



Singing Boy

Dennis McFarland

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Singing Boy

Dennis McFarland

Singing Boy Dennis McFarland

On the way home from dinner, Malcolm Vaughn is shot and killed in front of his family - the victim of a random act of violence. Undone by shock and grief, his wife Sarah retreats from the world, postponing her return to work and their son Harry's return to school. Harry appears to have come through the loss unscathed, until a troubling incident reveals his profound pain and confusion. It will take time and the support of Malcolm's best friend, Deckard, a Vietnam vet with troubles of his own to help them understand the intricacies of their sorrow.

Singing Boy Details

Date : Published March 6th 2002 by Picador (first published 2001)

ISBN : 9780312420628

Author : Dennis McFarland

Format : Paperback 309 pages

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary

 [Download Singing Boy ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Singing Boy ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Singing Boy Dennis McFarland

From Reader Review *Singing Boy* for online ebook

Luanne shea says

The sad beginning of this book (a senseless murder) leads to the story of a mother and her young son finding their way out of sorrow. Ends with hope.

Marguerite says

This is a story about loss and damage. It begins with a random murder, and the three main characters are the wife, son and best friend of the victim. They cling to each other and hide from each other. They all keep a lot of secrets. And they hurt each other repeatedly. It doesn't sound like a good story, but in Dennis McFarland's hands it works. It's plausible. The story moves along at a good clip. It's difficult at times to figure out which character is the focus of a chapter. I wondered whether McFarland did that intentionally, to emphasize the common suffering and pain of the characters. One false note: the cop who interrupts Sarah's vacation to ask her out. But the ambiguous ending to that subplot and the story as a whole add credibility. I also didn't swallow the doctor character turned nice guy. I was grateful for the overall absence of therapeutic language. An everyman's vocabulary of suffering makes this more approachable

Lars Jerlach says

The premise of this quite simple emotional drama by writer McFarland is that although tragedy often strikes meaninglessly and quickly, the memory of it fades rather slowly, which seems to be very much in tune with the writing.

Architect Malcolm Vaughn, his wife Sarah and their young son Harry, are on their way home one night through Boston when Malcolm gets out of the car to confront an erratic driver and is then shot and killed. At the hospital, Sarah calls Deckard Jones, Malcolm's best friend who's a former Vietnam veteran and a recovering drug addict. The principal characters, who are all victims of this senseless act find it increasingly difficult to cope with their loss, and the author then dedicates his time to pick up the fragments of their broken lives and painstakingly glue them back together.

Sarah, who refuses to return to her job as a science instructor chooses to leave town with Harry in tow after he begins having nightmares and wetting the bed. Deckard, whom I found to be quite stereotypical, has recurring flashbacks to the war and seems to be slowly regressing, but never completely losing the plot. Although there are a lot of discussions and arguments between the main characters they seem incapable of emphasizing with each other.

While I very much appreciate the overarching content and theme of the novel, I believe one of the fundamental problems with the narrative is that I never felt any true compassion for Sarah. Although she spends a good deal of time crying and mourning her husband, her grief seems at times stilted and spurious. I was also disappointed that Harry, who is by far the most interesting character, was never really fully developed. I thought that his bleak introversion and the intriguing disturbing images in his drawings would lead to a deeper analysis, but it was fairly superficially mentioned and then quickly forgotten, like so many other things in the book.

Although it could be argued that McFarland with gentleness and affection addresses timeless issues of death and remembrance, I was not overly convinced by the somewhat strained language, superficial character

development and superfluous relationships.

In saying that, I do realize that many other readers have found this book an extremely useful tool in dealing with the loss of a loved one.

Three stars is probably quite generous in the end.

Sylvia says

"You never know when you are going to change somebody's life. You don't necessarily have to be trying to do it."

"it was the summer he learned the word "inconsolable," and what a deep deep well of a word it was."

This last sentence really sums up the book, which starts with a tragedy. Prior to reading this book, I never would have believed that a book about grief, could be so enjoyable. Beautifully written, with some thought-provoking passages. Believeable, likeable characters.

Julie says

Gave it a three, but it's a high three (again, I'm stingy on ratings over three). An interesting book about three people in the year following the sudden loss of a key figure in their life. Dealing with grief is such a personal thing (although we tend to prescribe to people how they should handle it). The common route is to get back into life's routine, but the wife takes a different route - right or wrong, not sure, but it's her journey. Loved the character as she was written, not a saintly widow or mother, but a person knocked on her behind and trying to determine how and if to get back up. She's far from perfect, but seemed very real to me, and I hope I recall her the next time I'm tempted to pass judgement on how someone in a similar situation should "fix it". The son and friend also struggle along their own paths.

Linfron says

I really liked this book but not sure why. A well told story of how everyone grieves differently and on their own pace. Well developed characters who seemed very realistic. Not sure how the singing boy fits in, that part seemed out of place to me but totally possible.

Susan Finck says

A wonderful book, from start to finish.

Melissa Lee-Tammeus says

Another bargain book I picked up - this book pulls at some deep grief strings when in the first chapter a wife and husband are traveling home with their small son and the husband is inadvertently shot and killed by another driver. Thus, the rest of the book is the struggle of the wife and son in dealing with their insurmountable grief. Add to that the husband's best friend begins to have nightmares and flashbacks to his veteran war days and shows signs of PTSD and you just have an all out sad book. I think this is a wonderful book for those suffering from grief as this woman fights for her right to have all her emotions and owns it all - there are no apologies for her stages of grief, which is what it is all about.

Lisa Ferreira says

Very shocking and sad story about a woman and young son recovering from the shock of the husband/father's murder that they witness. Takes place in Boston.

Katherine says

"...he experienced a terrible bird's-eye view of himself and the other man as two old droolers talking shit at the VA because shit was all they had left to talk" (20).

"Easily two hundred years old, she was only about four feet tall and always appeared to Deckard to be needing someone to pick her up bodily and carry her from wherever she was to some other place" (25).

"Sarah could make no real sense of this, but it seemed to suggest that an alien occupation was afoot whose bright young agents had not yet mastered the variousness of civilian clothes..." (31).

"...the rubber percolation of an early morning tennis match" (70).

"...but as she crawls in and rests her head on the pillow next to them, it seems that all good things are possible again, and that the future, if she can keep her busy hands off it, is a skimpy companion to the present, right now, here" (75).

"She turned toward him and leaned against the sink, holding an Idaho in one hand and a black-handled peeler in the other, as if she might somehow use one or both of these on him" (82).

" 'It's just not helpful, that kind of platitude'" (83).

"I was thinking there's some connection between the hunger of the press and what the world's willing to serve up. That the hunger for scandal and horror is like a beast that must be fed. AND the hunger for scandal and horror is like a beast that must be fed. And the world accommodates it because it has a corresponding hunger for--I don't know what--attention, I guess, fame of any kind, the media shower..." (157).

"This is what getting old is all about, Deckard thinks, as he pushes through the doors. You get variations of what you need. You go into the world thinking you still know what you want, and the world says, How about considering this instead?" (173-174).

"...she confronted her grandmother's smashed teapot, so crude a symbol of loss, forget-me-nots in splinters on the floor" (207).

"The way the underwater lights light her from beneath, she looks something like a female deity; there's something about her head floating on the bright surface that suggests she herself might be the source of the water's extreme turbulence" (228).

Martha Tomhave says

When I find a writer I like, I take out all his/her other books and read them in chronological order, to see the writer develop. Before *Singing Boy*, I read *Nostalgia*, an extraordinary evocation of Civil War fighting, especially of the appalling Battle of the Wilderness, and of post war trauma. In *Singing Boy*, he evoked the intimacy of loss to a degree and with a vividness that was painful to read, but consoling that he understood what this was like. Two very different but remarkable books. However, I just couldn't get started with his *Clear Lake* book.

Terrie says

I don't have any strong problems with the book; I don't have any particular praise. It's 300 pages of how a wife, son, and best friend deal (or mostly doesn't deal) with the death of her husband/dad/friend. There's not really a cheerful page in the book, yet even though it deals with an emotional topic, I never felt emotionally connected to the characters. The story and extremely limited plot line does use the 3 main characters to show 3 very different reactions to grief and different ways to deal with death. It was just okay.

Mariah Burton Nelson says

I'm a huge Dennis McFarland fan, and will keep going until I've read them all. He's so good at description, physical and emotional: You SEE the people and places, and feel with and for them. Harry is such a believable 8-year-old in this book, and his mother and father's best friend are also very real, complicated people with many faults and failings. I was so glad the mother and her murdered husband's best friend never express their love for each other (or their confusion and grief) through sex; I was also glad to see her reject the cop who comes on to her. There were some sexual flashbacks with the husband, but the author didn't resort to easy answers, yet by the end, this little threesome is coming together as a unique sort of family.

Identifying with the woman who loses her spouse - what loving couple does not dread the loss of a spouse? - I was crying within the first few chapters, then wondering why we "entertain" ourselves with heartbreaking stories. Why not just choose comedy instead?

The answer has to do with literature, I think. A well-told story is so much more than plot; it's an experience, a journey, a mirror and, while sad, it's also, in this case, deeply beautiful and satisfying.

I read *The Singing Boy* in a day; could not put it down.

Sally says

I have never read anything by this author and was delighted by his writing. this is not a story for the faint of heart. It begins with the bizarre shooting of Malcohn, husband to Sarah and son Harry who witnesses the murder It goes on to show the effects of losing a spouse

and father in one fatal moment. Added to the story is Derrick, a very close friend of the family, who is also suffering the loss of his best friend and still has bad memories from the Vietnam war. A poignant story of loss and love.

Robin says

I had to put life on hold to finish this one. I just couldn't put it down. I found it to be a story of loss and grief on a deeply human level. Yet hope and human strength seeps in so slowly and quietly I think I would have missed it being there had it not been so intensely felt.
