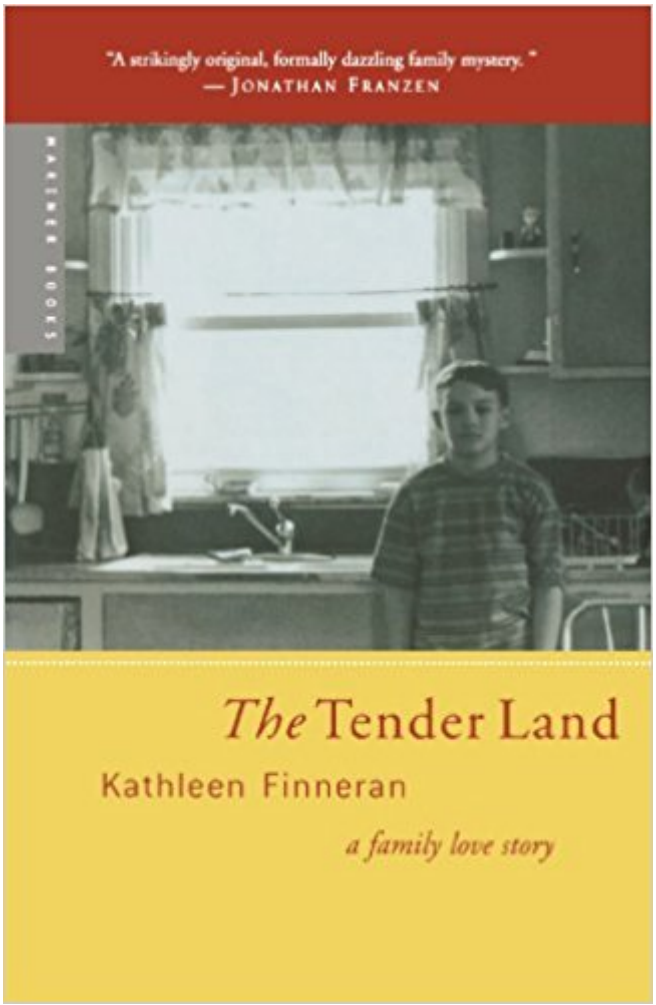
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The Tender Land: A Family Love Story



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Synopsis

A superb portrait of family life, THE TENDER LAND is a love story unlike any other. The Finnerans -- parents and five children, Irish Catholics in St. Louis -- are a seemingly unexceptional family. Theirs is a story seldom told, yet it makes manifest how rich and truly extraordinary the ordinary daily experience we take for granted is. In quietly luminous language, Kathleen Finneran renders the emotional, spiritual, and physical terrain of family life -- its closeness and disconnection, its intimacy and estrangement--and pays tribute to the love between parents and children, brothers and sisters.Ultimately, it is this love that sustains the Finnerans, for at the heart of THE TENDER LAND lies a catastrophic event: the suicide at fifteen of the author's younger brother after a public humiliation in junior high school. A gentle, handsome boy, Sean was a straight-A student and gifted athlete, especially treasured by every member of his family. Masterfully, the book interweaves past and present, showing how inseparable they are, and how the long accumulation of love and memory helps the Finnerans survive their terrible loss.THE TENDER LAND is a testament to the always complicated ways in which we love one another. In the end, the Finnerans are a family much like the reader's own: like every other family, like no other family.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This sensitive, restrained memoir searches for answers to the most painful of questions: Why would a bright, athletic, seemingly well-adjusted boy like Kathleen Finneran's 15-year-old brother want to take his own life? Sean Finneran's 1971 suicide is the pivotal crisis in The Tender Land, but not the only one. References to a family strain of depressive mental illness sound a warning note; Finneran's maternal grandfather probably killed himself, and her mother is subject to severe bouts

of depression that may also have afflicted Sean, whose suicide note reveals a self-hatred that the love of his parents and siblings could not assuage. The author frankly relates her own problems with weight, an inexplicable but irresistible urge to shoplift, and uncertain sexual orientation. But Finneran’s precise prose, rich in evocative physical details, convincingly limns an ordinary, generally happy Midwestern family: five children spread over 16 years; a devout, nature- and animal-loving mother; a father who communicated best without words, rooted in "his faith in materials men make of the earth." There are no villains and no answers in this heartbreaking book, which respects the essential mystery of a shattering tragedy and closes with an affirmative message to Sean: "I want to call out your name and tell you, across the tender land, that we have gone on living." --Wendy Smith --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Unforgettable in its restraint and quiet beauty, Finneran’s debut memoir lovingly reveals her family’s tragic history and her own painful coming of age. Born in the late 1950s into an Irish Catholic family, she and her four siblings had a comfortable life in suburban St. Louis, thanks to her mother’s thrifty management and her father’s success as a salesman. But depression and suicide ran in the family and the question of what caused her youngest brother Sean’s suicide when he was 15 permeates the book as much as it has haunted the Finnerans--Kathleen was also disposed to depression and another sister tried to overdose at age 28. As a self-conscious, overweight child, the author at times felt ignored by her parents. Nonetheless, at a young age she understood the need to protect her mother from sorrow, so she "made up stories." Sadly for the author, her first sexual experience coincided with the night Sean died, making sex and death forever inextricable for her. She found comfort with a woman lover who was her best friend, despite her mother’s cautious warning about being "different." Readers will relish Finneran’s skill in capturing her characters. "My mother," she writes, "ends each day this way, dusting in the dark, and in the morning, as soon as she wakes, she dusts again, in daylight." To Sean’s suicide note, which disclosed teenage loneliness and disappointments, Finneran offers an exquisite counterpoint in the form of this love letter. (June) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

What a gorgeous, loving book. One of my favorites.

From the first part of the book I was hooked. The author’s Mother had experienced some very powerful things in regard to her son..and what made them powerful was she wasn’t scared to share

those experiences with her daughter--the author. I gave this book to a friend to read and she thought it was very good--and I have since sold it to my favorite used bookstore--I think someday I will buy it (again) and reread it.

Beeautifully written. Should be required reading for any highschooler or college writing course. Unusual style, very easy to read, small list of characters. I believe Ms. Finneran has won many writing awards.

It is difficult to find words to describe how touching and truthful this memoir was. Ms.Finneran has a mastery of language like no other. I found myself laughing and weeping while reading this book.

This is a gift for a friend of mine. I haven't read it yet myself, so I can't really give a proper review.

This was a lovely book, a tribute to the writer's youngest brother who committed suicide at 15. Told very honestly and lovingly.

Beautiful story I never wanted to end. Hoping for a sequel. Please Please!

I love this book and I love that it came in a timely manner and this book makes me happy just because it exists.

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