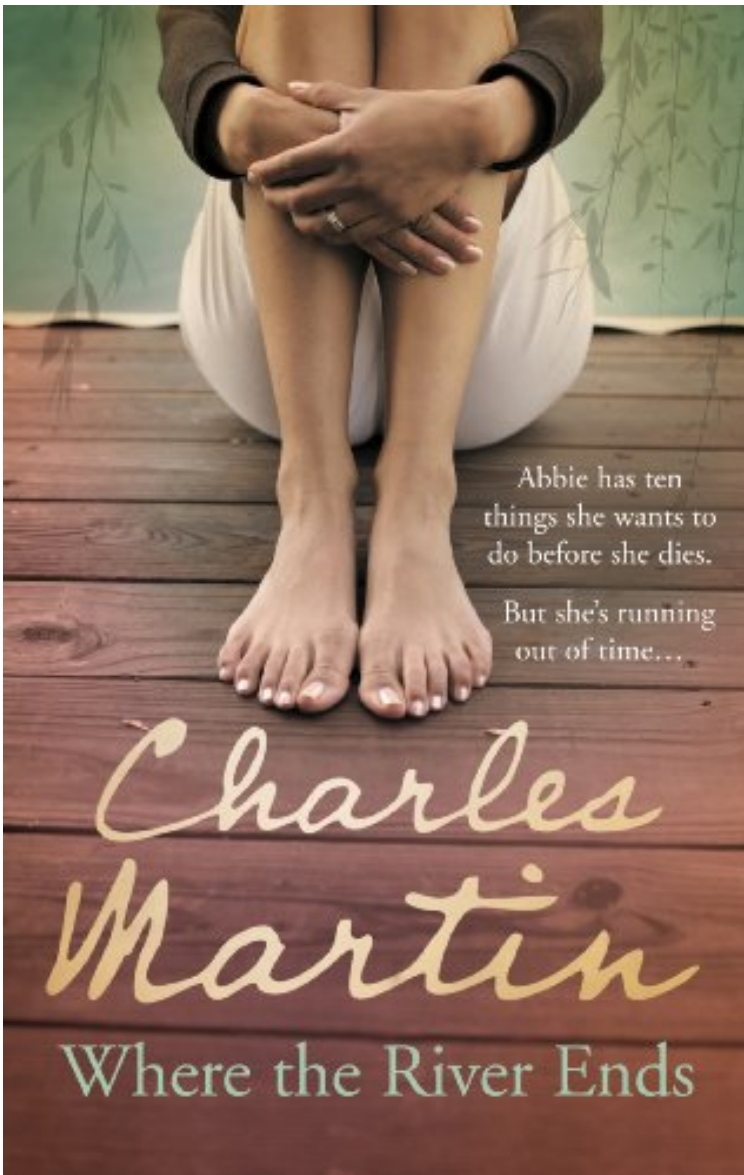


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Where the River Ends



Par Charles Martin
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Par Charles Martin : Where the River Ends before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Where the River Ends:

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Description : Description du produitA poignant and emotional novel with an intensely moving and unforgettable love story at its heart

Prsentation de l'diteur'Nobody fights forever, so I prepared myself for two battles. The first was fighting alongside her.We've done that.As well as two can.But, as the years have ticked by, I've seen a second front coming - and it's the tougher of the two. Abbie might still be swinging but she was beat. To be honest, I think she was still in the ring fighting, simply for me. Lately, the thing that had been keeping me up nights was wondering what would happen if I told her that she could let her guard down - that she could stop fighting. What if she was just waiting on me?'Chris Michaels and Abbie Colman should never have met let alone fallen in love. As the only child of South Carolina's most senior senator, Abbie's father had wanted

better for her than Chris, who grew up in a trailer park next to the St Mary's river. Abbie and Chris had married quickly and secretly, returning to face her parents' objections that haven't faded even after over fourteen years of marriage. But now Abbie and Chris are coming to the end of the road. Diagnosed with breast cancer four years before, Abbie's case is now terminal and they've run out of options. Rather than letting Abbie spend her final days in a cold, sterile hospital room, Chris packs their bags and steals away with her in the middle of the night. They carry with them Abbie's 'wish list' - ten things she wants to do before she dies. The wishes are simple, normal; because after four years of non-stop invasive medical treatments, 'normal' is a fleeting memory. Along with taking a final trip with Chris on the river that holds so many memories for them both, Abbie wants to dance with her husband, drink wine on a beach, laugh until it hurts. But as they head for river's end, racing against weather and time, Abbie's father, the press and the police are determined to find them and bring Abbie home...Extrait 1MAY 30

I climbed the final step into my studio, sniffed the dank fireplace and wondered how long it would take an errant flame to consume everything in here. Minutes I should think. Arms folded, I leaned against the wall and stared at all the eyes staring back at me. Abbie had tried so hard to make me believe. Even taken me halfway around the world. Introduced me to Rembrandt, poked me in the shoulder and said, "You can do that." So I had painted. Faces mostly. My mother had planted the seed that, years later, Abbie watered, nurtured and pruned. In truth, given a good flame and a tardy fire department, I stood to make more money on an insurance payout. Stacked around me in layered rows against the four walls lay more than three hundred dusty works--a decade's worth--all oil on canvas. Faces captured in moments speaking emotions known by hearts but spoken by few mouths. At one time, it had come so easily. So fluidly. I remember moments when I couldn't wait to get in here, when I couldn't hold it back, when I would paint on four canvases at once. Those all-nighters when I discovered Vesuvius in me. The last decade of my life was staring back at me. Once hung with promise in studios across Charleston, paintings had slowly, one at a time, returned. Self-proclaimed art critics pontificating in local papers complained that my work "lacked originality," "was absent of heart" and my favorite, "was boring and devoid of artistic skill or understanding." There's a reason the critics are called critics. On the easel before me stretched a white canvas. Dusty, sun-faded and cracked. It was empty. Like me. I stepped through the window, along the side of the roof, and climbed the iron stairs to the crow's nest. I smelled the salt and looked out over the water. Somewhere a seagull squawked at me. The air was thick, dense and blanketed the city in quiet. The sky was clear, but it smelled like rain. The moon hung high and full, casting shadows on the water that lapped the concrete bulkhead a hundred feet away. The lights of Fort Sumpter sat glistening in the distance to the southeast. Before me, the Ashley and Cooper rivers ran into one. Most Charlestonians will tell you it is there that the two form the Atlantic Ocean. Sullivan's Island sat just north, along with the beach where we used to swim. I closed my eyes and listened for the echo of our laughter. That'd been a while. The "Holy City," with its competing steeples piercing the night sky, lay still behind me. Below me stretched my shadow. Cast upon the roof, it tugged at my pants leg, begging me backward and pulling me down. The ironwork that held me had been fashioned some fifty years ago by local legend Philip Simmons. Now in his nineties, his work had become the Charleston rave and was very much in demand. The crow's nest, having ridden out the storm, had come with the house. In the thirteen years we'd lived here, this nine square feet of perch had become the midnight platform from which I viewed the world. My singular and solitary escape. My cell phone vibrated in my pocket. I checked the screen and saw the Texas area code. "Hello?" "Doss Michaels?" "Speaking." "This is Anita Becker, assistant to Dr. Paul Virth." "Yes?" My breathing was short. So much hung on her next few words. She paused. "We wanted to call and . . ."--I knew it before she said it--". . . say that the oversight committee has met and decided on the parameters of the study. At this time, we're only accepting primary cases. Not secondary." The wind shifted and swiveled the squeaking vane. The rooster now pointed south. "Next year, if this study proceeds as we hope, we're planning on adding a study on secondary . . ." Either she faded off, or maybe I did. "We're sending a letter recommending Abbie for a study with Doctors Plist and Mackles out of Sloan-Kettering . . ." "Thank you . . . very much." I closed the phone. The problem with a Hail Mary pass is that it hangs in the air so long, and most are dropped in the end zone. That's why they invoke God. Because it's impossible to begin with. The phone rang a second time, but I let it ring. A minute passed and it rang again. I checked the faceplate. It read, "Dr. Ruddy." "Hey, Ruddy." "Doss." His voice was quiet. Subdued. I could see him, leaning over his desk, head resting in his hands. His chair squeaked. "The scan results are in. If you two could get around the speakerphone, thought maybe we'd talk through them." His tone of voice told me enough. "Ruddy, she's sleeping. Finally. Did that most of yesterday. Maybe you could just give them to me." He read

between the lines. "I'm with you." A pause. "Umm . . . they're uhh . . ." He choked. Ruddy had been our lead doctor since the beginning. "Doss, I'm sorry." We listened to each other listening to each other. "How long?" "A week. Maybe two. Longer if you can keep her horizontal . . . and still." I forced a laugh. "You know better than that." A deep breath. "Yep." I slid the phone back in my pocket and scratched my two-day stubble. My eyes stared out over the water, but my mind was a couple hundred miles away. Empty-handed and lungs half full, I climbed down and back through the window. Running my fingers along the trim tacked to the wall, I crept down another flight. The staircase was narrow, made of twelve-inch-wide pine planks, which at nearly two hundred years old, creaked loudly--tapping out a story of age and the drunken pirates who once stumbled down them. The sound lifted her eyelids, but I doubted she'd been asleep. Fighters don't sleep between rounds. A cross breeze slipped through the open windows and filtered across our room, raising goose bumps across her calves. Footsteps sounded downstairs, so I crossed the room, closed the bedroom door and returned. I sat next to her, slid the fleece blanket over her legs and leaned back against the headboard. She whispered, "How long have I been asleep?" I shrugged. "Yesterday?" "Almost." While we could manage the pain with medication, we couldn't deter its debilitating effects. She would lie still, motionless for hours, fighting an inner battle in which I played helpless spectator. Then for reasons neither of us could explain, she'd experience moments--sometimes even days--of total lucidity, when the pain would relent and she was as normal as ever. Then with little warning, it would return and she'd begin her own private battle once again. It is there that you learn the difference between tired and fatigued. Sleep cures tired, but it has no effect on fatigued. She smelled the air, catching the last remnants of aftershave that still hung in the air. I lifted the window. She raised an eyebrow. "He was here?" I stared out over the water. "Yup." "How'd that go?" "About like normal." "That good, huh? What is it this time?" "He's"--I lifted both hands in the air making quotation marks with my fingers--" 'moving you.' " She sat up. "Where?" More quotation marks. " 'Home.' " She shook her head and let out a deep breath that puffed up her cheeks like a blowfish. "For him, it's my mother all over again." I shrugged. "How'd you leave it?" "I didn't. He did." "And?" "He's sending over a team of people in the morning to . . . 'collect you.' " "He sounds like he's taking out the trash." She pointed at the phone. "Give it to me. I don't care if he is four heartbeats from the President." "Honey, I'm not letting him take you anywhere." I flicked a piece of paint off the windowsill. She listened to the sound of footsteps downstairs. "Shift change?" I nodded, watching a barge slowly putter up the Ashley. "Don't tell me he talked to them, too." "Oh, yeah. Really put everybody at ease. Basically read them the riot act disguised as an 'attaboy.' I just love the way he gives you what he wants you to have under the pretense of your best interest." I shook my head. "Sleight-of-hand manipulation." She wrapped her leg around mine, using it as leverage to push her head up, allowing her eyes to meet mine. The once fit thighs now gave way to bony knees, thin veins and sticklike shins. Her left hipbone, the once voluptuous peak of the hourglass, pointed up through her gown, which hung loosely over the skin. After four years, her skin was nearly translucent--a faded sun-drenched canvas. Now it hung across her collarbone like a clothesline. The shuffling downstairs faded into the kitchen. She stared at the floor. "They're good people. They do this every day. We've only got to do it once." "Yeah . . . and once is enough." Our bed was one of those old, four-poster, Southern things that Southern women go gaga over. Dark mahogany, it stood about four feet off the ground, was bookended by steps on either side and Lord help you if you rolled off it at night. There were two advantages: Abbie slept there, and when I laid on my side, my line of sight was above the windowsill, giving me a view of Charleston Harbor. She stared out the window where all the world rolled out as a map, the green and red channel lights blinking back. Red right return. She slid her fingers into mine. "How's she look up there?" I loosened the scarf and let it fall down across her shoulders. "Beautiful." She rolled toward me, placed her head on my chest and ran her fingers inside my button-down where both . . . Revue de presse Lovers of love stories, get ready to cry you a River. USA TODAY This tale is a pleasure to read because it eloquently pictures unquestioning, steadfast love. Fayetteville Observer From the Trade Paperback edition.