfunctional adult siblings try to make their way in the world after the bizarre deaths of both of their parents (Mom: sucked up in a tornado; Dad: struck by lightning). I loved this book when it focused on these characters.

But the author was trying to do more than just tell the story of these people. She was trying to tell the story of an odd little Welsh town in Nebraska (what does it mean to be "home?"). She was also trying to offer a version of what-happens-after-you-die (some sections are told from the point of view of dead people). There's just too much of everything here -- too much description, too much quirkiness, too many storylines, and too many pages (540).

Laurie Armstrong says

When I began this book, I just knew it was going to be a great read. However, the more I read the less interested I became. It seemed to drag on and on and on....I kept looking for "the point". And the ending,

well, it just really left me hanging.

switterbug (Betsey) says

This is a saga, a sweeping family story that lodges in your marrow, the kind of story that makes you smile, laugh, weep, snort, chortle, sing, spread your arms wide and lay your heart wide open.

With flavors tender, ribald, ironical, farcical, tragic, magical, and wondrous, *Sing Them Home* narrates an epic story of a family emotionally disrupted by the disappearance of their mother (and wife), Hope, in a Nebraska tornado of 1978. Hope was swept up, along with her Singer sewing machine and a Steinway piano, but she never came down. Due to the absence of her remains, all that stands in the graveyard is her cenotaph.

Twenty-five years later, the three grown-up children are still trying to cope with their grief. None ever married. Larkin, an art history professor (whose work is symbolic with her loss and grief) hides behind food and refuses to "leave the ground." Gaelan is a weatherman (ah! the irony) who has only superficial, sexual relationships with women, and the youngest, Bonnie, is a virgin and garbologist. She roams after storms to look for "archival" remains of things that flew away in the tornado with their mother. And she talks to the dead at the cemetery.

There is also a beloved but inscrutable stepmother, Viney, (although she never legally married their dad); a large supporting cast of unforgettable characters; ancestral Welsh traditions; and the Nebraska weather and topography, a salient ingredient in pulling the story together.

The prose is beautiful and evocative as the story moves along non-linearly, but with grace. Past events are revealed gradually and build momentum as it catches up to the present. You will experience an intimate relationship with these radiant, unconventional characters and their extraordinary story.

There are some themes similar to *The Lovely Bones*--loss, unresolved grief, isolation, the meaning of memories and the idea of home. However, Kallos' novel is richer, more sprawling and textured. John Irving comes to mind, with veins of Philip Roth, Margot Livesy, and Ann Tyler. She is an original, though--she leaves her own memorable imprint.

This is no garden-variety redemption story. It exhilarates with an elixir of spiritual, metaphysical and deeply human voices, of things said, unsaid, unuttered, and forever sung.

For a taste of the author's wit, poise, sensibility, and charm, read her bio on her website at www.stephaniekallos.com

Kathrina says

It's been a long time since I've felt so close to what I begrudgingly must admit are fictional characters. And I don't mean that these characters felt like friends or neighbors, but that each of them was a part of me, and their story on the page was a piece of my story I hadn't yet considered. Kallos' writing is stunning -- poetically lush and sharp at the same time. Beware, there is magic realism here; the dead will speak, but it

only makes the voices of the living more distinct. This story has so much to tell you, and your listening will be rewarded.

Symbols! So many symbols and recurring themes - symbols are symbols -- kite strings, wooden dice, chairs/wheelchairs/bicycle seats, the shape of rain drops, the shapes of written language (English, Welsh, Hebrew), mousetraps, pianos, love spoons, grocery lists. Read this as a librarian would and consider the themes of archiving, censorship, information technology, when we share information and when we don't. So much is here. And singing. Beautiful, unselfconscious singing, rising and falling, inspiration and expiration, inflation and deflation, up and down, breath.

Kendra says

It took me a while to get into this book, but once I did, I was hooked. Kallos is a good writer, and one of her strengths is her subtle, intelligent humor. I really liked, too, how she feeds you a little bit of information at a time and makes you wait till the end of the book to get the whole story about this odd family and even odder town. For me, the biggest drawback was the terrible editing. There were lots of typos ("acamedician" was a standout among the more mundane misspellings) and odd mistakes ("Princess Leah" instead of "Leia" more than once). The author also repeatedly described children doing developmentally inappropriate things and made me wonder if she's ever been around children at all (e.g., she had a 6-week-old sitting up in a high chair and eating food, a 4-month-old playing alone in a kitchen and rearranging cabinets, and 2 kids under the age of 2 entertaining themselves outside without supervision). Nitpicky? Yes, but I can't help it -- those things really distract me.

Carrie says

This may be my new favorite novel: I love the rendering of Nebraska (where I currently reside) and its exploration of grief and absence. The characters are complicated and nicely drawn. A lovely book, seriously.
