



Many Rivers to Cross

Thomas Zigal

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Hurricane Katrina struck the Louisiana Gulf Coast in late August of 2005. In the aftermath of the category-three hurricane, the churning waters of Lake Pontchartrain tore through the levee system of New Orleans, causing unprecedented flooding and stranding those who had failed to evacuate in time. Images of desperate men and women clinging to rooftops and praying for rescue filled every news station. It is in this setting that Thomas Zigal's new novel unfolds.

With water rapidly rising to alarming heights and contaminated by filth, the only way in or out of New Orleans is by boat. Hodges Grant, a veteran of Vietnam, must ply the fetid waters in a homemade craft in order to reach his stranded daughter and two grandchildren. Accompanied by his grandchildren's good-for-nothing father Duval, Hodges enters into the treacherous wreckage left by the storm. The city appears to be deserted except for a few police out to commandeer civilian boats—by force, if necessary.

Deirdra, or Dee as she is known, was hardly daunted by the idea of a hurricane. There had been too many false alarms in the past from government officials. Still, for the sake of her two children, Dee had attempted to evacuate, only to turn back as gangs of armed highjackers pulled hapless drivers from their cars in gridlocked traffic. Now she and her children are stranded in their attic as the water laps at the hatch. They can only hope for Hodges's swift arrival.

Hodges's son PJ and eight thousand other inmates remain incarcerated in the Orleans Parish Jail as the waters begin to rise. Abandoned by the guards, the inmates must break through the bars of their cells or drown. They discover armed guards calmly waiting in boats outside; they pull a few inmates to safety and threaten to shoot those who rush for the fence.

As the waters advance through the city of New Orleans, so does Zigal's story. Told through the eyes of each member of the Grant family, Zigal weaves a tale bound by terror, loss, perseverance, and survival.

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