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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 wound down. As *Cold Rock River* comes to its surprising, shocking, endings, 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 mysterious connection between two women united by place and separated by race and a hundred years is revealed.

Cold Rock River Details

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From Reader Review Cold Rock River for online ebook

Markelle says

I know I like a book when it keeps me up late at night. Even though life was tough I never lost hope because I could tell from the very beginning that Adie was a character that would take charge of her life in a good way—which she finally did after not doing it for quite some time. I loved the southern drawl, I loved reading the words and thoughts of the characters, I loved the diary from the past. Not lots of life lessons learned but fun to get lost in the small town from the past.

Ms. B says

Synopsis:

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 wound 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 new baby Grace. Buck spends his with the conniving Imelda Jane. Adie welcomes the friendship of midwife Willa Mae Satterfield. Having grown close to her after Grace's birth, she confides that her baby sister, Annie, survived choking on a jelly bean only to drown in Cold Rock River a few month later. Willa Mae says, "My two little chillins Georgia and Calvin drowns in that river too." What she won't say is how and why. As Cold Rock River comes 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 mysterious connection between two women united by place and separated by race and a hundred years is revealed.

My Opinion:

I enjoyed reading this book because it made me feel like I wanted to know what was next. I did enjoy the book and of course the happy endings and all. Though I was slightly disappointed with the way the happy endings came about. I kinda felt as though the happy endings became what they are because that's how things turned out in their lives. Rather than making a decision to be happy and do that they thought they should do to get there. I feel like if things hadn't happened the way they did then things would have definitely turned out differently. I think the stories and ideas within the book were entertaining enough for me to keep reading but again I felt as though I could kind of see where everything was going.

Blodeuedd Finland says

This was a heartbreak tale at times, neither of the women in this book had it easy. First there is Adie Jenkins, who gets pregnant and marries at 17. But her husband does not leave his wild ways and she is pretty much left to fend for herself most of the time. But she find friendship in her neighbours and one of them, Willa Mae reads from a book. Another heartbreak tale about a young slave girl who lost her children.

The books tells much of Adie's family history and how things happened like they did. Like the loss of her

little sister that broke the family in half. Her sisters exploits, and how her other sister started to eat, and eat. And of course her own mistake. But Adie was strong, she would not give up, not even when it looked dark at one time and my heart was in my throat because of the injustice she suffered. But friends, family and that diary helped her along, and she never gave up. The road to happiness is not an easy one.

Then there is the diary, I did have problems at first, because of the way it looked, but I got used to it. Of course then there was the other problem of understanding, I had this sometimes in the book too cos of their southern accent.. But I got used to it, I have obviously spent too little time in the south. To the diary, a woman called Tempe is telling her life story. How she grew up on a plantation, how she got used and pushed around, how the war came, and ended and how she set out on a long journey. She had it bad at times, and she still had hope. It was a fascinating story, and it took turns I did not see coming. And at other times I was shaken by the cruelty of their masters.

I enjoyed the friendship she formed with Willa Mae, this very old midwife who helps her along, and her next door neighbour Murphy who helps her when she needs it. But he also lets her be independent.

Friendship and hope was the best part of this book because it showed the way. The agony of not knowing what was coming next at a certain time in the book made me want to stop reading, but at the same time read on to find out, and wish for the best.

I liked how she wove two stories together, about two entirely different women, but who at the same time were very much alike.

A tale of the south in the 60's, friendship, loss, love, finding your own way, and a look back at how slaves were treated 100 years before. A different world.

Blodeuedd's Cover Corner: Very nice, I am sure they would have been friends if they had met.

Final thoughts: I liked this look at the south of the US, I seldom find myself reading about it.

Sue says

Heart wrenching at times, joyful at others but above all, a good book.

Addie is 17, pregnant and freshly married to a good looking mama's boy. At times he measures up to his good looks but never has the strength to be a good husband or father. During her labor, a neighbor begins reading to her from a diary written by a 17 year old slave girl. Lovely book that draws their two lives together.

Susan Nass says

interesting writing - very regional and authentic.

Book Chick (Tori) says

This novel was an emotional roller coaster... I laughed and ugly cried.

I loved how the Adie's story intertwined with Tempe's story. Their lives were 100 years apart- both with a lot of heartbreak- yet they came full circle. I thought it was cool. :)

A fast, engaging read.

Cinnamon says

COLD ROCK RIVER by Jackie Lee Miles is full of emotional and angst - perfect for those times when you want a deeper story. Having never read one of Ms. Miles works before, I can't compare it to her other stories, but I would be willing to read more of her work after this book.

Adie is the kind of character that you can't help but feel for. She's young, pregnant, and enters into a marriage that should make life easier for her. Sadly, marrying simply for the sake of her pregnancy leads to a little more heartbreak than she had been prepared for. Adie finds some joy in little Grace, the baby who turned her world upside down. Unfortunately, this joy is dulled by the infidelity of her husband and a general sense of unhappiness.

During this time, Adie befriends Willa Mae, and is thrown into a whirlwind of history and mystery. The journal that Willa Mae always carries with her serves as a sort of life preserver for Adie in this difficult time. The journal tells the tale of Tempe, a young woman going through some of the same issues. Tempe's story carries with it a sense of suspense and raises a lot of questions; the girl's life was not a happy one. When Adie begins to see connections between the ancient diary and her own life she begins to question everything she knows about her life and her new friend, Willa Mae.

I have to say that I really liked Adie's story and the combination of Tempe's thrown in there. Although we seem to figure out what is happening before it actually happens, there is still a bit of suspense to the book. The mystery and all the questions help to make this a compelling read.

The best part of COLD ROCK RIVER was the characters. They were full of life and Ms. Miles really put a lot of energy into making sure that they were robust and full of personality. Each of the characters had layers upon layers of depth and became more like real people than simply words on a page. This aspect of the story kept me reading from the first page through to the last.

While the characters may have been great, I had a *very* hard time getting through the words coming out of the characters' mouths in order to understand what was going on. This was not a quick read (which sometimes is good) because there were often occasions when I would have to go back and reread a section. Any sort of dialogue needed to be reread a few times.

Unfortunately for me, instilling accents in dialogue is kind of a pet peeve for me. It's great to show us the accent instead of simply telling us that it is there, but at the same time, all that work is kind of waste if I have no clue what is being said.

Overall I really liked COLD ROCK RIVER and would recommend it to anyone looking for some good Southern fiction. The story is deep and will keep your mind entertained throughout.

Chris Desmottes says

Another one I couldn't put down. I loved her first novel (Roseflower Creek), so I couldn't wait to read this one. It is the story of a pregnant girl in the 60s' who is reading a journal of a slave girl from the 1800's. It alternates between the two girls and has some really shocking twists. I loved this book - read it in about 3-4 days. I am really disappointed that her new novel is chick lit - she is too good for that genre!!!

Tracie Walker says

Very good read , loved the historical additions .

Serena says

J.L. Miles' Cold Rock River flows in and out of the past and present of Adie Thacker's life and occasionally transports the reader into the thicket of plantations and slavery near the time of the Civil War. The reader travels along the current of Cold Rock River and hits some brisk rapids and undercurrents, following Adie on her journey.

When Adie is a child, her family is the picture of happiness, minus the normal angst among siblings and boy troubles. However, one day their family changes irrevocably. Her father drinks himself into a stupor, while her mother withdraws from her children and her husband. Rebecca, Adie's older sister, falls in love, becomes a mother, and moves out on her own. Clarissa, Rebecca's twin, is the sweetest of the sisters and wallows in food to shut out the pain. Although this story is about her family and how it evolves after a significant loss, the novel also is about family secrets and how those secrets eat up Adie and the family.

This beautiful image in Chapter Seventeen, page 162, holds a vast symbolic meaning in relation to this family's struggles and its one of my favorites:

Hog Gap and Cold Rock still had the mountain between them with no road cutting through. The only way to get from one spot to the other was to take the two-lane highway that ran around it. In the distance, Cold Rock Mountain rested like a fat king on his throne. The sides sparkled like jewels as the sun bounced off chunks of granite embedded along the edges.

Another of my favorite passages in this book is in Chapter Three, on page 33-34, shortly after Adie's mother becomes infatuated with Jackie Kennedy and her husband:

Mama was especially crazy about the pillbox hats Jackie wore. "Not every woman can wear them, you know," she said. "Takes a certain bone structure." Whatever type that was, Mama figured she had it. Every one of the dresses she made had its own matching pillbox hat, but they didn't look much like Jackie's. Mama used Pa's baseball caps as a base. She cut the bills off and covered what was left in whatever fabric she was

working on at the time.

Adie is a bit tough to take at first with her disjointed narrative, but eventually her ramblings endear her to the reader. She struggles as a new wife and mother, particularly when she realizes her husband, Buck, is not as in love with her as she is with him and that his mother, Verna, has secrets of her own and hopes Adie will fail.

Miles easily weaves in the slave narrative of Tempe Jordan into Adie's story. Although these stories parallel one another in some ways, the stories shed light on the strength these women share. This is one of those novels that will stay with the reader once the last page is read, and it is now one of my top 5 books from this year.

Melinda says

Oh, its over. Sad. I loved it! This is a book with a subject matter that has the making of being great or intelligence insulting and it was fabulous to me! Addie was such a good person/heroine. I dont want to say too much but I thoroughly enjoyed this. Exciting, heart wrenching, angry, disgusted, sad and happy are all emotions I felt. Not a typical classic love but a love none the less. A great summer read! Marianne I think you'd like this one too! It has a very "diary of Mattie Spenser" feel with a twist of "Uncle Tom's cabin". Now I have to go make some of Mamas sweet cherry jam and Willa Mae's strawberry muffins!

Marlene says

I read one of the reviews below that said this book was engaging and entertaining but not life moving and that is exactly the way I felt about it. Light reading, enjoyable but not memorable. Fast read.

Marleen says

What will stay the longest with me about this book is the language, the distinctive narrative that the author was so smart to opt for in this authentic read. It's very "southern" spoken language to begin with - and then once we delve into the parallel story, the slave girl's journal (Tempe), it becomes almost phonetic. But I liked that a lot. It added to the authenticity.

The events and plot-line of this book most often annoyed me, but than the language in which these events were conveyed also always made me smile. What irritated me was this lackadaisical attitude towards adultery, which was hurtful but not condemned by most of the characters, and then these unspoken feelings that fester in so many of them - it goes against every fiber of me. All these secrets that have been kept quiet for years and years, also in Tempe's journal - and then to think of all these people affected, but not broken. I couldn't wrap my mind around it sometimes, but accepted this, as it was so well told and part of the culture. This is the story of Adie Jenkins who's newly married and newly pregnant, though not necessarily in that order. Unready for fatherhood, her skirt-chasing husband isn't much help. But in this stunning tale that redefines intimacy, love, and family, Adie discovers hope where she least expects it: from her sweet neighbor Murphy, from the world-wise midwife Willa Mae, and in the worn pages of the diary of a slave girl-a girl who is much closer to Adie than she thinks.

This was a rather unique book, in my opinion, with a lot of simple wisdom to go around. That is the most

notable.

What was also important to observe is that while telling an ordinary story, it condemns all the wrongs that have been done to slaves over so many years: keeping their identities unknown, selling them and their children separately. Slave parents, who had no clue where their kids would end up. This book was so clever that way. Kudos to the author for that - and shame on all those people exploiters.

♥ArtfullySinful♥ says

Secrets are like stories. They have a beginning, a middle, an an end. They're shirt, or long, or in between , and they all take on a life of their own. Some go on and on, when you'd at her they not. You can close the book anytime, but it doesn't mean that you are finished. And you may think you know where they are going, but you never know for sure until you get to the end and unravel it.

The year, is 1963, in rural Cold Rock River Georgia, and the Vietnam War is just beginning to take shape and create catastrophic damage in the lives of so many families, including that of Adie Jenkins. The middle child, the one who learned by example one may say,yet also the one most haunting by tragedy and misery in memories. Her eldest siblings, Clarrissa and Rebecca, the twins, both hold highspots in her heart, yet none could complete eighth little sister she lost, Annie, back before everything began spiraling all out of control. Only two years old, still a baby, and such a simple family outing can spell out so much pain and death, all rolled into one huge mistake and lie. Left alone watch her youngest sibling, Adie, trying to be helpful, wandered off, leaving Annie all alone by the flowing waters and deadly currents for mere minutes, determined to bring her baby sister some additional flowers to play with. Upon returning, she stumbled upon a path of no turning back, as she witnessed the sexual relations of her very own father and her Aunt Louise.

Never could forgiveness welcomed back into her heart, as she discovered Annie had drowned, her little body floating alone in the river, her final moments left alive a haunting pain Adie will forever be forced to endure. All of this, unfortunately, would remain hidden beneath lock and key, until years later, her father's health declining and his latest heart attack leaving him in death's clutches, does she admit to her mother of her father's affair, and the blame she carried everywhere with her.

Her eldest sister, Rebecca, had three boys, each belonging to a different man, who each in turn let her vulnerable and alone with children. Third times a lucky charm, as she begins settling down with husband number three, as Adie begins falling off of th path of innocence. Still in High School, her like so many other girls, feel the tugging attraction to the new boy, Buck, she becomes pregnant, and dishonor forces her father to make the two Wed, leaving Adie without a place to call home.

As she pulls through two pregnancies, her husband continues to chest, This time with Imelda Jane, who too falls pregnant to him, leaving Adie so much more stung and betrayed. Turning towards Murphey, a newly made father after his wife, Adie's closest friend died in childbirth as she brought life to little Sam. Now, with another child on the way, and Grace Annie growing too soon, She feels there's nowhere to turn, when Buck joins the military to fight in the Vietnam War, promising to return a better man and husband to her. Yet a letter warms its way in, declaring there had been an accident, and Buck lost his arm and leg during combat. Returning home, depressed, he finds a love letter between Murphey and Adie, and his heart is torn in two. After his son was born, named Buphas Andrew, called Andy after both him and his brother, who suffered head trauma resulting in his mother Verna to raise her twenty five year old son as if he was an infant. Within days of her son's

birth, she returns home to discover Buck, dead after hanging himself in the chicken coop.

After the funeral, Adie finds herself falling desperately harder for Murphey, while also taking solace in Willa Mae Satterfield's journal of Tempe, a slave woman who lost her husband and three children, even unknowingly having a daughter, named Heart with her own son, before she realized her name was branding into his backside. As the story ends, we all discover Heart was Wills Mae, who's daughter Rachel, a child conceived of multiple rapes, killed not only herself but two additional children by drowning, in the very same lake where Annie died.

Joyce says

I really enjoyed this book. The novel, set in the small community of Hog Gap in the Appalachian Mts. of north Georgia, alternates between the story of Adie, a 17 year old girl, and a journal Adie is given telling the story of a slave named Tempe.

Adie's family had been traumatized by the drowning death of her younger sister and her father has never recovered from that. Adie carries the guilt of thinking she was to blame. At 17 years old, she ends up pregnant and marries Buck, a handsome boy who is worthless as a husband. Adie is befriended by Willa Mae, a black woman who lives with and takes care of the nearest neighbor. In the midst of Adie's difficult circumstances, Willa Mae gives her a journal to read. Adie's life includes many tragedies.

The journal tells the story of Tempe, a woman born into slavery but later freed at the end of the Civil War. Her story includes the interracial mixing of white and blacks due to plantation owners forcing slaves to have sex with them. It also includes the horror of having one's own children sold off and not knowing where they have ended up.

The author's style of writing was easy to read and definitely kept my attention the whole way through. To avoid spoiling the novel for others, I won't go any further into the plot but highly recommend this novel for those who enjoy historical fiction---especially historical fiction set in the South.
