

The American West is no safe haven for women—least of all in the Gold Rush town of Coloma, California. Not for Clara Tice, the blacksmith's strange and stubborn daughter. Not for Mei, the healer whose calm presence in the makeshift camp for Chinese immigrants contrasts sharply with her brother's hard-eyed pursuit of riches. And certainly not for Haloke, a Nisenan shaman's granddaughter whose native village has been devastated by smallpox, hunger, and the relentless greed of Outsiders.

One night, Clara and Haloke meet at the river's edge and watch in horror as Clementine Cobbs, the town beauty, is lured across the water. Together they witness something terrible in the Night Pool. Soon after, an unseen attacker descends upon the mining men of Coloma, abandoning heartless bodies one by one. As the gruesome killings in Coloma threaten to incite further violence, Clara, Haloke, and Mei find themselves unlikely allies—without the gangs, guns, or bravado of the men who claim Coloma's riches. The three women must work together to confront the evil that menaces them from both monsters and men.

The Night Pool is a gripping tale of sisterhood, vengeance, survival, and the hidden strength of the vulnerable among us.

Lauren Lee Smith was born and raised in rural Northern California Gold Country on Nisenan land, surrounded by remnants of forgotten history like pioneer cemeteries, abandoned gold mines, indigenous grinding rocks, and, of course, the powerful river and its many tributaries. As a mother, mental health advocate, and history lover, her work often explores maternal mental health, trauma, male brutality, and the historical intersections of diverse cultures through the lens of feminist horror. She now lives by the sea in Southern California with her family and a herd of dogs and cats. She enjoys trying to grow old-fashioned roses in the balmy climate and writing novels and screenplays that confront the darker, more taboo elements of the feminine experience. *The Night Pool* is the first of many novels to come.

Read by DeLanna Studi and Emily Ellet

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THE NIGHT POOL



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