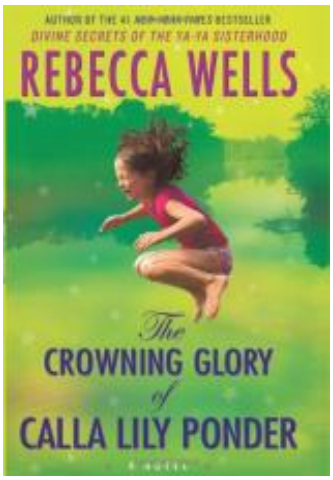
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The Crowning Glory of Calla Lily Ponder

by Rebecca Wells



About the Book

When small town Louisiana girl Calla Lily Ponder encounters sweet, sexy, succulent love on the banks of the La Luna River, she thinks her future with Tuck LeBlanc is a given. But when he disappears into the Ivy League world which she will never be a part of, she must make her own way. Using the gifts of healing, which her mother gave her, Calla leaves the familiarity of her hometown and heads to the untamed city of New Orleans, where love and adventure and beauty school help her magical destiny unfold.

A shining new stand-alone novel with an entirely new cast of characters from #1 *New York Times* bestselling *Ya-Ya* author Rebecca Wells, illuminates the pull of first love, the power of life, and the human heart?s capacity for healing.

Discussion Guide

1. Wells lives in Seattle now, but Louisiana is clearly still vivid in her life and work. Talk about Wells? fictional Louisiana, and how the setting of La Luna expands that growing landscape.

2. The natural world plays a major role in this story: the La Luna River and the Moon Lady are as fully realized and important as any of the human characters. Talk about how Wells is able to weave together the mystical and the ordinary. Why do you think this works?

3. The Crowning Glory of Calla Lily Ponder is a standalone novel, in which Rebecca Wells introduces a brand new character, Calla Lily Ponder. Wells has referred to this new book as a ?spiritual cousin? to her Ya-Ya books. How do you think it relates to Wells? previous works?

4. Wells has long been praised for her ability to write honestly and movingly about family, friendship, and love--all important themes in this new book. How did she approach them differently (or similarly) to tell Calla's story --- starting

with the fact that there is one very central character here?

5. Wells? previous books have dealt extensively with the idea of sisterhood. This new novel depicts female friendships across racial, generational, and socio-economic lines. Talk about Calla?s ?sisters,? and how each one provides different kinds of support for her emotional journey.

6. Wells has observed that in mythology, legend, and even in present time, hair symbolizes the soul. Hair plays a large role in Calla?s life. What does ?crowning glory? mean in this story? Why is it such a touchstone for Calla throughout her life, especially when paired with her memories of her childhood? What does the book?s title signify to you?

7. From her mother, Calla inherits ?healing hands,? the power to not only beautify a woman?s exterior but also to connect with and mend the emotional turmoil underneath. Why isn?t it until her adult life in New Orleans that Calla is fully able to appreciate her gift?

8. Think about some of the unbreakable bonds Calla has in her life: with M?Dear, with Sukie. Talk about the Moon Lady?s influence as a guiding force throughout Calla?s life. Is it just as strong or even stronger than Calla?s human relationships?

9. Over the course of the book, Calla experiences first love and then, later, a more mature love. How do the men in her life reflect both her essential nature and her growth? Talk about Wells? ability to depict male characters in this story.

10. Calla goes through heartbreak and loss throughout this story, but she manages to find inspiration through tragedy. How is she able to do this? Is this a strength she was born with?

11. What do you imagine might happen between Calla Lily and Tuck the day/week/month after they drink that cup of coffee together?

Author Bio

Rebecca Wells, actress, playwright, and *New York Times* bestselling author of DIVINE SECRETS OF THE YA-YA SISTERHOOD, LITTLE ALTARS EVERYWHERE, YA-YAS IN BLOOM, and THE CROWNING GLORY OF CALLA LILY PONDER was born in Louisiana.

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After college, Wells later moved to New York City to pursue her acting career and began studying the Stanislavski method of acting, as well as a depth approach that integrates spirituality and performance with Maurine Holbert. "I live in an actor's body, in which the cultivation of sense memory, active listening, and the belief that the sublime can arise out of the most common character, word, or gesture is somewhat of a religion for me," she says.

Wells's commitment was not only to the stage, but to peace and social justice as well. In 1982 she went to Seattle, Washington, where she performed at numerous professional theaters. She also founded a chapter of Performing Artists

for Nuclear Disarmament. Charmed by the beauty and grace of The Great Northwest, she decided to make it her home.

Her writing, however, resides in the heart of Louisiana. While many fans assume her work is autobiographical, Wells maintains that her stories are just that --- stories. "I grew up in the fertile world of storytelling, filled with flamboyance, flirting, futility, and fear. My work, though, is a result of my imagination dancing a kind of psycho-spiritual tango with my own history, and the final harvest is fiction, not memoir." LITTLE ALTARS EVERYWHERE, which won the Western States Book Award and was a *New York Times* bestseller, and DIVINE SECRETS OF THE YA-YA SISTERHOOD, a #1 *New York Times* bestseller and winner of the 1999 Adult Trade ABBY Award, have given Wells a dominant place in American literature.

She lives in Washington State with her husband and her King Charles Cavalier Spaniel, who is named Mercy. As Wells is fond of saying, "Dogs always remind me why the word *God* is *dog* spelled backward."

Critical Praise

"Wells returns with a preciously sentimental stand-alone novel that once again pays homage to the quirky Southern female.... Calla Lily Ponder is every bit as affable as her name suggests.... Expect high demand from loyal Ya-Yas fans, who have eagerly awaited a new work from Wells."

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