



Rabea Edel  
**The Water We Sleep In**  
[Das Wasser, in dem wir schlafen]  
Novel

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After their mother has left the family, two sisters each conspire to try to be braver, cleverer, and more desirable than the other. They provoke each other, create awkward situations for each other to overcome. When they fall in love with the same man, their game turns into deadly serious competition.

"My sister was conceived at a highway rest area between two half-harvested wheat fields, under the telephone lines heavy with birds, the handbrake leaving a red mark on my mother's back, which still showed through her blouse days later and for a week before going to bed she rubbed with coldcream, when my father came much too quickly and with open eyes and the handbrake released, the car rolling a few yards before it hit a tree, smashing the radiator."

Ever since that afternoon, the lives of every family member took a new direction. After the mother endured her pregnancy, she was unable to find her way back into the family. During this time, both girls were already quietly involved in their first competition. One would celebrate a victory over the other when she thought she was more in her mother's confidence of. After the mother finally left the family for good, their battles became more public. When the older one met a man, the game escalated to the level of who was dominant and who could keep the other down. The older sister was involved with Gregor more merely out of curiosity. Lina, on the other hand, appeared to be truly in love. What ensued would be a struggle with tragic consequences. The

Water We Sleep In is a prose debut which, through its poetic craft, will have readers under its spell. Rabea Edel, 22 years old, is able to portray emotions with a precise sense of extent and degree and to capture these in stunning images that are absolutely true to reality. She is a master of the give-and-take of the changing and changeable moods between lovers, and readers come to be as accomplices of both women. Seldom in German literature of recent years has a young author been capable of writing more strongly than this.