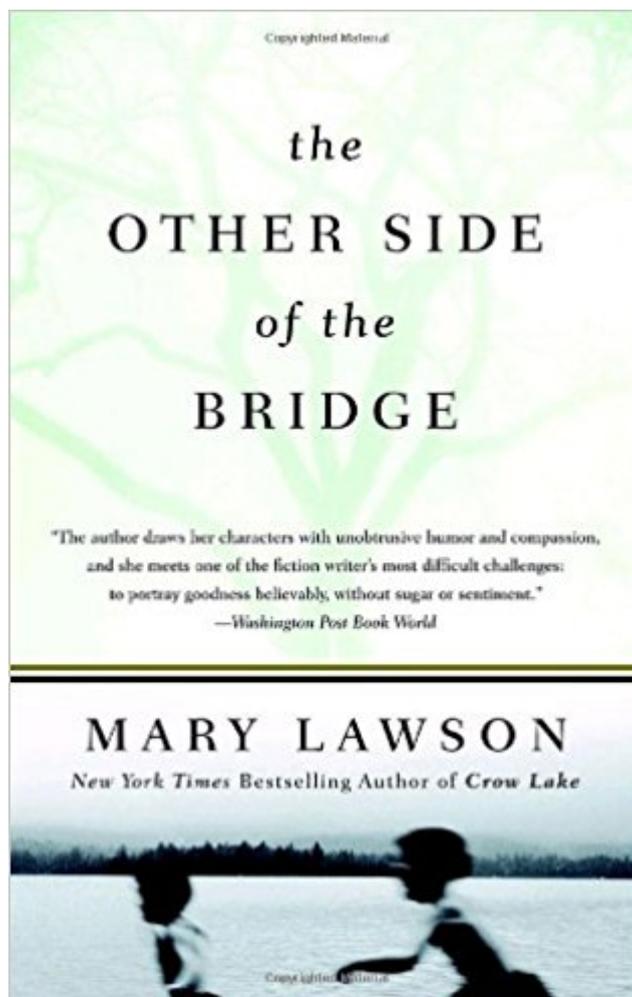


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The Other Side Of The Bridge



Synopsis

From the author of the beloved #1 national bestseller *Crow Lake* comes an exceptional new novel of jealousy, rivalry and the dangerous power of obsession. Two brothers, Arthur and Jake Dunn, are the sons of a farmer in the mid-1930s, when life is tough and another world war is looming. Arthur is reticent, solid, dutiful and set to inherit the farm and his father's character; Jake is younger, attractive, mercurial and dangerous to know – the family misfit. When a beautiful young woman comes into the community, the fragile balance of sibling rivalry tips over the edge. Then there is Ian, the family's next generation, and far too sure he knows the difference between right and wrong. By now it is the fifties, and the world has changed – a little, but not enough. These two generations in the small town of Struan, Ontario, are tragically interlocked, linked by fate and community but separated by a war which devours its young men – its unimaginable horror reaching right into the heart of this remote corner of an empire. With her astonishing ability to turn the ratchet of tension slowly and delicately, Lawson builds their story to a shocking climax. Taut with apprehension, surprising us with moments of tenderness and humour, *The Other Side of the Bridge* is a compelling, humane and vividly evoked novel with an irresistible emotional undertow. Arthur found himself staring down at the knife embedded in his foot. There was a surreal split second before the blood started to well up and then up it came, dark and thick as syrup. Arthur looked at Jake and saw that he was staring at the knife. His expression was one of surprise, and this was something that Arthur wondered about later too. Was Jake surprised because he had never considered the possibility that he might be a less than perfect shot? Did he have that much confidence in himself, that little self-doubt? Or was he merely surprised at how easy it was to give in to an impulse, and carry through the thought which lay in your mind? Simply to do whatever you wanted to do, and damn the consequences. – from *The Other Side of the Bridge* From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

Paperback: 296 pages

Publisher: Dial Press Trade Paperback; Reprint edition (August 28, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385340389

ISBN-13: 978-0385340380

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.7 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars – See all reviews (90 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #381,948 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #73 in Books > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > Canadian #14110 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Contemporary #24332 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Literary

Customer Reviews

From childhood, Arthur Dunn is burdened by his size and doleful personality. Living on a farm in remote Struan, in northern Canada, Arthur and his younger brother, Jake, make an uneasy peace with their differences: "Jake was a subtle bully, a devious bully." Jake has been blessed with a sunny personality, articulate and charismatic, his mother's blessing, a shining son with a world of promise ahead. In contrast, Arthur toils beside his father on the farm, but suffers the ignominy of a sluggish mind through years of school he endures for his mother's sake. A pivotal moment occurs between the brothers when Jake suffers a terrible accident, certainly his own fault, yet weight of blame shifts to Arthur, who can barely comprehend his own confused reaction: "He felt breathless with a kind of excitement, made up in equal parts of rage and retribution." Thereafter a spirit of enmity grows between Jake and Arthur, one that will poison their relationship and inextricably tie them to the past. What began as a sly one-upmanship on Jake's part accelerates to a campaign, their mother Jake's unwitting pawn. As reliable as a farm animal, Arthur is predictable in every respect, unquestioning, obedient and focused on the survival of the family farm. Falling in love with the preacher's daughter, Laura is Arthur's undoing; as soon as the handsome, charming Jake realizes Arthur's predicament, the die is cast. Buffeted by economic insecurity and the devastation of a world war, the brothers act out their roles as if the terrible conclusion is preordained. Arthur survives, his back bent to the work at hand. True to his nature, Arthur cleans up his brother's wreckage, yet is of little comfort to the mother casually devastated by Jake's two-line goodbye note.

We are far away in Northern Canada, in the small town of Struan. The life is rough, tough and simple. Or so it seems. We are in the years before, during and after World War 2, and we follow the lives of brothers Arthur and Jake, and Ian, son of the town's respected doctor. Arthur is the older brother to Jake, and their relationship has been bad almost since before Jake was born. Arthur is the one who works hard and who does his chores without complaining and without asking why he has to them. Arthur thinks a lot, doesn't talk much and hates going to school. Jake is the younger brother who is not all pleasant and nice. He doesn't like to work, not too hard anyway, he is quick and smart and he grows up to be a regular ladies man. When World War 2 begins, neither of the brothers enlist, for different reasons, but they stay at home, while their friends go overseas to fight.

Arthur devotes his time to farming and thinking and feeling guilty, while Jake seems to celebrate life by sleeping with as many girls as he can, drink and have fun. The brothers never really find each other, and specially Arthur is consumed by guilt and thoughts, until they are both grown up, and the high school kid Ian enters their world. Or enters Arthur's world. Ian is at a point in his life where he needs to find out what he wants to do with the rest of it, and while thinking about this, he goes to work for Arthur on the farm he inherited from his parents. Jake is long gone, and life goes on in a quiet way. Until Jake suddenly surfaces again, and Ian senses that there is something more behind his visit than just feelings for the good ole family.

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