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Girl in the River

Patricia Kullberg



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Girl in the River Patricia Kullberg A working girl's tale of desperation, desire and defiance . . .

On the eve of World War II, Portland has fallen into the hands of gangsters. Newly orphaned, Mae Rose wanders the rain-stained streets alone, on the lam from a knife-wielding pimp and mustering her own worst impulses to survive. As Mae rises in Portland's gritty sex industry, she's pursued by a district attorney who seeks to snare her for more personal reasons. In the city's nightspots, the glamorous Dr. Ruth Barnett turns heads, while by day she operated a wildly successful abortion service. She provides the refuge Mae has been seeking. At war's end, both women are caught in the cross hairs of Portland's anti-vice crusade and the women's survival depends on their ability to outsmart the cops and politicians who no longer protect them.

Girl in the River is a portrait of the intimate lives of women during one of the most corrupt periods in Portland history. It's an unflinching look at the power dynamics of sex, a glimpse into the work life of a call girl, an improbable love story and the tale of post-war assaults on reproductive rights. It's a tribute as well to two women who shaped the lives of Portlanders during those tumultuous times: Dr. Ruth Barnett, premier abortionist of the Pacific Northwest and queen of Portland's nightlife; and Dottie "Do-good" Lee, tireless anti-vice crusader and Portland's first lady mayor.

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