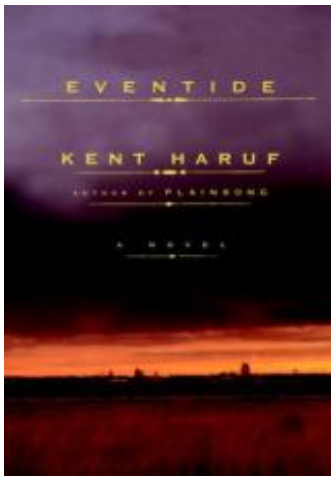
Eventide

by Kent Haruf



About the Book

One of the most beloved novels in recent years, **Plainsong** was a best-seller from coast to coast --- and now Kent Haruf returns to the High Plains community of Holt, Colorado, with a story of even more masterful authority.

When the McPheron brothers see Victoria Roubideaux, the single mother they'd taken in, move from their ranch to begin college, an emptiness opens before them --- and for many other townspeople it also promises to be a long, hard winter. A young boy living alone with his grandfather helps out a neighbor whose husband, off in Alaska, suddenly isn't coming home, leaving her to raise their two daughters. At school the children of a disabled couple suffer indignities that their parents know all too well in their own lives, with only a social worker to look after them and a violent relative to endanger them further. But in a small town a great many people encounter one another frequently, often surprisingly, and destinies soon become entwined --- for good and for ill --- as they confront events that sorely test the limits of their resilience and means, with no refuge available except what their own character and that of others afford them.

Spring eventually does reach across the land, and how the people of **Eventide** get there makes for an engrossing, profoundly moving novel rich in the wisdom, humor, and humanity for which Kent Haruf is justly acclaimed.

Discussion Guide

1. Two elderly bachelors living on an isolated ranch in eastern Colorado?not what one would immediately consider an exciting premise for a work of fiction. How does Kent Haruf transform the mundane materials of his characters and setting into such an emotionally compelling story?

2. In what ways does **Eventide** deepen readers' relationships with those characters who also inhabit Haruf's previous novel **Plainsong**? How are the two novels alike? In what ways are they significantly different?

3. What kind of men are Harold and Raymond McPheron? What are their most distinctive and appealing characteristics? What makes them so likable?

4. Why does Haruf interweave, in alternating chapters, the stories of the McPheron brothers and Victoria Roubideaux, Luther and Betty Wallace and Rose Tyler, Hoyt Raines, DJ Kephart and his grandfather, and Mary Wells and her daughters? How are their lives interconnected? In what ways do they represent a wide spectrum of American society?

5. When Tom Guthrie and his sons finish separating the cows and their calves, Ike Guthrie says, "They make an awful lot of noise. . . . They don't seem to like it much." To which Tom replies, "They never do like it. . . . I can't imagine anything or anybody that would like it. But every living thing in this world gets weaned eventually" [p. 155]. How does this statement illuminate the central themes of **Eventide**? In what ways is the novel about the pain of separation, of getting "weaned"?

6. Haruf's writing, like the speech of the characters he writes about, is restrained, as when Raymond calls Victoria to tell her of Harold's death:

Honey, I got something to tell you.

Oh, no, she said. Oh no. No.

I'm just afraid I do, he said. And then he told her [p. 80].

Why does Haruf end the conversation there? Why is it more moving to let the reader imagine the rest of the conversation than to describe it more completely? Where else in the novel does Haruf show this kind of reserve?

7. When Del Gutierrez tells Raymond that he can't see how just one man can run the ranch?"It seems like too much for one person to do"?Raymond responds, "What else you going to do?" [p. 233]. How does this response typify Raymond's attitude about life and his own predicament?

8. When Raymond worries that they might have to wait until seven-thirty to have dinner, Rose says, "You wouldn't do very well in New York or Paris, would you," and Raymond replies: "I wouldn't even do very good in Fort Morgan" [p. 255]. Why wouldn't Raymond do well in a big city? In what ways is he suited to, and a product of, the rural life of the high plains?

9. Why has Haruf included a character like Hoyt Raines in the novel? What does he add to the emotional texture of the book?

10. Parent-child relationships are important in **Eventide**. What kinds of behavior does the novel dramatize between parents (or grandparents or surrogate parents) and children? How are children seen and treated by their elders in the book? What are the best and worst examples of parent-child relationships in **Eventide**?

11. Near the end of the novel, Luther and Betty Wallace's children are placed in a foster home. Why does the court make this decision? Is it the right one? Does Haruf intend for readers to regard Luther and Betty critically, sympathetically, or with some mixture of feelings?

12. Why is the budding romance between Rose and Raymond so appealing? Why must Raymond be tricked into meeting her? Why are they so drawn to each other?

13. Eventide ends with Raymond and Rose sitting together quietly, "the old man with his arm around this kind woman, waiting for what would come" [p. 300]. Why is this a satisfying way to end the novel? What is likely to come for them? Literary works often imply, if only implicitly, a set of values to live by. What attitudes and values does **Eventide** seem to hold up for emulation?

Author Bio

Kent Haruf's honors include a Whiting Foundation Writers? Award, the Mountains & Plains Booksellers Award, the Wallace Stegner Award, and a special citation from the PEN/Hemingway Foundation; he was also a finalist for the National Book Award, the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, and the *New Yorker* Book Award. He died in November 2014, at the age of 71.

Critical Praise

"This hardscrabble story kicks up a dust cloud of melancholy that will sting even the most hardened readers' eyes. At the end of some chapters I was left wondering, Who in America can still write like this? Who else has such confidence and such humility?"--- *Christian Science Monitor*"A stunning novel of brothers, land, grief, and redemption...The dry, cold air of Colorado's high plains seems to intensify the light Kent Haruf shines on every character in his masterful novel Eventide. He brings such grace and care to his examination of the ways we fail and, sometimes, help one another, that the end result is a book of hope, hope as plain and hard-won as Haruf's keenly styled prose."--- *O Magazine*"This novelist writes with such unabashed wonder before life's mysteries, such compassion for frail humanity that he seems to have issued from another time, a better place."--- *Newsday*"Melancholy truths set to gorgeous melody . . . Haruf sings the second verse of his moving hymn to life on America's great plains."--- *Kirkus*

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Publication Date: May 4, 2004
Genres: Fiction
Hardcover: 320 pages
Publisher: Knopf
ISBN-10: 0375411585
ISBN-13: 9780375411588