

When the Past Comes Back to Haunt You

“Gabhart shines. This cozy read explores the uncertainty present in every new beginning.”

—*Booklist* on *When the Meadow Blooms*

Ada, Mich.—Bestselling author Ann H. Gabhart has captivated readers with her historical romance novels set within her home state of Kentucky. In her newest novel, *In the Shadow of the River*, Gabhart invites readers to come aboard the *Kingston Floating Palace*, a showboat filled with lively entertainment, music, and dancing. But amidst the spirited atmosphere, there lurk secrets from the past, and the truth is hard to come by. *In the Shadow of the River* weaves a tale of mystery, romance, and things remembered, all set along the Ohio River.

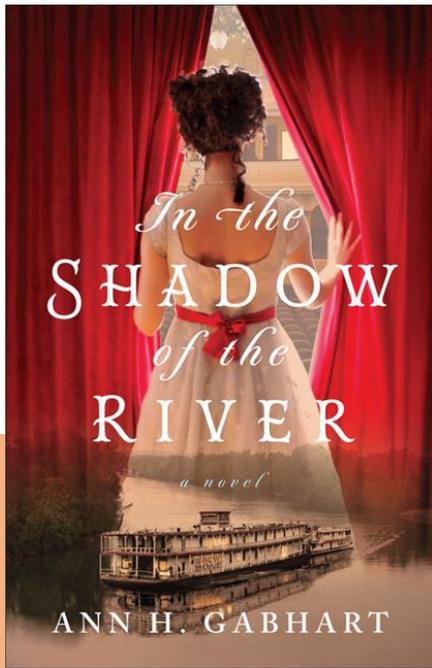
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Jacci Reed was only five years old when a man attempted to kidnap her from the steamboat her mother Irena worked on. Although her mother had been wounded, they were still able to escape to a neighboring showboat.

Now fifteen years later, Jacci has come to love life on the river and her adopted family of actors, singers, and dancers. She has even developed her own talent as an entertainer. But when someone tries to kill her, the past once again resurfaces. The memory of the altercation that took her mother’s life and the cryptic statements that she overheard once again replay in her mind. Jacci has many unanswered questions about why these events happened and is determined to uncover the mysteries of the past. But her grandfather, among others, are determined to keep the past hidden.

Gabe Kingston was a teenager when Jacci first came aboard his father’s showboat. His affection for Jacci has only grown throughout the years. Now that she is in peril, he is determined to help her find answers.

Will they be able to uncover the shadows from the past to allow for a brighter future together?



In the Shadow of the River by Ann H. Gabhart

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About the Author

Ann H. Gabhart is the bestselling author of many novels, including *When the Meadow Blooms*, *Along a Storied Trail*, *An Appalachian Summer*, *River to Redemption*, *These Healing Hills*, and *Angel Sister*. She and her husband live on a farm a mile from where she was born in rural Kentucky. Ann enjoys discovering the everyday wonders of nature while hiking in her farm's fields and woods with her grandchildren and her dogs, Frankie and Marley. Learn more at www.annhgabhart.com.

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PRAISE for Ann Gabhart's Novels

“*When the Meadow Blooms* by **Ann H. Gabhart** is an engaging tale of heartache, first loves, and spiritual lessons that leave the reader entertained and educated.”

—*Interviews and Reviews on When the Meadow Booms*

“Gabhart’s skillful use of period details and the Appalachian landscape lend plenty of atmosphere to accompany the lessons of hope, compassion, and fortitude amid hardship. This is her best historical inspirational yet.”

—*Publishers Weekly, starred review of Along a Storied Trail*

“*Along a Storied Trail* is a heartwarming romance with strong Christian themes of reaching out to others in need and trusting God’s plan. Fans of Christian historical romance will enjoy this captivating tale.”

—*The Historical Novels Review on Along a Storied Trail*

“An engrossing story, told believably with very well-described settings and lots of interesting historical details about the work of the Pack Horse Library Initiative. . . . A fascinating insight into a part of American history I’d never heard of before.”

—*Together Magazine on Along a Storied Trail*

“Gabhart takes readers to the majestic Kentucky mountains during the Great Depression in this enjoyable inspirational romance.”

—*Publishers Weekly on An Appalachian Summer*

“Ann. H. Gabhart creates more than a wholesome, historical love story. She shares an intriguing look into the Depression Era.”

—*The Stand on An Appalachian Summer*



Sample Interview Questions for Ann H. Gabhart *In the Shadow of the River*

Can you please provide a brief summary of your novel *In the Shadow of the River*?

On the steamship where she works as a maid, Irena Reed fights off a man who tries to kidnap five-year-old Jacci. Injured in the confrontation, Irena takes Jacci to a showboat tied up beside their steamship, where Irena's father is an actor. Jacci doesn't understand what is happening and is puzzled about the overheard conversations between her mother and grandfather. After her mother dies, Jacci finds a home with her grandfather on the *Kingston Floating Palace* showboat. She becomes part of the showboat family and acting cast. Fifteen years later, Jacci continues to wonder about the mystery surrounding her mother's death. Gabe Kingston, thirteen when Jacci joined the showboat family, has loved her for years, but he worries she will never see him as more than a brother figure. As the summer heats up, Jacci's search for the truth of her past puts her in danger. When someone tries to kill her, the need for answers becomes critical. Gabe is ready to do whatever he can to protect her.

Your novel offers a very intriguing plot. What was the inspiration behind your story?

While looking for a new story idea, I picked up a book about steamboats and how important they were to commerce. But boats weren't just carrying passengers and freight. Showboats were also bringing entertainment to towns and villages along the rivers. Most showboats were family affairs with fathers, mothers, and children putting on shows each night and then heading on down the river to the next landing. As I did more research, my showboat family came to life in my imagination. I wanted to stir some mystery into my story. So, what better place for a person to disappear than on a showboat that was rarely in one place more than a night or two during the long showboat season? Then I had to find a reason for my character to need to disappear. Each question and each answer helped me dip deeper into my story of how the unknown past can be a threat to the future.

***In the Shadow of the River* takes place on the Ohio River, which borders Kentucky. Why did you choose this setting?**

I originally hoped to set the story on the Kentucky River since my books all have Kentucky settings, but in my research I discovered that the big showboats couldn't navigate the Kentucky River in the time period of my story unless the river was flooded. The showboats went up and down many rivers, usually starting on the Kanawha River in West Virginia in the early spring and then ending up down the Mississippi to Louisiana rivers in the fall. I picked a summer setting for my story and imagined my showboat on the Ohio during the summer months. Then I concentrated on the landings along the river on the Kentucky side. That way I was able to keep my Kentucky setting.

Your female protagonist, Jacci Reed, grew up on a showboat. What type of research was required to accurately portray life on a showboat in the late 1800s?

I read several books about families who lived on showboats for most of the year. I had no idea when I started my research that showboats were so elaborate. While the early ones were very basic, as the years went by, the showboat families built larger boats with theaters that could seat hundreds of entertainment-hungry patrons. Many showboat owners became wealthy. The family

generally had very nice living quarters too, although the rooms for the hired actors and actresses were small.

A showboat wasn't a steamboat. It was a huge, elaborately decked-out raft that was pushed up and down the river by a small steamboat. The actors signed on at the beginning of the season and stayed with the showboat until the end of the season months later. The family of the showboat owner was generally the nucleus of the shows, but the actors they hired had a way of becoming part of the family. Some would come back every season. Others signed on to see the country along the river, to do some fishing during the days, and to save money since the little towns and landings where the showboat tied up didn't give much opportunity for the actors to spend their earnings.

The showboat family did face many hazards as they traveled up and down the rivers. They had fires, floods, sickness at times, and angry patrons when the shows didn't live up to the audiences' expectations. At the same time, the showboat people loved the life and always looked forward to the next landing and the next show.

As a child, Jacci experienced a traumatic event. Can you please provide some insight about this occurrence?

In the 1800s, a woman was ostracized for having a child out of wedlock. The child, innocent of any blame, was also subjected to ridicule and shame. Jacci's mother did not want that for her child, and so she came up with a convoluted plan to hide the fact that Jacci was illegitimate. But with Jacci, other factors were also at play. Jacci's mother feared the powerful man her father insisted she marry would find out about the baby and do something to ensure no one would ever know about her indiscretion. The plan to hide Jacci falls apart when a man tries to take her from the only mother she has ever known. Jacci's mother struggles with the man and is gravely wounded. Jacci's world is turned upside down.

How did this incident impact her life?

Jacci is set adrift without the anchor of her mother. While she likes life with her grandfather on the showboat, the secretive nature of her past haunts her. Her grandfather tells her to forget about the past and concentrate on her future. But the unknown can sometimes threaten the future. Jacci begins to wonder if her life is as pretend as the plays she stars in on the showboat.

Jacci is determined to find out secrets from her past. But her quest continues to be blocked. Why did her grandfather in particular feel like the past should stay hidden?

Jacci's grandfather, Duke, promised her mother that he would protect Jacci. He felt that also meant protecting her from the unhappy facts about her birth. Duke was a man who lived to act. It was only natural for him to push aside the truth of the past that he believed would do nothing but bring Jacci pain. He wanted Jacci to dwell in the happiness of the present. On top of that, Irena had never shared everything about Jacci's early life. So, Duke didn't know all the answers Jacci wanted.

Can you please tell readers about Gabe Kingston and his connection to Jacci?

Gabe was the first person Jacci saw when she and her mother came aboard the *Kingston Floating Palace*. At thirteen, Gabe was greatly impacted by a real-life drama with impending tragedy rather than the pretend dramas they acted out on the showboat stage. He took Jacci under his wing and treated her like a beloved little sister. But as they both got older, he realized his feelings were more than that of a brother for a sister. However, because he wasn't sure Jacci would ever feel the same, he feared stepping out of the brother shadow to reveal his true feelings. From the very first week she was on the showboat, he would do anything to make sure she was safe and did his best to find ways to make her smile.

What do you hope audiences will gain from reading *In the Shadow of the River*?

Of course, I want those who read the story to be entertained and enjoy getting to know Jacci, Gabe and all the cast as they ride along with them on the showboat. I found the showboat history fascinating, and I hope my readers will as well. I think the story proves that line from a poem written by Sir Walter Scott in 1808: *What a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive*. Sometimes no matter the motivation behind the deceit, a person can still be caught in that tangled web and suffer the consequences.

What are you working on next?

I've headed back in time to 1910 as I return to the Eastern Kentucky Appalachian Mountains for a new novel about a preacher and a teacher who go into the hills in hopes of not only changing lives there for the better but also finding a way to happiness for themselves. They will have challenges and obstacles in their road and will have to look to the Lord for the right directions in their lives.

How can readers connect with you?

To find out more about my books or me, readers can visit www.annhgabhart.com. There they can also find links to my blog posts, social media sites, and a way to sign up for my newsletter. I love talking to readers and friends on Facebook, www.facebook.com/anngabhart; Twitter, <https://twitter.com/AnnHGabhart>, and Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/annhgabhart/>. I share research pictures, nature shots, my blog posts, and more on Pinterest, <https://www.pinterest.com/annhgabhart/>. Bookbub, <https://www.bookbub.com/profile/ann-h-gabhart>, is a great way to keep up with special book sales, reviews, and new releases. I'm out there on Goodreads too: https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/311723.Ann_H_Gabhart. But for the most fun, readers can sign up for my newsletter where I talk books, share pictures and stories about life down here on the farm, and always have some kind of giveaway of books and more: <https://madmimi.com/signups/43953/join>.