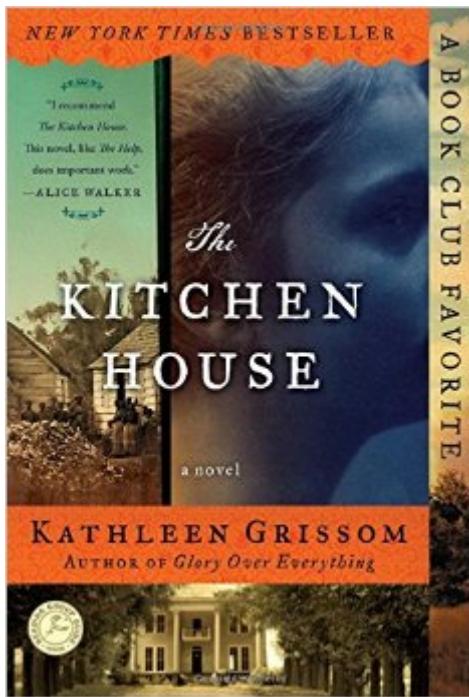


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The Kitchen House: A Novel



Synopsis

Kathleen Grissom, New York Times bestselling author of the highly anticipated *Glory Over Everything*, established herself as a remarkable new talent with *The Kitchen House*, now a contemporary classic. In this gripping novel, a dark secret threatens to expose the best and worst in everyone tied to the estate at a thriving plantation in Virginia in the decades before the Civil War. Orphaned during her passage from Ireland, young, white Lavinia arrives on the steps of the kitchen house and is placed, as an indentured servant, under the care of Belle, the master's illegitimate slave daughter. Lavinia learns to cook, clean, and serve food, while guided by the quiet strength and love of her new family. In time, Lavinia is accepted into the world of the big house, caring for the master's opium-addicted wife and befriending his dangerous yet protective son. She attempts to straddle the worlds of the kitchen and big house, but her skin color will forever set her apart from Belle and the other slaves. Through the unique eyes of Lavinia and Belle, Grissom's debut novel unfolds in a heartbreakingly hopeful story of class, race, dignity, deep-buried secrets, and familial bonds.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (5,009 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,509 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #70 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Family Saga #101 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Coming of Age #255 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical

Customer Reviews

"The Kitchen House" After reading "The Kitchen House" I believe that Kathleen Grissom has crafted an absorbing historical tale that probes the darkest edges in this villainous period of American history by employing an extraordinary and distinctive approach. The author cleverly created two contrasting protagonists, Lavinia, the white girl-to-woman, and Belle, the mixed race slave, to move the story alternately from their separate perspectives; Ms. Grissom guides the reader into the

deepest reaches of the soul of each character in the book. For me, at least, this memorable cast of characters, from the good ones to the downright evil ones seems to have established permanent residence in my thoughts. While I agree with M. Jacobsen's comment that Belle's chapters could have been longer (I really loved Belle), I don't believe her role to be less significant than Lavinia's. Lavinia, as a white person observes and shares the slave experience from within. This approach is unique, I think. At least, I don't recall encountering the technique in literature, and I found it extremely compelling. The actual historical events of the period are less prominent than the actions, emotions and motivations of the people who live on either side of the implied, but not to be violated, boundary between the races. I think that the complicated relationships between Lavinia and Belle, Mama, and many of the other characters, allow the reader to discover tiny, but significant, cracks in this boundary through which the plot races along from crisis to crisis and then to the shocking, yet fitting conclusion. Ms. Grissom obviously conducted exhaustive research into the time period of the book. As a born Canadian, she must be commended.

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