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# Ballads of Suburbia

By Stephanie Kuehnert

Early praise for **Ballads of Suburbia**:

"...an intensely real and painfully honest novel of high-school anxiety."  
"....Kuehnert nails the raw vulnerability of teendom and delivers a hard-hitting and mesmerizing read." —*Booklist*

Additional praise for Stephanie Kuehnert:

"Acidly incisive and full-out entertaining...Kuehnert's smart gal, punk rock narrator is irresistible." —*Booklist*

"Kuehnert's language is slick. The punk references bite with genuine angst and hunger, and Emily's tough, sardonic attitude, as revealed through chunky, poetic language, is feverishly tempting."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

The critically acclaimed author, Stephanie Kuehnert, returns with another gripping and incisive novel. In **BALLADS OF SUBURBIA** (MTV/Pocket, July 2009, \$13.00) Kara McNaughton reveals the darker side of suburbia.

In high school, Kara McNaughton helped maintain the "Stories of Suburbia" notebook, which contained newspaper articles about bizarre and often tragic events from suburbs all over, as well as personal vignettes written by her friends, which Kara dubbed "ballads". Ballads are the kind of songs that Kara likes best.

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Not the clichéd ones but the truly genuine, gut-wrenching songs that convey love, loss and an individual's story. Those "stories of Suburbia" were heartbreakingly honest tales of the moments when life changes and a kid is forced to grow up too soon. But Kara never wrote her own ballad. Before she could figure out what her song was about, she was leaving town after a series of disastrous events at the end of her junior year of high school.

Four years later, Kara returns to face the music, and tells the tale of her first three years of high school with her friends' "ballads" interspersed throughout. Among them are her best friend Stacey, who dates guy after guy trying to find the one who will take care of her the way her parents never did; Cass, who copes with her mother's mental illness and her older brother's abandonment by doing copious amounts of acid; Adrian the creator of the "Stories of Suburbia", who has "Thrown Away" tattooed on his forearms to express how he feels about his adoptive parents and his birth parents; Christian, who seems like the nice guy type that Kara belongs with, but has a violent streak; Kara's little brother Liam, who idolized Johnny Cash as a preschooler and has idolized Kara all his life though she lets him down again and again; and Maya, an eccentric but beautiful redhead who refuses to talk about her mother's suicide.

Then of course, there's Kara. She begins high school as a loner, who copes with her lack of friends and her rapidly unraveling home life by going to concerts with Liam, smoking the occasional joint, and cutting herself when things get really bad. She's reluctant at first when she tags along with Maya to Scoville Park, where the "misfit" kids hang out, but she really wants "a life." The summer after junior year that life nearly ends with a heroin overdose, the event that triggers Kara's exit from Oak Park.

All the things that happen in between make up the ballads of suburbia.

## **BALLADS OF SUBURBIA**

By Stephanie Kuehnert

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