



Saints in Limbo

River Jordan

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“River Jordan’s *Saints in Limbo* is a compelling story of the mysteries of existence and, specially, the mysteries of the human heart.”

–Ron Rash, author of *Serena and Chemistry* and *Other Stories*

“I lose myself in River’s writing—transported to a different time and place— and in this case, to one that makes the ordinary mystical and magical. I give it FIVE diamonds in the Pulpwood Queen’s TIARA!”

–Kathy L. Patrick, founder of the Pulpwood Queens Book Clubs and author of *The Pulpwood Queens’ Tiara Wearing, Book Sharing Guide to Life*

Ever since her husband Joe died, Velma True’s world has been limited to what she can see while clinging to one of the multicolored threads tied to the porch railing of her home outside Echo, Florida.

When a mysterious stranger appears at her door on her birthday and presents Velma with a special gift, she is rattled by the object’s ability to take her into her memories—a place where Joe still lives, her son Rudy is still young, unaffected by the world’s hardness, and the beginning is closer than the end. As secrets old and new come to light, Velma wonders if it’s possible to be unmoored from the past’s deep roots and find a reason to hope again.

Praise for River Jordan

“[River Jordan’s] literary spice rack has everything you need to put together a good book.”

–Rick Bragg, author of *All Over but the Shoutin’* and *Ava’s Man*

“River Jordan writes so beautifully.”

–Joshilyn Jackson, author of *Gods in Alabama* and *The Girl Who Stopped Swimming*

Saints in Limbo Details

Date : Published May 5th 2009 by WaterBrook (first published April 25th 2009)

ISBN : 9780307446701

Author : River Jordan

Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Fiction, Fantasy, Paranormal, Magical Realism, American, Southern

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From Reader Review Saints in Limbo for online ebook

Virginia Campbell says

SAINTS IN LIMBO is at once both simple and complex. I liked each of the characters individually, and they came together for a wonderfully told tale of the shadow world of wishes and dreams. Not all wishes should come true, and some dreams are just too true. It is the blessing of learning what to wish for that is bestowed upon Velma True and her family and friends. There is a very deep sweetness in the remembered love between Velma and her late husband, Joe. Rudy, their son, loves and respects his mother and the memory of his father. However, Rudy was always too smart, charming and good-looking for his own good. Velma has never doubted that eventually he would come into his own, and then the world would see him as she did. She has always seen him with the eyes and heart of a mother, as aware of his quirks and faults as well as the good person in his soul. On her birthday, Velma receives a special, mystical gift from a stranger. This gift is blessing which comes with a powerful underlying message which touches all the characters. They each must learn what has real value, and they must fight to protect each other and hold on to what is most dear to their hearts.

Katherine says

Ok. So. What to say about this book???

I picked this book up several times, lost interest, set it down, read another book, and then tried this one again. What kept me reading was the desire to know what the heck was happening in it, honestly. None of the characters are ever developed enough for me to really get to know them or get to feel them. Their relationships are so intertwining that it got distracting trying to remember who was who and how they knew each other. The ending was sudden and very unappetizing for me. The author tried so hard to keep ???it??? a secret, that I think the reader totally misses the point. I re-read the ending twice to make sure I didn???t miss anything and I still don???t follow what she meant. This copy was filled with grammar and editing errors??? Nearly one every five pages or so. I didn???t like the dialect used ??? it felt forced and fake??? Like it was only stereotypical sayings heard somewhere and jotted down. I liked the idea of the pieces of heaven and Velma having to move on an let go of her strings, but I think that this sweet tale of a woman mourning her husband was overshadowed by the oddly out of place mystical sci-fi bits. The writing itself felt choppy??? The chapters felt like they had bad transitions at times???

But the main story line??? Even though there were multiple protagonists that I???m not sure ever learned what they had to??? was cute.

Julie Smith (Knitting and Sundries) says

This review first appeared on my blog: <http://jewelknits.blogspot.com/2010/1...>

I think I'm still high from this book. From the first sentence:

It was the kind of day when even the lost believed.

through the end, I was transported into an everyday world that was somehow more. Marvelous imagery and

evocative prose cause you to smell the wisteria and hear the plop of the mullets as they jump up and hit back down into the water of Echo, Florida. A world where a plain, smooth rock suddenly eddies and flows with color, opening the door into a magical place of remembrance, and an evil that feeds on regret comes knocking in whatever face it wants to don that day.

We meet Velma, clinging to threads in her front yard to keep from being swept away by the current that gripped her when she opened her mailbox to find her husband Joe's death certificate waiting there.

We meet her best friend Sara Long, a retired teacher whose memories are slowly slipping away.

We meet Rudy, Velma's son, handsome and charming, but never living up to his potential. Drinking and womanizing to keep the bugs that he sometimes feels crawling on his skin at bay.

We meet Annie, a musically-gifted teen being raised by an uncaring and emotionally abusive aunt after the sudden death of her mother from a brain aneurism. She journeys on her own from Texas in search of something that is calling to her in Echo.

There's Rose, owner of the local tavern and pizza joint, who has bailed Rudy out of trouble and been his friend and confidante.

And finally, Mr. Springer, Rudy's retired schoolteacher neighbor, who Rudy enlists to watch his mother one day when he feels an unnamed dread lurking in the trees surrounding his mother's house.

It is difficult to classify this story; a mixture of fantasy, a touch of horror, a drama of friendship and family - it is all of this and more.

I absolutely loved it.

QUOTES:

They sat quietly for a while, a little more shook up than they would like to admit - both of them being strong women in different ways. It's not every day that they tussled and rolled in the dirt and traveled through time.

That night Rudy slept in the old bedroom by the front porch, the one closest to the door. He listened for anything that sounded like it might be hungrily searching for something that now belonged to his mama.

Eddie looked at Rudy and smiled. Rudy saw him then in the light of his mother's front yard. He didn't see his lonely neighbor. He saw the man, the retired teacher from Chicago. Rudy saw that he held his back up straight when he walked and that he had a gentleman's grace that Rudy didn't possess and never would. Not like that. Mr. Eddie Springer had his own magic, but Rudy had been too self-absorbed to see it.

Gabby says

Now **THIS** is what storytelling is all about! I'd previously read an earlier River Jordan book, The Messenger Of Magnolia Street, and loved her writing style. She has a way with describing people and places that brings them to life and allows the reader to clearly "see" them in the mind's eye. Her events are so well written it's as though the characters pulled up a chair for the reader and invited her to sit right down and live through the experience with them.

Velma True had a long and mainly fulfilling marriage to Joe True. When he died, part of Velma died with him. After experiencing a frightening incident in her front yard shortly after Joe's death, Velma was afraid to leave her front porch without the security of a thread tied to the porch and extending to wherever she wanted to go. There was more than one thread attached to the porch documenting Velma's trips from safety into a world that now scared her.

When Velma receives a visit from a man, a stranger to her, and he gives her what appears to be simply a flat, smooth rock, she doesn't quite know what to make of it. But she soon finds out that the rock can give her back some of what she thought was lost: time with Joe through memories that seem very present and real. The stranger who left the rock with Velma also gave her a warning that what she now possessed would come with a price because there were those who wanted what Velma had, and she would not be safe in the presence of those visitors.

There are other characters with whom Velma interacts. People who love her and believe getting out of her house and off that porch without the security of her threads would be good for her. River Jordan gives each of those characters traits and individuality that sets aside each one in the story to his or her own personality. As they all develop we see how they fit into the overall story, and we find each person's motivation believable.

Saints In Limbo is a story about hope and growing awareness about who we are and how we got to be that way. What I liked most about it was Jordan's grasp of growing older and how that unstoppable force of nature changes a person at what appears to be the end of her or his life. Hope can slip away without one's even being aware of it, but it can be recaptured and enjoyed for whatever life is left to live.

I look forward with great anticipation to whatever story River Jordan shares with her readers next.

Andi says

Someone (pipe up if it was you) reviewed this book on her blog, and then - as bloggers are wont to do - she offered the book as a giveaway. After reading her review, I thought this might be a book I wanted to read, so I commented and won. When the book arrived, I got pretty excited and moved it to the top of the TBR pile. I finished it last night, and I really enjoyed the book.

The basic story is of several people in the small southern town of Echo. These folks are all connected by blood or friendship, and they're lives are - as all of ours are - irretrievably intertwined with each other's. One day, on her birthday, Velma - the older woman who is the protagonist of the story - has a mysterious visitor - a man who appears out of a whirlwind. The man gives her a gift of a rock, but this is not just any rock - it's a rock with the ability to move Velma through her own memories and, sometimes, to take other people to places they need to do as well. The novel follows Velma and her friends and family as they seek to move forward in their lives, with this rock as a guide and tool for them all.

The plot summary does not do this book justice (but I didn't want to spoil anything for you) because it is full of supernatural wonder, mystery, great characters, painful scenes, and honest humanity. There's nothing really big in the story - although the plot does drive the book along at a nice pace. Everything takes place in

one small town; everyone is simply human; everything is just as life is - normal and not normal all in the same moment. But in the midst of all this simplicity, Jordan has written a story about the ways we, as human beings, make sense and peace out of lives - or the ways we choose not to do so.

Near the beginning of the book, Velma is carried in her memory back to a time when she and her husband, who is now deceased, were younger. Jordan writes:

The man whistled beneath his breath. She stepped behind him, trying not to breathe, trying not to make him fade away, fearing to touch him, but she thought she would die if she didn't try. The man wasn't just any man. It was her man. The old hunger was suddenly back, filling the space left in those last few inches between them.

For Velma, there was only this minute. Her legs standing strong, the sun hot and dry outside, her hand as it moved toward her husband's right shoulder. She knew it was the end of the first summer they were married because she remembered a part of this moment. . . .

Then he turned and looked at her, was looking at her right now, and she was drowning in her man's blue eyes. He studied her, her fingers at her lips, her eyes full of wonder and heat and promises, and he emptied his hands before he stepped forward. This, right now, is forever, she thought. This moment is forever and always. It is everything.

This scene brought tears to my eyes, not just because of the beautiful picture of love here but because of the reminder those last few lines bring - a sort of mantra or theme in the book. What we have is now, but what we have is also everything we have always had. We are humans who were gifted with memory, and so all the pain and glory of our lives is in us always - there is such power and beauty in that.

I highly recommend this book, especially if you are interested in the ways our stories shape our lives, if you appreciate southern fiction, or if you like stories about older women. But really, it's a great read for anyone.

Tracy says

Although *Saints in Limbo* starts with a magical event that defies any explanation, it soon grounds itself in people who are struggling to become their best selves. Many very different characters converge to combine the past, present, and future into an amazing new story. Don't let the beginning throw you off. *Saints in Limbo* is about family, about friendship, about love, about seeing yourself as you truly are.

Gaynell says

River's writing is like a melody that you find yourself humming along to. Her words are brushstrokes that paint a picture so vivid that you know that place exists somewhere, that the characters are real people, and you've just been visiting them. Each character is a person in his or her own right, not just 2 dimensional props to help the story along. Each has strengths and weaknesses, flaws and redemptions.

"Saints in Limbo" is River Jordan's best yet out of truly great works. The main character, Velma, is a strong, steadfast old woman who seems a very unlikely person for a main character. She is mourning a recently lost husband, sorrowful over a seemingly lost son, and given up on a future that she will never have. Her own story seems to be winding down to it's end until a stranger gives her a gift that helps her relive it all again.

As her own story unfolds for her the second time, we are allowed to glimpse a life of quiet beauty and simple, strong love with roots so deep that the long years and even death can't shake them.

A something is out to steal her gift, a stranger is on her way home, mysteries unfold and people aren't

everything they seem.

In this book you're invited to lay aside your prejudices and snap judgments, because people are just people and yet so much more. This is a story you'll want to read twice.

Monie says

After receiving her husband Joe's death certificate in the mail, Velma True refused to go out of the front of her house without the safety net of strings anchoring her to the porch. She did allow herself to go out the back door and through the woods to the grocery store but that was it as far as leaving the house was concerned. Her son Rudy and her best friend Sara both tried to get her to leave to no avail.

On the afternoon of her birthday while Velma was sitting on her porch a visitor steps out of the woods and hands her an innocent looking river rock. Despite its plain appearance she quickly learns it is very special indeed and someone very dangerous is looking for it. The rock has the ability to take Velma back to special moments in time when Joe is still alive. The trips back are meant to show Velma that her life still has meaning but she's skeptical.

Having lots of potential to succeed in life Rudy disappointingly grew up to lead a mediocre life. His biggest achievement is to claim to have had most of the eligible women in town. When strange things start happening with his Mom he makes the decision to move back home for a few days and keep a closer eye on her but she's not the only one experiencing something strange and Rudy steps up to the plate to become something special.

If I had to sum up this book in two words they would be strangely awesome. There is an incredible story filling these pages and the writing is wondrously flowing. The opening jumps right into the story so initially was a little awkward but once I got the hang of what was going on I COULD NOT put this book down.

Part supernatural, part romance and part suspense Jordan brings an amazing story to life with lovable characters. This is a must read for all fiction lovers.

Heather says

Saints In Limbo was not what I expected it to be. When I requested it I was expecting a Women's Fiction novel with southern style warmth and a message on the value of life (regardless of your age). What I read was very lyrical as it has been described, but it was also so mystical/science fiction that it lost the feminine character that I need as reader.

I'm a sucker for women's fiction. I love a good heart-warming story. Add in time travel, magic stones, and mysterious man-creatures and I glaze over pretty quick. I'm just being honest. I'm simply not wired to respond well to science fiction.

I continued reading to the end, but scratched my head in confusion many times. Who would be so crazy that they tie strings onto their porch and refuse to go anywhere without holding one? It was just too nutty to comprehend. Also, I was repeatedly annoyed with the character, Rudy, who seemed to take hardly any interest in his aging and mentally unstable mother. I don't know . . .if my Mom tied strings to her porch and held it with one hand while gardening I think I'd call the funny farm. . . I'm just saying .

River Jordan does write passionately and her use of language and vocabulary are very impressive. However, the movements of her scenes seemed a little awkward to me at times. I found areas where I struggled to figure out if Velma was in reality or sailing through time in a memory.

I'm kind of stumped on this book.

In my opinion, Saints In Limbo is not a solid fit into any real genre. It's a little too lyrical for sci-fi and way too sci-fi for general Women's fiction. With all the mystical and magical elements in the story, I wouldn't consider it a Christian novel either. Again, I'm stumped.

If you really enjoy science-fiction and don't mind mystical elements and female characters, then you might want to check it out for yourself.

Nicola Mansfield says

Reason for Reading: I love Southern fiction, especially when old ladies are involved for some reason. The mysterious visitor angle got me and knowing this was Random House's Christian Fiction imprint I just felt the story would resonate with me somehow.

I don't know where to begin to describe this story. Southern fiction is usually defined by its quirky characters and this book certainly has its fair share of those. All of them as lovable and quirky as the next, even the irritating ones end up showing their compassionate side. Plot wise we start off with an elderly woman, Velma, but just how old we are never told; she could have been anywhere between 60s and 80s, though I tended to think of her as in her late 60s. She has been widowed one year and basically had a nervous breakdown at her mailbox when she received his death certificate and now will not leave from the front of her house or travel by road. She has many brightly coloured strings leading from her porch to the mailbox, the birdbath, bird feeders, plants around the yard, etc. so she can be grounded to the house while she takes care of these needs. Velma is visited by a mysterious stranger one day and given a small rock with awesome power. It shines amazing colours when it wants to and can take Velma back into her memories, both happy and sad. But something evil wants this rock, which is much more than it seems. The evil makes its presence known bit by bit but it isn't until the end that it outright shows itself and an epic spiritual battle of good vs. evil must be fought.

I absolutely adored this book! The story crosses so many genres within one plot but for the main part is simply a southern fiction story about a group of people in a small town with an added magical realism element. The spiritual battle/paranormal/horror or whatever you want to call it based on your own beliefs, because this book is perfectly readable by any creed. If you are Christian, you'll get the plot from a believer's view, but if you are not Christian, you'll simply read it from your own world view. There is no preaching, and really know mention of God; it's all in how you read the story.

The characters are wonderful! Velma, the main character, I've mentioned. Then there is her best friend Sara who is the absolute opposite of Velma, a former school teacher, who has been looking for someone to share her knowledge with all her life and is now slowly losing her memory from Alzheimer's. Rudy, Velma's only son, though she had wanted a multitude, is a bachelor of choice, a womanizer who works as little as he can to get by, which means pay the bills, buy the booze and spend his nights with a good woman, currently he works part time as the rural route mail man. These are just the main three and there are plenty more to meet as well. The book's writing is also beautiful. The author captures the feel of the place, northern Florida far away from the ocean, and transplants the reader into her world. Her writing is lyrical and a joy to read. I really enjoyed this book; I think I said that already but it's true! Anyone who likes Southern Fiction will

enjoy this book as long as they are able to suspend belief and accept the magical realism that is an integral part of the story. Highly recommended!

Lisa says

One of the most interestingly different novels I've read in a long time is this new release by River Jordan. Taking place in a sleepy southern town in the Florida panhandle, it tells the story of people living with regret and how they deal with it and so much more.

I really didn't know what to expect from this novel, but as soon as I started reading I found myself intrigued by Velma and the occurrences that happen as a result of the gift she is given by a stranger. You can feel the loneliness she lives with since the death of her husband and immediately get the sense that there are things in her past that still need to be faced.

Along with Velma, we also meet her son, Rudy, who has quite a reputation in their small community. It's many people's opinion that Rudy hasn't lived up to the potential his life could have been and we watch as Rudy comes to that realization as well.

We also meet Annie, a young girl making her way to Echo, Florida, to find answers to questions she has about her life. Annie has a feeling she's being followed to Echo, and when she finally arrives, it becomes obvious that she is being followed by someone - or is it something?

I really liked this story. It didn't take long for me to develop a compassion for Velma for the loss of her husband and the fact that she was afraid of so many things. The book also has several supporting characters that are likeable and interesting as well. It becomes clear that the three protagonists are all on a road of discovery that ultimately lead to each other.

This is a very interesting book that has some mystical elements mixed in that make it a unique story of faith and the power of one's mind over regret. It was described to me by the author's publicist as Christian Fiction, but the godly elements are subtle and does not overpower the story at all.

River Jordan is a southern writer with a knack for lyrical prose that keeps the pages turning fluidly while the story unfolds. I had a hard time putting this book down because I was intrigued by the story and had to find out what was going to happen next.

Delores says

I won this book in the first reads giveaway so I was excited about winning and excited to read because it sounded interesting. I was pleasantly surprised by how much I thoroughly enjoyed this book and not just because it was free:) What a fabulous well written story about fear, regret, unfinished business, and hope. My favorite aspect of this book was the spiritual, supernatural, other world element (not sure exactly how to describe it) that the author wove into the story. I loved the symbolism of the threads through out the story. The characters were well developed, believable and some were a bit eccentric (in a way that kept the story interesting).

I would certainly read other books by this author as she is a great story teller. Her writing just seems to flow so smoothly. The threads of the story really float out to the reader (why not carry on the thread theme)while

really making you think of events in your life that you might like to do over or have the opportunity to discover something you didn't realize at that time (referring to the part where Velma "sees" the kitchen scene and has an "aha" moment). I could have easily read this book in one or two sittings if I had the time. Overall 4 1/2 stars! If the essence of this story could be captured accurately it would make a great movie.

Tomi L. Wiley says

Utterly gorgeous, surprising, and yet relatable. Magical, yet I felt as if I could walk down the road and have a glass of tea with the characters. Highly recommended.

Valerie says

Regardless of the title and author's name, this book is not about Utah or Mormons! It is a very interesting book. It has very poignant moments and I really enjoyed reading it!

Kelly says

This was quite a strange book. Tons of symbolism. It would be a great book for a book group because there are so many themes in it and several possible interpretations. It centers around good and evil, regret, fear and doubt.

The main character Velma is a widow living on the outskirts of Echo, a small town. On her birthday a strange man shows up at her house and although she doesn't know him he knows her and gives her a birthday present, a magic stone. The stone takes her back in time to re-experience moments in her life. She cannot control where or when the stone takes her to the past. Her friend Sara and her grown son Rudy have their own ideas about what Velma should do with the stone. They aren't sure Velma is right in her mind. When strange things start happening, though, their minds start to change. A very sinister character is determined to get the stone from Velma, no matter what it has to destroy in its path.

Before the stone even appeared in her life, Velma has been called crazy because she is afraid to leave her house. She has strings attached to the porch railing that she holds onto when she waters the plants in the yard, collects the mail...etc. She will only venture into the back yard without the security of holding onto a string.

Velma has several regrets, one is how her son has lead his life. He jumps from one relationship to another, crushing Velma's dream of having grandchildren. Only one time did he have a relationship that appeared to be stable and then that ended. Since Velma only had one child she really looked forward to having grandchildren to love.

There is another character named Annie, a 15 yr old living with an Aunt who doesn't want her. Annie runs away to Echo, looking for something from her past. She brings change to the lives of Velma, Rudy and a diner owner named Rose.

It's a very thought provoking book.

