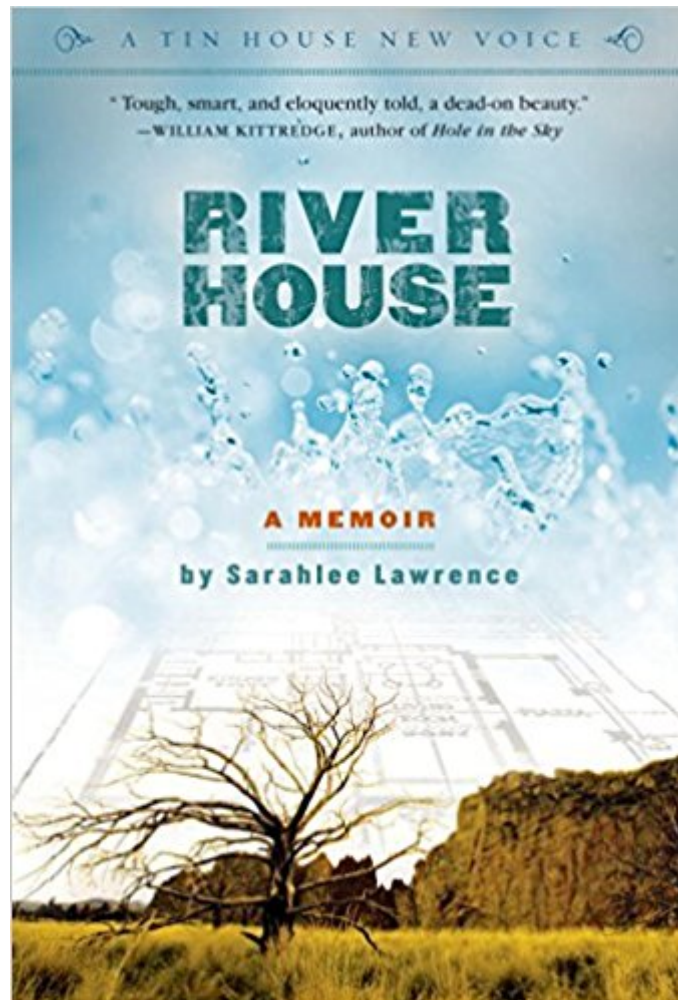




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River House: A Memoir (Tin House New Voice)



Synopsis

An exquisite blend of memoir and nature writing, *River House* is one young woman's story about returning home. An exquisite blend of memoir and nature writing, *River House* is the story of a young woman returning home to her family's ranch and building a log house with the help of her father. An avid river rafter, Sarahlee Lawrence grew up in remote central Oregon and, by the age of twenty-one, had rafted some of the most dangerous rivers of the world as an accomplished river guide. But living her dream led her back to the place she least expected—her dusty beginnings and her family's home. *River House* is a beautiful story about a daughter's return and her relationship with her father, whom she enlists to help brave the cold winter and build a log house by hand. Together, they work through the harsh winter, father helping daughter every step of the way.

Book Information

Series: Tin House New Voice

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review Lawrence grew up on a ranch in the high desert of Oregon, where her strong, unflappable mother is content, but where her father, a surfer in a place of little water and epic winters, suffers like a caged bird. Lawrence develops a passion for rivers, and at a young age, she becomes an accomplished, seemingly fearless, world-traveling river guide and advocate pleased with her roughing-it, transient life. Until she finds herself on the flooded, hence monstrous, Tambopata River on the border of Peru and Bolivia. Suddenly, it seems imperative that she build her own log house on her family's land, just as her parents did. Surely this will make her

father happy. Instead, he's instructively adversarial, and her strenuous and dangerous work on the ranch caring for 40 horses and constructing her house in the bitter cold is as harrowing and demanding as any wilderness sojourn. Handy with tools and rafts, a good neighbor, and a mighty fine horsewoman, Lawrence is also adept with language, writing with arresting lucidity and a driving need to understand her father, her legacy, the land, community, work, and herself. A true adventure story of rare dimension. --Donna Seaman

"Handy with tools and rafts, a good neighbor, and a mighty fine horsewoman, Lawrence is also adept with language, writing with arresting lucidity and a driving need to understand her father, her legacy, the land, community, work, and herself. A true adventure story of rare dimension."

•Booklist, starred review"With her keen eye and talent for writing about the natural world, Lawrence pays homage to the American West. . . Lawrence is one of those remarkable young women spawned by the American West who are adept at running wild rivers, operating heavy equipment, and building a log home, all evocatively told in this informative book."•Publishers Weekly"It's messy, this building of houses and relationships, but the experiences give this memoir an existential grace."•Kirkus Reviews"In her stirring memoir, *River House*, Sarahlee Lawrence describes a yearning to return to her rural Oregon home that's every bit as powerful as was her youthful need to escape it. . . Lawrence brings her connection to home alive in the classic Oregon-lit tradition of turning landscape and climate into a beautifully surly character."•Randy Gragg, *Portland Monthly*"It's very simple: If you call Oregon your home•not just Portland, but this whole big awkward schizophrenic state•then you need to go to a bookstore and purchase a copy of Sarahlee Lawrence's *River House*. . . if there's any justice, it'll become an Oregon classic."•Alison Hallet, *Portland Mercury*"Astonishing. . . [*River House*] resonated more deeply with me than anything I've read about Oregon in a long, long time. . . *River House* pulses with movement."•The Oregonian"Lawrence writes with remarkable candor about her loved ones; the joys and pitfalls of life in a small community; and the creeping development from upscale Bend 40 miles away. She is in her element writing about nature, and it's a treat to share her journey."•Seattle Times"A memoir narrative that pivots off the worlds of landscape and wild water."•The Salt Lake Tribune"It's a sturdy, honest, and direct recounting of the author's audacious life in unusual places, and is a beautifully clear exposition of her relationships with her parents, neighbors, and friends, living and dead."•Minneapolis Star Tribune"Lawrence's voice, like the desert, is beautiful in its simplicity, while she herself embodies the strong womanhood of the American West. Like her many skills, this debut book is

versatile;resembling, at intervals, a memoir, nature-adventure writing and easily digestible rural philosophy. Her simple prose makes her adventures in construction, gardening and horse-tending seem as thrilling as Tambopata's rapids. Lawrence's writing is honest and, like the river that begins her memoir, raw."

Salt Lake City Weekly"More action and grit than soul-searching and pretty writing, this memoir ends up a love note to Central Oregon."

The Eugene Register-Guard"Lawrence's debut book forecasts the beginning of a new career; that of a talented writer. Her descriptive prose paints a vivid and respectful portrait of the natural world, which she clearly treasures. . . River House is a rare accomplishment with a narrative that flows and ebbs like the mighty current of life."

Durango Herald"[Sarahlee Lawrence] has crafted a memoir with sentences that draw one's attention like a firefly buzzing around your head in the heat of summer."

Cascadia Weekly"A transfixing read. . . the end of River House leaves a reader begging for a sequel."

New West"An engaging piece of literary work about passion, travel, love, and what it means to come home."

Wend"An exquisite story of personal strength and nature."

Fort-Wayne News-Sentinel"River House is about rediscovering family and working through the compromises involved in finding your life, the people and days you actually love. It's tough, smart and eloquently told, a dead on beauty. Enjoy. I surely did."

William Kittredge, author of Hole in the Sky and The Willow Field"Log by log, and word by word, Lawrence locates her love and affirms her commitment to her parents, her place, and the natural world. If you love wild water and land, if you value hard work and family, this is the book not to miss."

Phil Condon, author of Clay Center"ln River House, Sarahlee Lawrence tells a story as carefully hewn and crafted, as lovingly rendered, as the log cabin she and her father have built together in the high desert of central Oregon. It's a story of roots; the pull of the land that calls her back to the heart of her family farm. And it's the story of wings, the journey of a father and a daughter each coming to terms with a dream."

Judy Blunt, author of Breaking Clean

Lawrence is a promising voice of nature writing's next generation as evidenced by the rich and poetic language that matches the breath-taking scenery it describes."

National Book Critics Circle

Sarahlee Lawrence has experienced more adventure in a couple of decades than most of us can hope for in a lifetime."

Orion Magazine"Only once before have I seriously considered calling in sick so I could read nonstop. [River House] made the second time. . . This is not just a book. This is more."

Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

This is a true story of Rainshadow Organics in Oregon. Author Sarahlee Lawrence babbles on and

on in her book about her pothead dad, building her house, and her general superiority as an organic farmer in what she obviously sees as a small backwards farming community. Which is also her hometown. The book rats out her father's mental issues, addictions, and the pain this brings upon her mother who obviously enables him. Sarahlee thinks she invented the concept of sustainable living while living in her backwards hometown, and she supports them all. And saves the family farm by herself. Mildly interesting if you're from central Oregon.

I am an avid reader of river rafting adventures that people have taken around the world Through her words, this memoir shares Sarahlee's travels and excitement with the reader. During her travels, she took one book with her... WALDEN by Henry David Thoreau given to her by her mother. She receives great inspiration from it and fosters a growing urge to go back home to her parents farm in Oregon and build a log cabin for herself. Sarahlee accomplishes this enormous feat with the help of her father but must do all of the designing, purchasing of product and basic construction on her own. Her dad helps as needed. For such a young girl, I cannot imagine having the stamina, determination and drive to complete all of the work that she did. This memoir will instill greatness in any one who embraces the opportunity to read it. My regret is that this book did not exist when I was young. It would have made a great difference in my life then, but is still an inspiration today, for me. (This is not a book I knew of until suggested in their regular e-mails. Thank you !) Autumn Oak

Although the ending is bittersweet, the author's power of description of places, people and feelings make this a wonderful book.

Such an amazing book!

Travels through some scary unchallenged whitewater through moments of despair dodging some mighty physical and psychological bullets refreshing, revealing and nicely descriptive renderings of a soul journey

Sarahlee Lawrence is a talented writer with an important story to tell about the lessons learned in following your heart and your passions, and growing up in a remarkable family. If you enjoy travel adventures, Lawrence pulls you in to the excitement of her river rafting adventures. Her descriptions of ranch life and how she and her dad build a log home--from laying the concrete foundation to raising the roof--are inspiring and caused me to appreciate the hard work ahead of them. This is also

a story about family values, dynamics, love and choices that people make in their younger lives that conflict with their true passions later in life. The respect and admiration Sarahlee has for her father and mother shows in the loving way she describes their individual personalities. What happens at the crossroads of a child reaching adulthood and a parent needing to realize his dreams before it's too late are bittersweet, yet hopeful. I couldn't put the book down, and look forward to hearing more about Sarahlee's purposeful life.

"River House" is the memoir of Sarahlee Lawrence, mainly describing the building of her log home on her parent's property on the high desert of Oregon. Her descriptions and story flow easily, but also with much frustration both for her, her father who helps her build her home and the reader. The book starts out with no real description. It jumps into her love of running rivers. She is in Peru and leaves with a man she has just met to run the Tambopata River - her information consists of some squiggly lines on a cocktail napkin, she does not even bring a first aid kit, which it turns out is desperately needed. You know from the beginning that this will not be a tale of a sensible, reasonable woman. There is intolerance and bitterness here (many times with understandable justification) of any city dweller who comes to live in their locale, and of their McMansions. She "knew how rich people liked to settle in the sagebrush where there's privacy and a view. It gives them a reason to drive their expensive cars". She loves her mother and father and this work with her father is a time for them she says, but yet there is much she does not respect about him, "only my father could teach me how to survive the desert for a lifetime. Not by his successes, but by his failures". He always has his jar of weed and makes much use of it throughout his life. He is indeed a lost surfer, far from the sea. It is often hard to picture what she is doing, both in her river rafting and in the building of the house. Her descriptions of the high desert are detailed but something is missing elsewhere in her explanatory method. There is much aggravation here, both towards her, at her attitude, and her father - to each other and it leaches out to include the reader many times. But at least her story is honest, there is not much hidden in her story or her emotions. This might be of interest to those who wish to read of the changing face of open areas, of Oregon and those who try to live a "natural" life.

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