



Karen Osborn

The River Road
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The story behind the book

I have been at work on this book for the past three years, but its conception came more than 10 years ago when an incident occurred at a college I was teaching at involving the tragic drug-related death of a young student. It was the kind of incident that ended up haunting me for months and years afterwards, and I always knew that at some point I would write about it. What I ended up producing is fictionalized, but the emotional core of that earlier experience is at the heart of the book. I have always had a passionate relationship with rivers, possibly because I grew up along one of the most turbulent and dangerous ones. From an early age, I was both fascinated and frightened by the Niagara. While I was drawn to spend hours there watching the fishermen, collecting things along its bank and swimming in the creeks which fed it, the biggest warning of my childhood was to stay away from its waters. Cars slid into it from the icy road above and had to be rescued. One summer, a neighbor's son drowned trying to canoe across it. I knew from an early age that you could be swept

away by its current, pulled under by its whirling suck holes. While working on this book, I did research on the Connecticut River, all of which I thoroughly enjoyed. I drove along it, following it one summer from Massachusetts up through New Hampshire and Vermont. I hiked along it and took boat trips down it. I also read about it and listened to local talks by historians and geologists and saw a slide presentation taken by a team of divers who explored the bottom of the river. I ended up falling in love with the land along its banks where the characters in the book live. I also took many trips to look at bridges. The French King Bridge is one of the most beautiful bridges I have ever seen, romantic because of its scenery and the graceful way it swoops across the river, dangerous because of its height and the depth and width of the river at that point where it is joined by the Millers River Tributary. Both walking across it and traveling under it by boat make for an impressive sight.