



The Tender Bar: A Memoir

J. R. Moehringer

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The *New York Times* bestseller and one of the 100 Most Notable Books of 2005. In the tradition of *This Boy's Life* and *The Liar's Club*, a raucous, poignant, luminously written memoir about a boy striving to become a man, and his romance with a bar. J.R. Moehringer grew up captivated by a voice. It was the voice of his father, a New York City disc jockey who vanished before J.R. spoke his first word. Sitting on the stoop, pressing an ear to the radio, J.R. would strain to hear in that plummy baritone the secrets of masculinity and identity. Though J.R.'s mother was his world, his rock, he craved something more, something faintly and hauntingly audible only in The Voice. At eight years old, suddenly unable to find The Voice on the radio, J.R. turned in desperation to the bar on the corner, where he found a rousing chorus of new voices. The alphas along the bar--including J.R.'s Uncle Charlie, a Humphrey Bogart look-alike; Colt, a Yogi Berra sound-alike; and Joey D, a softhearted brawler--took J.R. to the beach, to ballgames, and ultimately into their circle. They taught J.R., tended him, and provided a kind of fathering-by-committee. Torn between the stirring example of his mother and the lurid romance of the bar, J.R. tried to forge a self somewhere in the center. But when it was time for J.R. to leave home, the bar became an increasingly seductive sanctuary, a place to return and regroup during his picaresque journeys. Time and again the bar offered shelter from failure, rejection, heartbreak--and eventually from reality. In the grand tradition of landmark memoirs, *The Tender Bar* is suspenseful, wrenching, and achingly funny. A classic American story of self-invention and escape, of the fierce love between a single mother and an only son, it's also a moving portrait of one boy's struggle to become a man, and an unforgettable depiction of how men remain, at heart, lost boys.

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Nellie Kim:

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Dana Vinson:

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