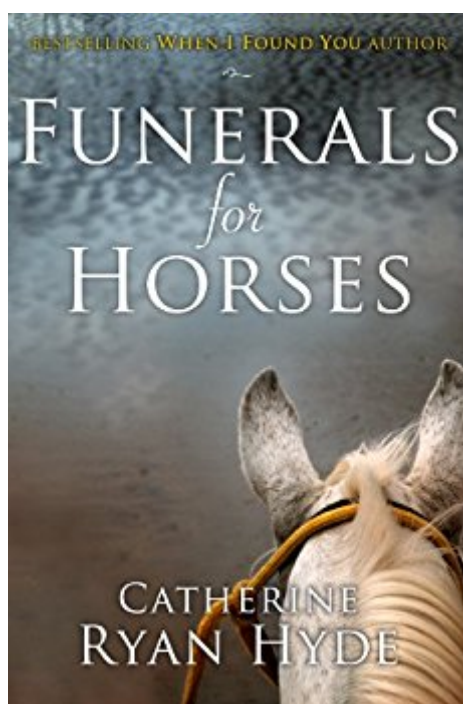


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Funerals For Horses



Synopsis

FUNERALS FOR HORSES, Catherine Ryan Hyde's critically acclaimed first novel (initially published in 1997) is a deeply felt and heartrending story of redemption and love, disappearance and faithfulness by the author who would go on to be known for the bestselling DON'T LET ME GO and PAY IT FORWARD. Ella Ginsberg's brother Simon has disappeared. His clothing, shoes and watch were found abandoned near a freight line track in Central California. His jockey shorts and wallet were never found. The police have no clue, and Simon's wife had no warning that anything was wrong. Ella takes off on foot across much of California and Arizona, thinking she can find Simon using nothing but her knowledge of the way he might think. Her search leads her to the Navajo Nation in Arizona, where she is helped and befriended by three Native Americans and an aged paint horse named Yozzie. Ella has serious mental health issues, and Simon, who raised her, is still the most important person in her shaky world. Only maybe it's not as unstable as it looks from the outside. Maybe inside Ella a core of unexpected strength is emerging. Maybe Ella is even stronger than the brother who held her family's lives together for so long. "A tale of sibling loyalty, madness, pain and redemption. In this restrained but compelling narrative, Hyde movingly conveys the toll of years of emotional damage." -Publishers Weekly This "Classic Catherine" Anniversary Edition includes a new Author's Note by Catherine Ryan Hyde.

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Customer Reviews

Funerals for Horses is a novel that adds an incredible physical journey to the kind of emotional voyage of *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Ella's "descent into madness" is more a series of frightening dips into a breathtaking clarity, where the surface of the mind is broken again and again with the haunting memories that threaten to ruin her. Ella's final aim seems not to triumph over these visions but to come to an understanding of their impact and, ultimately, of their origins. Catherine Ryan Hyde creates seamless transitions between the levels of Ella's reality. Most striking to me is the development --within Ella's mind-- of the character of DeeDee. More than a stabilizing, conscience-type voice, DeeDee is a parallel to Ella, an other-world, alternate life version of her. DeeDee's urgings to make decisions based on other-than-sensible logic may be Ella's best defense against her own emotions. The novel's voice is a crushing one, heavy with layers of sensation that must be felt simultaneously before they can be experienced separately. Catherine Ryan Hyde has created a story that cannot be interrupted, one that will make you miss your stop on the bus, eat cold cereal for dinner, and stay up long past your normal bed time. Plan accordingly; *Funerals for Horses* is not to be missed.

This is a book borrowed from the library, which I must now purchase to have on my bookshelf to reread in several years to check whether I went where my instincts want to lead me now. *Funerals for Horses* is one of those rare books wherein a seemingly weak woman harnesses her nature to exceed even her own expectations. The protagonist, Ella, embarks on a journey to locate her missing brother and in the process discovers herself. Any woman who has suffered deeply and wanted to leave that pain for the road she can now see ahead, will feel that Catherine Ryan Hyde gave voice to her emotions. What woman has not wished to hear the words offered to Ella by an old man she meets at a critical juncture of her journey: "You have a mission. Most of us only wish we did. It's the purest, most untarnished way to live a life. All the universe envies you. All the people, the animals, even the sun and the clouds and the night. If we could trade places with you, we would. So we line up at your back in admiration. We are all with you, Ella." The lyrical prose which is Ella's voice will stay with you like the hawk on the Mesa. Bravo.

A beautiful, seamless blend of yesterday's memories and today's realities I was drawn to follow Ella

through her dysfunctional childhood to the one place in her life where she makes a conscious decision. She pulls herself together and takes charge in an effort to find Simon, her missing brother, following her instincts and trusting her strengths. Becoming responsible for her destiny instead of constantly being dragged through the dirt by life's past experiences. It reminds me how fragile and random life is and how brave we sometimes have to be to overcome our weaknesses. A deep and powerful read.

It's so odd that the best books by Catherine Ryan Hyde (this one and her book of short stories, "Earthquake Weather") are out of print while her lesser work is still being published. "Funerals for Horses" is not nearly as uplifting as "Pay it Forward" (it's not its purpose) and it is a million times more realistic than either "Electric God" or "Walter's Purple Heart." In both of these more recent novels it was obvious that Hyde was in way over her head. Not so with "Funerals." Here she flexed her literary muscle. "Funerals" is a descent into a family's dark past and, at times, even into madness. I believe it could even be described as cathartic, especially for anyone recovering from their own childhood. Through it all Hyde maintains a believable tone and atmosphere which is a tough path to follow. Not too many authors can approach this topic (metaphor, family abuse, mental illness) without coming off as melodramatic or just incoherent. I can't say that "Funerals" is for everyone. But it is an excellent novel nonetheless. I highly recommend it.

This novel explores how the facade of strength inevitably disintegrates. The face that is visible does not accurately represent the underlying motivations and ability to deal with life challenges. The author has crafted a multifaceted novel that defines resilience and the power of familial love. I highly recommend this insightful novel.

This novel may be dark at times but it is a powerful, moving story that allows the reader to live in a world most of us have never seen, never even imagined. You will think about this story for a long time after you read the last page.

Again, a book's subject made me think that some women should not have children. Ella, the main character, has mental problems; her big brother Simon protects her. This makes Ella think as she grows up that Simon is the stronger, but then in their early adulthood Simon disappears. The rest of the book is Ella's quest to find and save Simon. Time and again what you fear happening to her doesn't, but so many intriguing surprises do. What Simon became... Oh, yes, and then there's

Yozyy.

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