



Durable Goods

By Elizabeth Berg



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“Radiant...startling and delicate.” —*The Boston Globe*

On the hot Texas army base she calls home, Katie spends the lazy days of her summer waiting: waiting to grow up; waiting for Dickie Mack to fall in love with her; waiting for her breasts to blossom; waiting for the beatings to stop. Since their mother died, Katie and her older sister, Diane, have struggled to understand their increasingly distant, often violent father. While Diane escapes into the arms of her boyfriend, Katie hides in her room or escapes to her best friend’s house—until Katie’s admiration for her strong-willed sister leads her on an adventure that transforms her life.

Written with an unerring ability to capture the sadness of growth, the pain of change, the nearly visible vibrations that connect people, this beautiful novel by the bestselling author of *Open House* reminds us how wonderful—and wounding—a deeper understanding of life can be.

“Elizabeth Berg writes with humor and a big heart about resilience, loneliness, love, and hope. And the transcendence that redeems.” —Andre Dubus

“This quietly told tale will find a place in your soul, and will stay there.”
—Christopher Tilghman

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Durable Goods By Elizabeth Berg Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #7549144 in Books
- Published on: 2001-05
- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Dimensions: 7.75" h x 7.75" w x 1.75" l,
- Binding: Audio CD

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In Berg's understated and promising fiction debut, a 12-year-old "army brat" comes to epitomize the quality that her father prizes: emotional durability. Narrator Katie lives on a Texas Army base with her 18-year-old sister and volatile father, an officer of unidentified rank. The girls' mother has died of cancer, although Katie never discusses how much time has passed since the loss. Accustomed to a military lifestyle, suspecting that her home will be only a temporary one, Katie leads a fairly ordinary existence. She and her best friend go swimming, talk about puberty and meet boys. When the inevitable happens and the family learns they're being transferred to Missouri, Katie tries to accept the impending change, but her sister, who can no longer tolerate her father's abuse, rebels. Direct, matter-of-fact sentences convey resilient Katie's point of view; the absence of a maternal figure is acutely felt, particularly in the vulnerable but violent father's frightening temper. Overall, however, this subdued tale of a troubled family is more modest than memorable, insinuating rather than fully examining its characters' motives. Author tour.

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From School Library Journal

YA-After her mother's death, Katie and her father move from their home on a Texas army base. Her sister Diane, 18, runs away with her boyfriend rather than spend any more time with her grieving, distant father. Katie, at 12, is just discovering her potential and working through relationships with friends, boys, her sister and, most especially, her father. Every once in a while, she and readers see the unresolved despair that contributes to his abusive spells. No one in this compelling story is completely right or wrong. Diane cannot see the man's pain or, if she does, cannot forgive him yet. He is seemingly uncaring and cruel, but, at moments, is also loving and concerned for his small family. At the end of this book, readers will feel that the girl and her father are going to make it. Katie is an endearing and persistent heroine, and Berg's prose borders on the poetic. This is an easy read, but its haunting images of coming of age are sure to remain with YAs.

Susan H. Woodcock, Potomac Library, Woodbridge, VA

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From Library Journal

Berg and reader Jen Taylor combine to create a convincing narrative about growing up that avoids the pitfalls of heavy adolescent angst. Katie, the youngest daughter in a military household, is still reeling from the recent death of her mother. The 12-year-old's view of life is now funneled through the teenage sensibilities of two older girls, her friend Cheryl Ann and her sister Darlene. With major characters that are strongly developed once again, Berg has found the right touch of wry insight as well as the wonder of loss in the voice of her young protagonist. Narrator Taylor's sense of the book is well conceived and delivered. It is a short novel that deserves to be heard in this unabridged format. Recommended. Joyce Kessel, Villa Maria Coll., Buffalo, NY

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Blair Kennedy:

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Irene Allen:

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