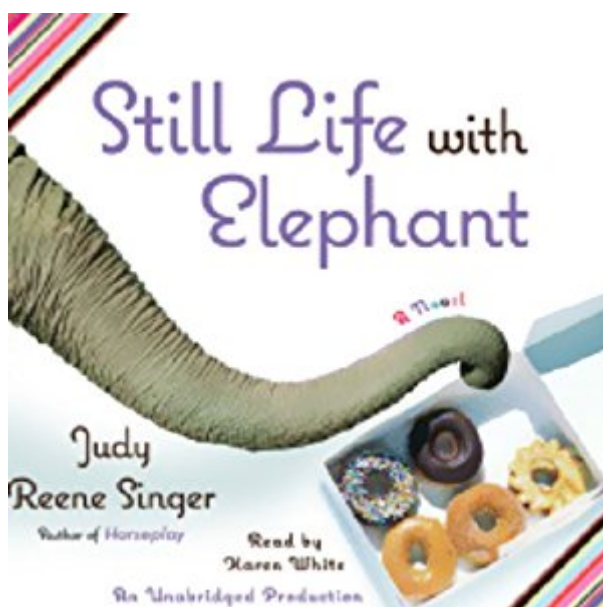


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Still Life With Elephant



Synopsis

Can a badly abused elephant halfway across the world help a woman win back her cheating husband? In this funny, heartwarming story, the author of the beloved novel *Horseplay* presents another smart, memorable heroine and the animals and men she loves. Neelie Sterling never did listen well to the conversation around her. Always preoccupied with an inner monologue, she sometimes missed things. She was happy when Matt, her veterinarian husband, told her he was getting a collie; she liked dogs. He had said colleague, to help with his busy practice. The problems start when the pretty blonde collie calls Neelie to say that she is pregnant with Matt's child. Sent into a tailspin, Neelie throws herself into her horse training business until she discovers that Matt is part of a group planning to leave for Zimbabwe to rescue a badly injured elephant. Thinking she could win Matt's heart again, Neelie manages to get included. The trip is dangerous, exhilarating, and revealing. Neelie learns about herself as a wife and a woman. Back at home, she discovers secrets everywhere with her parents, with Matt, even in training an elephant. Fighting to keep her life from unraveling as she struggles to gain the elephant's trust, she ultimately learns that healing can be mutual. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Judy Singer has done it again. This book is very different from *Horse Play*, but a great treat, and a very poignant book. I ached with the heroine and loved her sense of humor. The other adults are

charming, but the stars are the elephants. They are wonderfully etched with their own distinct personalities, and connect almost eerily with Neelie as she struggles with training them and finding her own life. Ms. Singer's descriptions of Africa just add to the mix. I really enjoyed and was moved by this book.

First of all, I did NOT like the main character at all. I found that her "cute" habit of mishearing half of what was said to her was not at all funny, in fact I think it made her seem stupid. Get a hearing aid, already, turn down your music, get over yourself and PAY ATTENTION. I found the whole financial situation with her creepy ex to be unreal... what woman who finds out that her husband has mortgaged the house from under her wouldn't call him up immediately and scream... or at least demand to know WHY? The back cover of this book suggests that most or much of the plot takes place in Africa. That's why I bought the book. Well, about three chapters take place there and that was a huge disappointment. I couldn't figure out what such an interesting man (the rich guy Tom) could possibly like about her. And yes, the ending... very dissatisfying. But by then I didn't care what happened to her.

I finished this book in three sittings, so Singer does keep you interested. However, I felt that this could have been a much more moving story. Singer hand feeds the obvious details of Neelie's life to the reader while glossing over the truly intriguing aspects of her journey. I certainly admire an author who can move the story along without gobs of explanation but Neelie's time warp through life and travel seemed rushed. Therefore, her emotional revelations seemed false and her new found relationship seemed pathetic. Also, I could not believe a book with such an original premise still managed to end on a tired fairytale tip. This would be a good book for a plane trip or long car ride. It should only take about that long to read.

I love this book. I am an older lady that is gradually losing my hearing... so the words our heroine hears... makes sense to me. I too go through life nodding my head, waiting a bit before I can work out what someone might have said. It also gets me into all sorts of trouble... Her explanation of an animal's communication, all without saying a word, makes sense, based on my own experience with cats, dogs, horses, ducks, turkeys, llamas, etc. Her emotional upheaval going through the shock of betrayal, the agony of indecision, all are written with such feeling and clarity. I am supposed to be finishing a newsletter for publication, instead I'm reading this wonderfully enjoyable book.

This book's charm lies partly in the quirky habit of main character Neelie's misunderstanding of nearly everything that's said to her because she pays so little attention to anyone. Having said that, a character's quirks can be overdone. By the end of the book I'd grown a little weary of Neelie's constant lack of comprehension. I understand it's a part of her nature, but it became a worn-out record after almost 300 pages of repetition. Subtlety is a very good thing, something a writer of fiction would do well to practice. Being hit over the head with a character's "endearing qualities" isn't. A storyline relying largely on divorce allowed Singer to go into a lot of relationship issues, but that's the part of the book that interested me least. It's been done to death, and by far more skillful writers. Nothing new or interesting there, nothing exceptional. She writes better when depicting close relationships between animals and humans, and how animals can sometimes remind us of our own humanity - demonstrating their unconditional love and often hard-won trust. It's a quick read, sometimes funny, more than a little unbelievable, convenient and predictable as far as how things eventually work out. Definitely a book for those who like their plot threads tied up neatly by the end, leaving no room for ambiguity. I'd never have read this book through to the end had it not been a book group read.

Actually restless and a little annoyed. Somehow I didn't connect with these people. The elephants are the most interesting characters in the book. If my book club wasn't reading it, I would NEVER have finished it. I didn't care who she ended up with because her character was not really well developed. Didn't particularly root for either guy - didn't really care about them either. Shallow.

I liked this book because it was an easy read. I also stayed on edge wondering about where she would forgive her husband or not. There were some funny aspects to the story which I laughed out loud. Seldom do I laugh out loud. I did want to see what Tom liked about the main character. I was puzzled at that. What intrigued him to like her so much? The reader had to make up their own reasons. I reckoned it was her interest in elephants. I thought the story line was different for books I had read. The financial situation can happen like it did in this story because I have actually seen this happen in real life to a friend of mine. I like books that keep me guessing and this one did that.

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