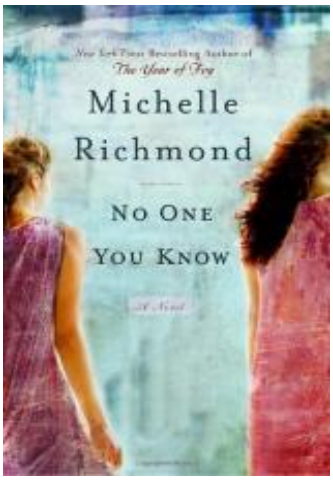
No One You Know

by Michelle Richmond



About the Book

Michelle Richmond dazzled readers and critics alike with her luminous novel **The Year of Fog**. Now Richmond returns with an intensely emotional, multilayered family drama --- a woman?s search for her sister?s killer that spirals into a journey of secrets, revelations, and damaged lives.

All her life Ellie Enderlin had been known as Lila?s sister. Until one day, without warning, the shape of their family changed forever. Twenty years ago, Lila, a top math student at Stanford, was murdered in a crime that was never solved. In the aftermath of her sister?s death, Ellie entrusted her most intimate feelings to a man who turned the story into a bestselling true crime book --- a book that both devastated her family and identified one of Lila?s professors as the killer.

Decades later, two Americans meet in a remote village in Nicaragua. Ellie is now a professional coffee buyer, an inveterate traveler and incapable of trust. Peter is a ruined academic. And their meeting is not by chance. As rain beats down on the steaming rooftops of the village, Peter leaves Ellie with a gift --- the notebook that Lila carried everywhere, a piece of evidence not found with her body. Stunned, Ellie will return home to San Francisco to explore the mysteries of Lila?s notebook, filled with mathematical equations, and begin a search that has been waiting for her all these years. It will lead her to a hundred-year-old mathematical puzzle, to a lover no one knew Lila had, to the motives and fate of the man who profited from their family?s anguish --- and to the deepest secrets even sisters keep from each other. As she connects with people whose lives unknowingly swirled around her own, Ellie will confront a series of startling revelations --- from the eloquent truths of numbers to confessions of love, pain and loss.

A novel about the stories and lies that strangers, lovers and families tell --- and the secrets we keep even from ourselves --- Michelle Richmond?s new novel is a work of astonishing depth and beauty, at once heartbreaking, provocative, and impossible to put down.

Discussion Guide

1. How did Ellie?s storytelling voice enhance your reading? How might the novel have unfolded if it had been told from Peter McConnell?s point of view, or even Lila?s?

2. The title **No One You Know** captures the quest to find Lila?s killer, but it also describes the secrets Lila kept from Ellie. Discuss the relationship between the sisters. In what way did they know each other well? In what ways were they very different? In your family, do siblings tend to be close or distant?

3. How did your opinion of Andrew Thorpe and Peter McConnell shift throughout the novel? When did you trust each of them the most, and the least?

4. Why was Lila drawn to mathematics? What did it mean to her? What life philosophies did it provide? How did she fit into a community of mostly male math scholars?

5. What lay at the heart of Henry?s breakup with Ellie? How were her relationships affected by her sister, even when she was a teenager?

6. Were Thorpe?s books inappropriate? What is the nature of true-crime books? Do they sensationalize and fabricate, or can they reveal important truths?

7. Chapter ten describes the distinctions between conjecture and proof. How did these concepts, along with the quotation from Pascal at the beginning of the novel, echo throughout Lila?s story? What did the Goldbach Conjecture represent to Lila and Peter? How might the word ?proof? carry a different meaning to a mathematician than to a ?regular person??

8. At the end of chapter twenty-nine, Ellie says that she had always thought of her sister as blameless. Was Lila blameless in her affair with Peter?

9. Discuss Billy Boudreaux and his music. Ultimately, who was he, and how did he perceive himself? What were his greatest strengths and vulnerabilities?

10. In what ways did the coffee trade give Ellie a soothing way to escape the tragedies of her life? Why was she so well suited for the cupping process?

11. How do the two landscapes, Central America and San Francisco, affect the tone and mood of the novel? What aspects of Ellie?s personality are captured in both locales?

12. Which character did you most suspect of being Lila?s killer? When the truth about her death was revealed, how did you react? How was Ellie?s family affected by so many years of not knowing? Would her parents have stayed together if they had not been forced to live in the shadow of the unknown?

13. What did you think of Thorpe?s advice about how to tell a good story? In what ways does Michelle Richmond defy Thorpe?s approach? What is meant by the novel?s closing lines, asserting that stories belong to listeners and authors in equal measure?

14. Both this novel and Richmond?s most recent work, **The Year of Fog**, portray families coping with tragedy. How is San Francisco used as a character in each novel? How does Richmond use mystery and the unknown to portray a character?s strength and grace?

Author Bio

Michelle Richmond is the *New York Times* bestselling author of seven novels and story collections, including THE MARRIAGE PACT, GOLDEN STATE, THE YEAR OF FOG and HUM. She received the Truman Capote Prize for Alabama?s Distinguished Writer of the Short Story. Her books have been published in 30 languages. She lives with her husband and son in Northern California.

Critical Praise

"Beautifully written."

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