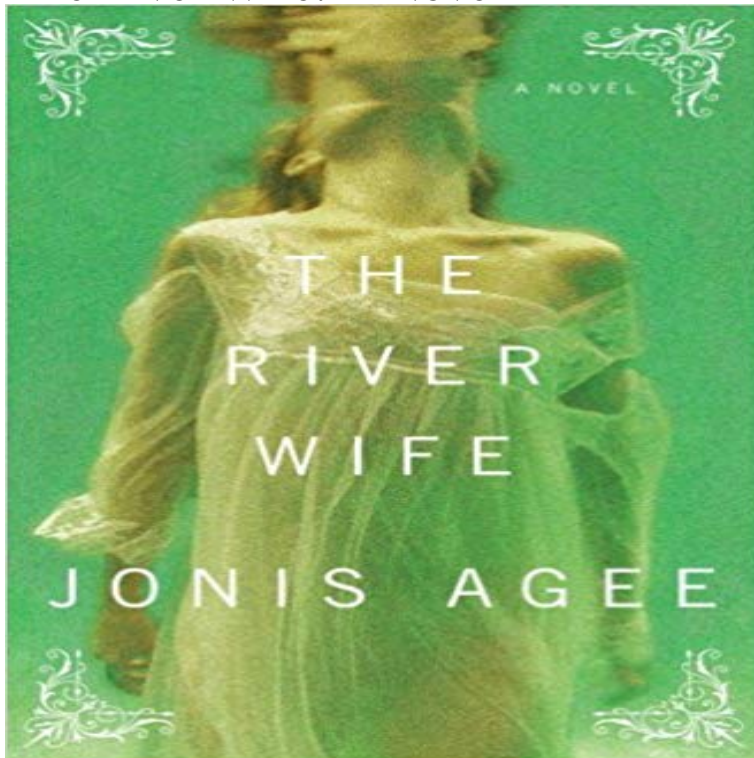


The River Wife: A Novel



From acclaimed novelist Jonis Agee, whom *The New York Times Book Review* called a gifted poet of that dark lushness in the heart of the American landscape, *The River Wife* is a sweeping, panoramic story that ranges from the New Madrid earthquake of 1811 through the Civil War to the bootlegging days of the 1930s. When the earthquake brings Annie Larks Missouri house down on top of her, she finds herself pinned under the massive roof beam, facing certain death. Rescued by French fur trapper Jacques Ducharme, Annie learns to love the strong, brooding man and resolves to live out her days as his River Wife. More than a century later, in 1930, Hedio Rails comes to Jacques Landing to marry Clement Ducharme, a direct descendant of the fur trapper and river pirate, and the young couple begin their life together in the very house Jacques built for Annie so long ago. When, night after late night, mysterious phone calls take Clement from their home, a pregnant Hedio finds comfort in Annie's leather-bound journals. But as she reads of the sinister dealings and horrendous misunderstandings that spelled out tragedy for the rescued bride, Hedio fears that her own life is paralleling Annie's, and that history is repeating itself with Jacques' kin. Among the family's papers, Hedio encounters three other strong-willed women who helped shape Jacques Ducharme's life: Omaha, the freed slave who took her place beside him as a river raider; his second wife, Laura, who loved money more than the man she married; and Laura and Jacques' daughter, Maddie, a fiery beauty with a nearly uncontrollable appetite for love. Their stories, together with Annie's, weave a haunting tale of this mysterious, seductive, and ultimately dangerous man, a man whose hand stretched over generations of women at a bend in the river where fate and desire collide. *The River Wife* richly evokes the

nineteenth-century South at a time when lives changed with the turn of a card or the flash of a knife. Jonis Agee vividly portrays a lineage of love and heartbreak, passion and deceit, as each river wife comes to discover that blind devotion cannot keep the truth at bay, nor the past from haunting the present. From the Hardcover edition.

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