

Last Night in Twisted River: A Novel

By John Irving

In 1954, in the cookhouse of a logging and sawmill settlement in northern New Hampshire, an anxious twelve-year-old boy mistakes the local constable's girlfriend for a bear. Both the twelve-year-old and his father become fugitives, forced to run from Coos County—to Boston, to southern Vermont, to Toronto—pursued by the implacable constable. Their lone protector is a fiercely libertarian logger, once a river driver, who befriends them. In a story spanning five decades, *Last Night in Twisted River* depicts the recent half-century in the United States as “a living replica of Coos County, where lethal hatreds were generally permitted to run their course.” What further distinguishes **Last Night in Twisted River** is the author's unmistakable voice—the inimitable voice of an accomplished storyteller.

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Last Night in Twisted River: A Novel Summary Details

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pdetail:

- Sales Rank: #373000 in Books
- Published on: 2010-06-15
- Released on: 2010-06-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.98" h x 1.20" w x 5.19" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 592 pages

editorial:

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best of the Month, October 2009: A long, delicious trip to the land of Irving is hands-down the best way to begin the month of October. A trio of tragic events (though the prize for most hell-shocking goes to the third) exiles widower and camp cook Dominic Baciagalupo and his son Danny from a mid-century logging outpost called Twisted River. They leave behind the Bunyan-esque lumberjack Ketchum--a gruff, eccentric, dyed-in-the-wool Yankee--who remains their sole connection to the past. What's next neither father nor son knows: their rootless existence moves swiftly in and out of New England, tied ostensibly to jobs for Dominic and schools for Danny, but it seems one foot is always back in those New Hampshire woods. Theirs is a restless, richly observed journey, crowned by a reckoning no one could predict. Few writers can match John Irving's knack for *denouement*, and in *Last Night in Twisted River*, his extraordinary ending is made all the more powerful by a story that feasts on language, life, and love. --Anne Bartholomew

From Publishers Weekly

Irving (*The World According to Garp*) returns with a scattershot novel, the overriding themes, locations and sensibilities of which will probably neither surprise longtime fans nor win over the uninitiated. Dominic Cookie Baciagalupo and his son, Danny, work the kitchen of a New Hampshire logging camp overlooking the Twisted River, whose currents claimed both Danny's mother and, as the novel opens, mysterious newcomer Angel Pope. Following an Irvingesque appearance of bears, Cookie and Danny's world of accidents expands, precipitating a series of adventures both literary and culinary. The ensuing 50-year slog follows the Baciagalupos from a Boston Italian restaurant to an Iowa City Chinese joint and finally a Toronto French cafe, while dovetailing clumsily with Danny's career as the distinctly Irving-like writer Danny Angel. The story's vicariousness is exacerbated by frequent changes of scene, self-conscious injections of how writers must detach themselves and a cast of invariably flat characters. With conflict this meandering and characters this limp, reflexive gestures come off like nostalgia and are bound to leave readers wishing Irving had detached himself even more. (*Oct.*)

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Longwinded, improbable, contrived, and ridiculous. Despite these grave literary offenses, critics couldn't help but enjoy this novel about an Irving-like writer. Readers familiar with Irving's novels will recognize his

penchant for melodrama, as well as his unwavering affection for bizarre secondary characters, implausible coincidences, and bears. At its core, however, *Last Night in Twisted River* centers on the relationship between a father and son, a familial connection that will resonate with readers. It is also a moving story about the factors that shape a young man's life and the insight that comes with time and reflection. The critic from the *Oregonian* refused to be charmed, calling Irving's latest "hokey" and "monotony in stereo." Still, it is a fine read for steadfast Irving fans and readers who are forewarned.

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