



# Cleaving: The Story of a Marriage

*Dennis Covington, Vicki Covington*

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## **Cleaving: The Story of a Marriage** Dennis Covington, Vicki Covington

"Marriage is like a rain forest," Vicki Covington writes in *Cleaving*. "The story of a marriage contains all that grows in the canopy, all that is visible from an aerial, or public, view. The understory of a marriage is the place where . . . we struggle, fight, and conceive. It's the place where compost is made, where anything can grow, including forgiveness." Told in the authors' alternating voices, *Cleaving* is both the story and the understory of a marriage.

Childhood acquaintances, Vicki and Dennis meet again in their twenties and wed. they "promise each other nothing" and get more than they'd bargained for: alcoholism, infidelity, infertility, uncertainty. tumult gives way to sobriety, parenthood, and meaningful work, but a yearning remains. In a quest to root themselves in the larger world, they embark on a mission to dig water wells in Central America, assuaging a spiritual thirst by addressing a practical need. Yet even this is part of the story-the visible, overarching canopy-of the marriage. The understory-and the triumph of this haunting book, which is neither sentimental nor cynical-is its portrayal of the eddying of passion through the institution that enshrines but cannot contain it.

A soulful and unsparing portrait of the forces that threaten-and sustain-a relationship over time.

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