



Wabash

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Wabash is a small town directly across from Saint Louis, on the Illinois side of the Mississippi. It is also the name of the steel mill which serves as the primary industry of the town. Jeremy Cole, like his father before him, works in the mill; his wife, Deborah, remains at home. Estranged from each other after the sudden death of their only child, both attempt to find consolation within their own worlds. Deborah turns to the women of her family, seeking connection and support, while Jeremy becomes a political activist at the mill, gradually committing himself to a course of action that becomes violent and life-threatening.

Butler weaves the separate stories of Jeremy and Deborah with grace and skill. Jeremy's tale takes place in the outer world of the steel mill, where actions take precedence over feelings and a good day's work is the true measure of a man. Deborah's story, however, is centered in the inner world of family relationships, emotions, and intuition. While Deborah attempts to reconcile old family feuds, Jeremy becomes indignant at the treatment of his fellow steel workers and plots to kill the mill owner. It is in the midst of this assassination attempt that Deborah and Jeremy reconcile and their worlds finally converge.

Butler seems equally at home at the furnaces of steel mills, in the midst of political activism, and in the intricacies of women's conversations. He has also created an assembly of supporting characters who are full of depth, passion, and humanity. While the worlds of Jeremy and Deborah Cole may seem stereotypical by current standards, they prove apt for the 1932 setting of this book. An intense and passionate novel, this book should appeal to a diverse readership.

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