

DIRECTIONS TO WHERE I LIVE -- Stephanie Kallos

(Edited version)

Start in Mountainhome, five minutes before April Fool's, during a full base alert. Get heatstroke on the way to Wymore. Watch your father clean a mallard, silently pondering why Daddy killed Donald Duck. Play alone, happily, with an invisible Dumbo, until he eats the berries on the hedge and dies. Find dead baby birds and nests in the forest. Draw pictures. Wonder why you can't have a brother or a sister or a dog. Wonder why your mom cries. Listen to Beethoven, Brubeck, Shearing, Bernstein, Stravinsky.

Move to East Eden Drive. Do cartwheels on the lawn. Steal pickles from Mrs. Smith. Skateboard as good as any boy. Climb trees. Read Archie comics. Swim. Watch scary movies. Think about atomic bombs and the end of the world. Imagine being in a bomb shelter with your parents. Get used to kids telling you you're spoiled, you're lucky. Get used to hearing that your mom is so pretty; you look just like your dad. Pray every night that lightning won't strike, robbers won't break in, atomic bombs won't fall, and nobody will get multiple sclerosis or cancer. Pray that you won't have bad dreams. Listen to your dad drive to work in his bug-eyed Sprite while it's still dark outside. Go to basketball games with your dad in his bug-eyed Sprite. Yell till you're hoarse. Watch your mom iron pretty clothes and put on make-up, getting ready to go out with your dad. Eat TV dinners. Listen to your parents fight. Have boys for your best friends; defend that choice. "Yes, he's a boy. And yes, he's my friend! "Start a newspaper with your boy friends. Get crushes on all your teachers.

Move to the suburbs. Get a TV in your room. Get a diary. Get quiet. Wonder if you're crazy. Watch TV in your room while you make drawings of the Breck girls from Seventeen. Cry a lot. Slam doors. Go for walks. Wish for trees. Dream about mountains and frozen lakes. Get used to

boys who are not your friends calling you Dog and Fatty. Get used to your parents offering you a nose job. Get braces. Get good grades. Spend hours practicing. Baby-sit for a girl and her genius brother.

Fall in love with a married man.

Major in art. Sing in bars. Act in plays.

Break up with the married man. Fall in love some more.

Keep a journal.

Move from Lincoln to Manhattan to Lincoln to Seattle to Moscow to Seattle to Normal to Seattle to the Berkshires to Seattle. Get the nose job. Spend a summer in Boise, a winter in Missoula. Move back to Seattle. Follow a bad boyfriend to Roswell. Break up with him. Meet a nice boyfriend from Conyers. Go to Chapel Hill. Marry the nice one. Move back to Seattle. Have two boy children. Adore them. Yell at them. Get used to them calling you Mama and Mister Lady.

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