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Half Wild

Robin MacArthur



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A powerfully authentic new literary voice debuts with stories that carve out a distinctive vision of the wildness and beauty of rural Vermont.

Spanning nearly forty years, the stories in Robin MacArthur's formidable debut give voice to the hopes, dreams, hungers, and fears of a diverse cast of Vermonters—adolescent girls, aging hippies, hardscrabble farmers, disconnected women, and solitary men. Straddling the border between civilization and the wild, they all struggle to make sense of their loneliness and longings in the stark and often isolating enclaves they call home—golden fields and white-veiled woods, dilapidated farmhouses and makeshift trailers, icy rivers and still lakes rouse the imagination, tether the heart, and inhabit the soul.

In "Creek Dippers," a teenage girl vows to escape the fate that has trapped her eccentric, rough-living mother. "Maggie in the Trees" explores the aftershocks of a man who surrenders to his passion for a wild, damaged woman—his longtime friend's partner. In "God's Country," an elderly woman is unexpectedly reminded of a forbidden youthful passion and the chance she did not take. Returning to her childhood house when her mother falls ill, a daughter grapples with her own sense of belonging in "The Women Where I'm From."

In striking prose powerful in its clarity and purity, MacArthur effortlessly renders characters cleaved to the land that has defined them—men and women, young and old, whose lives are inextricably intertwined with one another and tied to the fierce and beautiful natural world that surrounds them.

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