

Mean Low Water

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In the thrilling novel Mean Low Water, a Southern lawyer searches for her missing childhood friend with desperate hope.

In Stephanie Alexander's emotive novel *Mean Low Water*, longtime friends who share a special gift experience love and redemption.

This Lowcountry tale follows psychics LeeLee and Ginny from their meant-to-be first meeting as teenagers into their challenging adulthoods. LeeLee becomes a lawyer with a full family life, while Ginny becomes an addict, one more bad decision away from disaster. Between them stands Peace, an on-again, off-again love interest; a tight-knit group of friends with their own full family lives and impending disasters; and the erratic psychic power that the women couldn't feel more opposite about possessing. Whereas LeeLee tries to snuff out her visions, Ginny does all she can to dive into them headfirst, for better or for worse.

After a fallout and a long separation, LeeLee receives troubling news about Ginny from an anonymous source. She gets their old crew back together to find her. Peace, whom LeeLee has never quite gotten over, seems to be the prime suspect in Ginny's disappearance after his own lengthy absence and sudden return.

Striking a balance between whimsy and tension on topics including maturation, interpersonal struggles, and moving on from one's past, this intricate novel toggles between points of view, events, and time periods well. While Ginny, LeeLee, and Peace are focal, the secondary cast is also well fleshed out. LeeLee's husband, Clay, makes a herculean effort to find forgiveness for a past mistake; friends Jess and Palmer set aside time from their own spousal and parental challenges to find their old friend.

The Southern setting is described in colorful, raw terms. Bustling bars, town squabbles, and summers spent boating with friends on marshy waterways all receive attention:

The famous mansions lining White Point Garden are lords and ladies lined up to politely applaud as I navigate a jogger's jousting tournament. I dodge meandering tourists, young men selling sweetgrass roses, and antebellum mounting blocks. Pressure from tree roots below creates miniature tectonic shifts in the sidewalks, so I jump uneven fault lines and climb cement mountains.

The book's suspense and sense of immersion are maintained up until the underwhelming revelation of Ginny's fate, the explanations of which are rushed through and feel somewhat discordant with the rest of the story. Still, the conclusion is satisfying thanks to its touching notes; they make the idea of a sequel tantalizing.

In the romantic thriller *Mean Low Water*, a lawyer with unwelcome visions initiates a desperate search for her missing childhood friend.

BRANDON PAWLICKI (October 17, 2024)

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