

Cold Rock River



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In 1963 rural Georgia, with the Vietnam War cranking up, pregnant seventeen-year-old Adie Jenkins discovers the diary of pregnant seventeen-year-old Tempe Jordan, a slave girl, begun as the Civil War was winding down. Adie is haunted by the memory of her dead sister; Tempe is overcome with grief over the sale of her three children sired by her master. Adie - married to Buck, her baby's skirt-chasing father - is unprepared for marriage and motherhood. She spends her days with her new baby, Grace Annie. Buck spends his with the conniving daughter of the man he works for. Adie welcomes the friendship of midwife Willa Mae Satterfield. Having grown close to her after Grace Annie's birth, Adie confides that her baby sister, Annie, survived choking on a jelly bean only to drown in Cold Rock River a few months later. Willa Mae replies, "My two little chillins Georgia and Calvin drowns in that river, too." What she won't say is how and why. Adie takes refuge in Tempe's journal. It tells an amazing tale, but the further she reads, the more questions the diary raises in her mind. After "the freedom" comes, Tempe sets out to find her lost children and meets Tom Barber, another freed slave. Tom and Tempe marry and have one daughter, Heart. When Tom is killed in a drunken brawl, Tempe takes Heart and settles on a small patch of land in North Georgia. There, Heart blossoms, eventually marrying and giving birth to Georgia and Calvin. Adie is filled with questions: Could Willa Mae be Heart? How - and why - did the children die?

And is it possible that the man who now owns the house in which she lives is Willa Mae's grandson? As "Cold Rock River" rushes to its surprising, shocking ending, questions of family, race, love, loss, and longing are loosed from the mysterious secrets that have been kept for too long. And the depth of the connection between the two women united by place and separated by race - and a century - is revealed.

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