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# Plainsong: Picador Classic (English Edition)



*Par Kent Haruf*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWith an introduction by Peter CareyI suppose it is crazy. I don't know. I don't even care. But that girl needs somebody . . . And you old solitary bastards need somebody too. Somebody or something besides an old red cow to care about and worry over.Set in Kent Haruf's fictional landscape of Holt County, Colorado, Plainsong is a story of simple lives told with extraordinary empathy. Tom Guthrie is struggling to bring up his two young sons alone and, in the same town, school girl Victoria Roubideaux is pregnant and homeless. Whilst Tom's boys find their way forward without their mother, brothers Harold and Raymond McPheron - gentle, solitary, gruff and unpolished - agree to take Victoria in, unaware that their lives will change forever.A novel of haunting beauty from one of America's greatest writers of our time, Plainsong is an undeniable classic that explores the grace and hope of every human life and mankind's

infinite capacity for love..co.uk Plainsong, according to Kent Haruf's epigraph, is "any simple and unadorned melody or air." It's a perfect description of this lovely, rough-edged book, set on the very edge of the Colorado plains. Tom Guthrie is a high school teacher whose wife can't--or won't--get out of bed; the McPhérons are two bachelor brothers who know little about the world beyond their farm gate; Victoria Roubideaux is a pregnant 17-year-old with no place to turn. Their lives parallel each other in much the same way any small-town lives would--until Maggie Jones, another teacher, makes them intersect. Even as she tries to draw Guthrie out of his black cloud, she sends Victoria to live with the two elderly McPhéron brothers, who know far more about cattle than about teenage girls. Trying to console her when she thinks she's hurt her baby, the best lie they can come up with is this: "I knew of a heifer we had one time that was carrying a calf, and she got a length of fencewire down her some way and it never hurt her or the calf." Holt, Colorado, is the kind of small town where everyone knows everyone's business before that business even happens. In a way, that's true of the book, too. There's not a lot of suspense here, plot wise; you can see each narrative twist and turn coming several miles down the pike. What Plainsong has instead is note-perfect dialogue, surrounded by prose that's straightforward yet rich in particulars: "a woman walking a white lapdog on a piece of ribbon" glimpsed from a car window; the boys' mother, her face "as pale as schoolhouse chalk"; the smells of hay and manure, the variations of prairie light. Even the novel's larger questions are sized to a domestic scale. Will Guthrie find love? Will Victoria run away with the father of her baby? Will the McPhérons learn to hold a conversation? But in this case, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and Plainsong manages to capture nothing less than an entire world--fencing pliers, calf-pullers, and all.

Kent Haruf has a gorgeous ear, and a knack for rendering the simple complex. --Mary Park Extrait

Here was this man Tom Guthrie in Holt standing at the back window in the kitchen of his house smoking cigarettes and looking out over the back lot where the sun was just coming up. When the sun reached the top of the windmill, for a while he watched what it was doing, that increased reddening of sunrise along the steel blades and the tail vane above the wooden platform. After a time he put out the cigarette and went upstairs and walked past the closed door behind which she lay in bed in the darkened guest room sleeping or not and went down the hall to the glassy room over the kitchen where the two boys were. The room was an old sleeping porch with uncurtained windows on three sides, airy-looking and open, with a pinewood floor.

Across the way they were still asleep, together in the same bed under the north windows, cuddled up, although it was still early fall and not yet cold. They had been sleeping in the same bed for the past month and now the older boy had one hand stretched above his brother's head as if he hoped to shove something away and thereby save them both. They were nine and ten, with dark brown hair and unmarked faces, and cheeks that were still as pure and dear as a girl's. Outside the house the wind came up suddenly out of the west and the tail vane turned with it and the blades of the windmill spun in a red whir, then the wind died down and the blades slowed and stopped. You boys better come on, Guthrie said. He watched their faces, standing at the foot of the bed in his bathrobe. A tall man with thinning black hair, wearing glasses. The older boy drew back his hand and they settled deeper under the cover. One of them sighed comfortably. Ike. What? Come on now. We are. You too, Bobby. He looked out the window. The sun was higher, the light beginning to slide down the ladder of the windmill, brightening it, making rungs of rose-gold. When he turned again to the bed he saw by the change in their faces that they were awake now. He went out into the hall again past the closed door and on into the bathroom and shaved and rinsed his face and went back to the bedroom at the front of the house whose high windows overlooked Railroad Street and brought out shirt and pants from the closet and laid them out on the bed and took off his robe and got dressed. When he returned to the hallway he could hear them talking in their room, their voices thin and clear, already discussing something, first one then the other, intermittent, the early morning matter-of-fact voices of little boys out of the presence of adults. He went downstairs. Ten minutes later when they entered the kitchen he was standing at the gas stove stirring eggs in a black cast-iron skillet. He turned to look at them. They sat down at the wood table by the window. Didn't you boys hear the train this morning? Yes, Ike said. You should have gotten up then. Well, Bobby said. We were tired. That's because you don't go to bed at night. We go to bed. But you don't go to sleep. I can hear you back there talking and fooling around. They watched their father out of identical blue eyes. Though there was a year between them they might have been twins. They'd put on blue jeans and flannel shirts and their dark hair was uncombed and fallen identically over their unmarked foreheads. They sat waiting for breakfast and appeared to be only half awake. Guthrie brought two thick crockery plates of steaming eggs and buttered toast to the table and set them down and the boys spread jelly on the toast and began to eat at once, automatically, chewing, leaning forward over their

plates. He carried two glasses of milk to the table. He stood over the table watching them eat. I have to go to school early this morning, he said. I'll be leaving in a minute. Aren't you going to eat breakfast with us? Ike said. He stopped chewing momentarily and looked up. I can't this morning. He recrossed the room and set the skillet in the sink and ran water into it. Why do you have to go to school so early? I have to see Lloyd Crowder about somebody. Who is it? A boy in American history. What'd he do? Bobby said. Look off somebody's paper? Not yet. I don't doubt that'll be next, the way he's going. Ike picked at something in his eggs and put it at the rim of his plate. He looked up again. But Dad, he said. What. Isn't Mother coming down today either? I don't know, Guthrie said. I can't say what she'll do. But you shouldn't worry. Try not to. It'll be all right. It doesn't have anything to do with you. He looked at them closely. They had stopped eating altogether and were staring out the window toward the barn and corral where the two horses were. You better go on, he said. By the time you get done with your papers you'll be late for school. He went upstairs once more. In the bedroom he removed a sweater from the chest of drawers and put it on and went down the hall and stopped in front of the closed door. He stood listening but there was no sound from inside. When he stepped into the room it was almost dark, with a feeling of being hushed and forbidding as in the sanctuary of an empty church after the funeral of a woman who had died too soon, a sudden impression of static air and unnatural quiet. The shades on the two windows were drawn down completely to the sill. He stood looking at her. Ella. Who lay in the bed with her eyes closed. He could just make out her face in the half-light, her face as pale as schoolhouse chalk and her fair hair massed and untended, fallen over her cheeks and thin neck, hiding that much of her. Looking at her, he couldn't say if she was asleep or not, but he believed she was not. He believed she was only waiting to hear what he had come in for, and then for him to leave. Do you want anything? he said. She didn't bother to open her eyes. He waited. He looked around the room. She had not yet changed the chrysanthemums in the vase on the chest of drawers and there was an odor rising from the stale water in the vase. He wondered that she didn't smell it. What was she thinking about. Then I'll see you tonight, he said. He waited. There was still no movement. All right, he said. He stepped back into the hall and pulled the door shut and went on down the stairs. As soon as he was gone she turned in the bed and looked toward the door. Her eyes were intense, wide-awake, outsized. After a moment she turned again in the bed and studied the two thin pencils of light shining in at the edge of the window shade. There were fine dust motes swimming in the dimly lighted air like tiny creatures underwater, but in a moment she closed her eyes again. She folded her arm across her face and lay unmoving as though asleep. Downstairs, passing through the house, Guthrie could hear the two boys talking in the kitchen, their voices clear, high-pitched, animated again. He stopped for a minute to listen. Something to do with school. Some boy saying this and this too and another one, the other boy, saying it wasn't any of that either because he knew better, on the gravel playground out back of school. He went outside across the porch and across the drive toward the pickup. A faded red Dodge with a deep dent in the left rear fender. The weather was clear, the day was bright and still early and the air felt fresh and sharp, and Guthrie had a brief feeling of uplift and hopefulness. He took a cigarette from his pocket and lit it and stood for a moment looking at the silver poplar tree. Then he got into the pickup and cranked it and drove out of the drive onto Railroad Street and headed up the five or six blocks toward Main. Behind him the pickup lifted a powdery plume from the road and the suspended dust shone like bright flecks of gold in the sun.