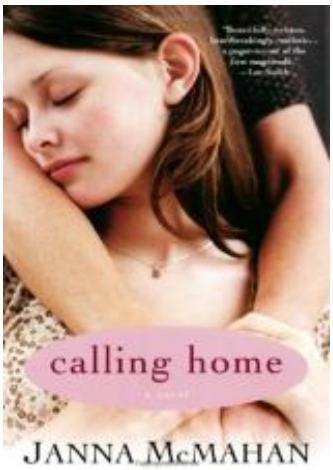
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Calling Home

by Janna McMahan



About the Book

From an extraordinary new voice in fiction comes a haunting, powerful novel about mothers and daughters, choice and regret, the mistakes we make and the ones we hope we can correct before it?s too late.

Nothing much ever happens in Falling Rock, Kentucky. So when Virginia Lemmons? husband takes off in his Trans Am to take up with a beautician, there?s not much to do but what people in rural Kentucky have always done --- get on with it. Now, overwhelmed and unsure, Virginia?s got her hands full trying to keep it together, body and soul, while raising her two teenage kids --- eighteen-year-old son, Will, and her spirited fourteen-year-old daughter, Shannon.

But Shannon has her own ideas for breaking free of Falling Rock, and in her reckless, wild-child daughter, Virginia sees echoes of herself and her own painful past. She?ll do whatever it takes to keep her daughter from making the same tragic mistakes, and saving what?s left of her fragile family just may be the biggest fight of Virginia?s life.

In this compelling, heartbreaking first novel, Janna McMahan brings to authentic life the dreams, passions, and troubles of one southern town, where choice isn?t always easy to come by, and living the hand you?re dealt with is a grace all its own.

Discussion Guide

1. Does Kerry represent unconditional love? Is his character strong or weak?

2. Considering their history, do you think it was wise of Virginia to take Roger back? Should Virginia have taken this opportunity to be more independent and carve out a different life? Will this new baby bring Virginia and Roger closer?

3. Many rape victims never come forward out of shame or because they feel as if they are at fault somehow. Society can

still make young women feel as if they are responsible because of revealing clothing or other poor choices. How can young people who have been sexually assaulted be encouraged to come forward and take action? Should Jake have been prosecuted for raping Shannon?

4. How could Virginia?s life have been different after her rape? What could have been done to help her, considering the time period and society?s view of situations like hers? Did she truly have other options?

5. Patsy is really the only character who embraces religion in the story. Should Virginia have opened herself up to the support of the church? Does religion always offer comfort or can it be a hypocritical situation as Virginia views it?

6. The tornado represents how good can spin out of a vortex of anger and despair. It forced Shannon?s secret into the open, and Virginia and Roger both came clean about their past as well. Have you ever been through a horrific experience that shocked you into a different perspective on life? Has something traumatic caused you to reevaluate your actions and goals?

7. This story is also about second chances. Will Virginia find happiness raising another child? Will Shannon make the most of her college opportunity? Will Roger and Virginia make their life together happier this time around? Do you think people can change for the better, or will they always fall into old patterns?

Author Bio

Janna McMahan is the winner of the South Carolina Fiction Project, the Piccolo Spoleto Fiction Open, the Harriett Arnow Award from the Appalachian Writers Association, and the Fiction Prize from the Kentucky Women?s Writers Conference. She lives in Columbia, SC with her husband and their daughter.

Critical Praise

"A beautifully wrought novel populated by a vivid cast of characters? Janna McMahan takes us completely into the lives of these people and their small town, presenting this world with authenticity and dignity. I absolutely loved this book and will carry it with me for a long time."

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