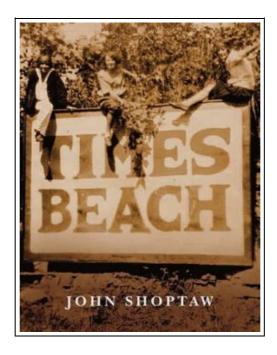
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University of Notre Dame Press. Paperback. Condition: New. 144 pages. Times Beach is a personal, cultural, and environmental history of the Mississippi watershed, a poetic meditation on how the river is ceaselessly shaped by, and shaping, the lives around it. John Shoptaw guides us from the Mississippis headwaters in Lake Itasca to its delta in the Gulf of Mexico, from its aboriginal mounds to its present-day dams and levees, weaving together episodes in the life of the riverthe New Madrid earthquakes of 1811 and 1812, the great floods of 1927 and 2010, the EPAs eradication of the dioxin-laced town of Times Beachwith his own memories of growing up in the part of southeast Missouri known as the Bootheel. A pivotal place in Times Beach is Shoptaws home county of New Madrid, a hardwood floodplain of the Lower Mississippi that, over time, has been drained, logged, and farmed. Still muggy and earthquake prone, Swampeast Misery is the poets autobiographical landscape where he picked cotton, was baptized in a drainage ditch, and worked in the lumber mill. It is also the place his education let him escape, delivering him to a life far away from the swampland to which these poems return. Through the overarching metaphor of correction, Shoptaw associates this educationteaching his dialectal tongue how to talk and write correctlywith the straightening and regulating of the river by the Army Corps of Engineers. While informed by his education, Shoptaws poems regularly erode and evolve their traditional forms. In Blues Haiku, he crosses the syllabic haiku with the accentual blues tercet; in Itasca, he parodies Longfellows learned Hiawatha; in Shuffle, he delivers an outsized variation on the sestina; and, in Heebie Jeebies, he creates a jazzed rendition of a Miltonic masque. Delightful in its formal invention and informed by an ecopoetic urgency,...

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