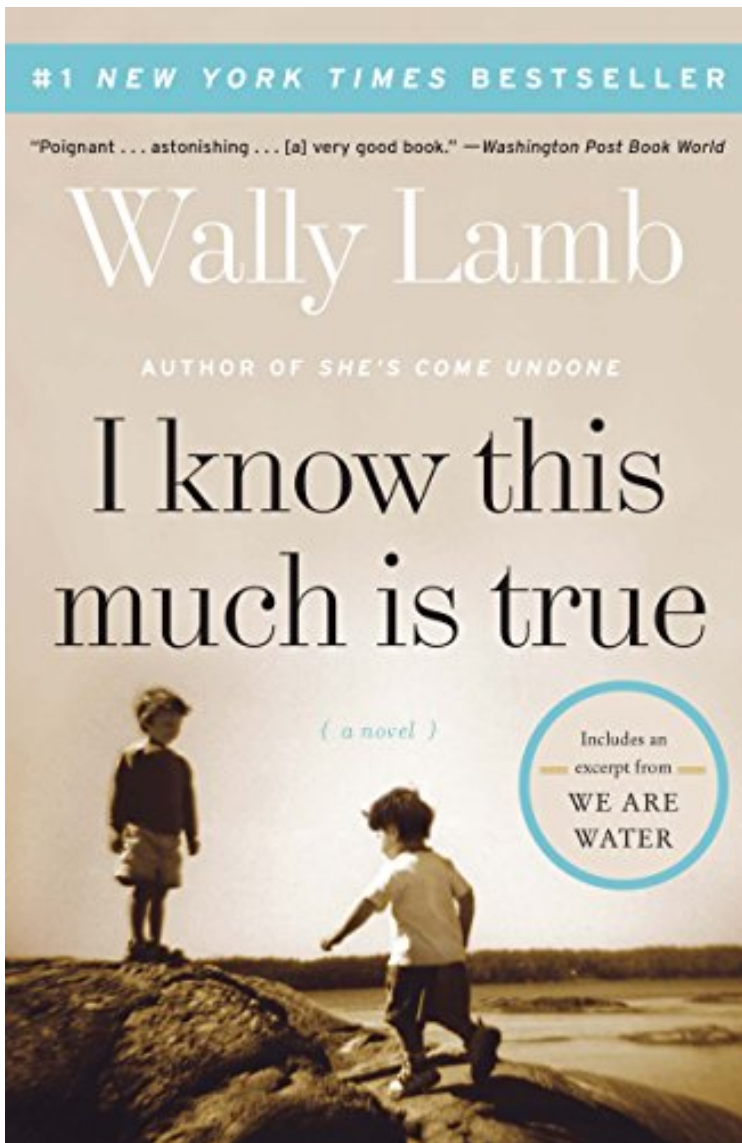


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I Know This Much Is True: A Novel



Par Wally Lamb
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWith his stunning debut novel, *She's Come Undone*, Wally Lamb won the adulation of critics and readers with his mesmerizing tale of one woman's painful yet triumphant journey of self-discovery. Now, this brilliantly talented writer returns with *I Know This Much Is True*, a heartbreaking and poignant multigenerational saga of the reproductive bonds of destruction and the powerful force of forgiveness. A masterpiece that breathtakingly tells a story of alienation and connection, power and abuse, devastation and renewalthis novel is a contemporary retelling of an ancient Hindu myth. A proud king must confront his demons to achieve salvation. Change yourself, the myth instructs, and you will inhabit a renovated world..comTony award-winning Ken Howard (1776, *Child's Play*) reads *I Know This Much Is True* with the conviction of a used car salesman and the charm of a seasoned politico. Reminiscent of a

former football coach recalling his glory days, Howard's booming, rich voice is a beefy compliment to Lamb's powerful prose. Never to be mistaken as a ventriloquist, Howard makes little distinction when moving in and out of character--his voice barely cracks an octave for dainty female personalities. However, this understatement (so to speak) lends to smooth transitions and believable, down-to-earth narration. (Running time: six hours, four cassettes) --Rebekah WarrenFrom Publishers Weekly

This much is true for sure: Lamb's second novel (after the bestselling, Oprah-selected *She's Come Undone*) is a hefty read. Some may be daunted by its length, its seemingly obsessive inclusion of background details and its many digressions. The topics it unflinchingly explores--mental illness, dysfunctional families, domestic abuse--are rendered with unsparing candor. But thanks to well-sustained dramatic tension, funky gallows humor and some shocking surprises, this sinuous story of one family's dark secrets and recurring patterns of behavior largely succeeds in its ambitious reach. The narrative explores the theme of sibling responsibility, depicting the moral and emotional conundrum of an identical twin whose love for his afflicted brother is mixed with resentment, bitterness and guilt. Narrator Dominick Birdsey, once a high-school history teacher and now, at 40, a housepainter in upstate Connecticut, relates the process that led to his twin Thomas's schizophrenic paranoia and the resulting chaos in both their lives. The book opens with a horrific scene in which Thomas slices off his right hand, declaring it a sacrifice demanded by God. Flashbacks illuminate the boys' difficult childhoods: illegitimate, they never knew their father; diffident, gentle Thomas was verbally and physically abused by their bullying stepfather, who also terrorized their ineffectual mother. Scenes from the pivotal summer of 1969, when Dominick betrayed Thomas and others in crucial ways, are juxtaposed with his current life: his frustrating relationship with his scatterbrained live-in, Joy; his enduring love for his ex-wife, Dessa; his memories of their baby's death and of his mother's sad and terrified existence. All of this unfolds against his urgent need to release Thomas from a mental institution and the psychiatric sessions that finally force Dominick to acknowledge his own self-destructive impulses. Lamb takes major risks in spreading his narrative over more than 900 pages. Long stretches are filled with the raunchy, foul-mouthed humor of teenaged Dominick and his friends. Yet the details of working-class life, particularly the prevalence of self-righteous male machismo and domestic brutality, ring absolutely true. Though the inclusion of a diary written by the twins' Sicilian immigrant grandfather may seem an unnecessary digression at first, its revelations add depth and texture to the narrative. Lastly, what seems a minor subplot turns out to hold the key to many secrets. In tracing Dominick's helplessness against the abuse of power on many levels, Lamb creates a nuanced picture of a flawed but decent man. And the questions that suspensefully permeate the novel--the identity of the twins' father; the mystery of the inscription on their grandfather's tomb; the likelihood of Dominick's reconciliation with his ex-wife--contribute to a fully developed and triumphantly resolved exploration of one man's suffering and redemption. BOMC main selection; author tour; simultaneous audio. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.