



## The Water Dancers: A Novel

*Terry Gamble*

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## **The Water Dancers: A Novel** Terry Gamble

A stunning new voice in literary fiction makes her remarkable debut in a moving, lush, and brilliantly rendered tale of the walls between wealth and poverty, love and duty, and a rich evocation of the years following America's greatest trial and triumph.

Terry Gamble's *The Water Dancers* is the story of Rachel Winnapee, a poverty-stricken, sixteen-year-old Native American orphan who goes to work at the opulent March family summer home on the shores of Lake Michigan in the post-World War II summer of 1945. A young woman with no delusions about her place in this world of privilege, she quickly adapts to her role as an obedient servant expected to remain silent and unobtrusive while catering to her employers' wishes. Surrounded by a wealth she never imagined, she strives to remain invisible, until she is assigned the task of caring for the family's tragically scarred, emotionally shattered young scion, Woody March.

A veteran who lost a leg in the Pacific conflict, Woody is haunted by his injuries and battlefield experiences -- and by the loss of the older brother he emulated -- and now desires only relief from his twin agonies of pain and memory. He recognizes a kindred spirit in this gentle and mysterious child-woman who is so unlike anyone he has ever known yet who understands the depths of human suffering. In Rachel's eyes, Woody is a noble, tortured prince, and her fervent wish to help ease his torment soon metamorphoses into more intense and irrevocable feelings of love and need.

But if Rachel is a young woman with no future, Woody's has already been mapped out in intricate detail: as the last surviving March son, he is to run a successful banking business, marry the well-bred Elizabeth, and raise a family who will carry on the March name with distinction. Yet the obligations he never questioned prior to the war are becoming increasingly odious to him -- especially now, as he feels himself becoming irresistibly drawn to Rachel in ways no one else in his world would understand or tolerate. As the relationship between two lost and damaged souls intensifies, they move toward the one pivotal event that will alter their lives in ways both heartbreaking and profound.

An unsparing portrayal of the conflicts of race, culture, and class that lays bare the complex passions and deepest yearnings of the human heart, Terry Gamble's *The Water Dancers* possesses a lyrical, strong, and assured artistry and heralds the arrival of a major new American novelist.

## **The Water Dancers: A Novel Details**

Date : Published May 13th 2003 by William Morrow

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Author : Terry Gamble

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# From Reader Review The Water Dancers: A Novel for online ebook

## Connie says

Terry is a personal friend who grew up, summers, in the little town of Harbor Springs, Michigan where the novel takes place. It was fun to recognize people and places in the book, even though they had different names.

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## Val L says

One of the most beautiful novels I have ever read.

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## Joyce says

Where do I find the words to comment on this exceptional debut novel? It's absolutely one of the best novels I've read this year. Well-constructed, full-fleshed characters and thought-provoking themes of class, ethnicity, love, betrayal and forgiveness. The Water Dancers is a must read book, especially for those who currently view different cultures and beliefs as insignificant.

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## Carmen says

A kind of boring book. A Native American girl goes to work as a maid in a rich white household. The younger son comes back from war disabled and addicted to morphine. They have lots of sex. She gets pregnant. He marries a blonde, and she raises the son by herself. Later, she moves back and introduces them. He ends up dying (suicide?). Etc, etc.

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## Vivian says

Very interesting book. The author did a good job of building the characters. Ones' heart really can go out for Rachel as she suffered so much heartbreak. The descriptions of the Native American dances and handiwork was fascinating. And the humor of the tourist stand mixing the stuff from China with the locally handmade Native American crafts made me laugh. But the book had its serious side to with the soldiers and how they suffered from their wars. Good read.

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## Louise says

This first novel was well worth the time. Rachel is an Odawa girl, orphaned and taken from her family to a convent school. Woody is a WWII vet returned from war without a leg or the spirit to start over. Rachel ends

up working for his family and they fall in love. Then things fall apart. PTSD and forced acculturation are examined carefully and ultimately, we see that time may not heal all wounds but it can soften some of the effects.

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### **Zhana says**

I'm really confused about this book. I don't really know if I like it or not. I liked the story but I feel that something in the writing style really put me off so I didn't really enjoy the book. I didn't like the characters and most of the times I was really annoyed by them. The main character - Rachel, was really strange and for some reason not very likeable. My favorite character in the book was Rory (in my imagination he was just so adorable and cute), but he was not a well built character, which really pisses me off. May be out of all the characters in the book Ben was the one that I understood the most.

So, inspite of the fact that I finished this book fast, I will say it was a hard and most of the times not very interesting read.

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### **zespri says**

This is a haunting, beautifully written book. Lots of themes and issues are touched on, taking a peep at the dedication page there are 7 listed ! World War, 1939 - 1945, Veterans, Women domestics, summer resorts, social classes, rich people, amputees. I liked the look at that list, and all are woven into the story.

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### **Missy says**

I loved this story! This book was a nice change from what I normally read. Through the story, I was able to visit the state of Michigan, Harbor Point, on the water, and the surrounding areas. I learned so much about the area and felt like I was actually there.

This engrossing tale tells the story of Rachel Winnapee, an Indian girl who is hired by The March Family Matriarch, Lydia, to work in their summer home, as a servant. The year is 1945, and The March's son Woody, is returning from WWII, wounded. He will need a nurse to care for him at home. After the nurse that was hired gets fired for alcoholism, Rachel takes her place, and she and Woody fall in love. Their relationship can never be revealed, as Woody is engaged to be married, and Rachel is considered the poor, hired help. Their romance is bittersweet, lasting for just one summer, but something transpires that changes Rachel's life forever.

As a rule, I do not read historical romances, but....this book was an exception. I enjoyed it immensely! I read it quickly, and I will never forget it.  
Highly recommended!

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## **Linda says**

This was a "goodread". Not terribly compelling but it kept my interest. The concept of "tasting the earth" is interesting to me and I wonder if there is something to that. Does that really bring you home? How?

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## **Vi Walker says**

A beautiful novel about connections to home and land and the need humans have for a link to their past. A very enjoyable read.

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## **Mum says**

I felt as if I were looking at photos of the characters. Had I not read other books about this general time period and location, I would have abandoned the book after about ten pages. It was good, but not anywhere near great.

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## **John Eich says**

If you mash up the Great Gatsby and Jane Austen, add a dollop of Native American culture and scosh of shamanism, you'd be pretty close to this novel. Set in a wealthy summering lake town in Upper Michigan, an orphaned Native American girl begins working at one of the summer mansions and meets the wounded son, newly back from World War II. Annnnnnd, you know most of the rest of the story. Not all of it though; the author freshens the story with Native American culture and preserves some unexpected twists throughout.

On that note, the only annoying aspect of the book is the way the author slowly builds up a storyline with characters building in a crescendo - and then suddenly tosses it all away. Builds up a secondary pairing...and tosses it away. I can respect the unexpected, but I felt a bit betrayed as a reader, having invested in the protagonists of each story. Similarly, the shamanic aspects - why was that brought back time and again? Two characters "have the vision"...for what purpose in the plot exactly? Use it or cut it, I say.

That said, I did really care about the characters and pull for them to succeed. I can picture the scenery and characters well. I am reminded of them from time to time - all hallmarks of a great book.

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## **Bonnie says**

A beautifully written novel by first-time author Terry Gamble. Rachel Winnapee, a sixteen-year Native American orphan girl, is sent to work for the wealthy March family at their summer home on the shores of Lake Michigan in 1945. Her world changes when she is asked by the matriarch to care for her son who was injured in the war. He lost his leg in the Pacific conflict and relies on Rachel for the morphine that dulls his pain and memory. Their relationship evolves into one of passion and the result is a boy born without the father's knowledge. Woody is engaged to Elizabeth, a beautiful socialite and after an initial rejection by her,

they are married. The most hauntingly, beautiful descriptions are of the small Native American village where Rachel was born and of the specialness that is her son. The ending is unexpected but magical.

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### **Kira says**

Native American orphan Rachael Winapee works in the summer house of the March family, routinely, until the March's youngest son, Woody, returns home from war, wounded and addicted to morphine. Doubtless, the two fall in love, but everything goes downhill from there. This was a great book, but depressingly sad.

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