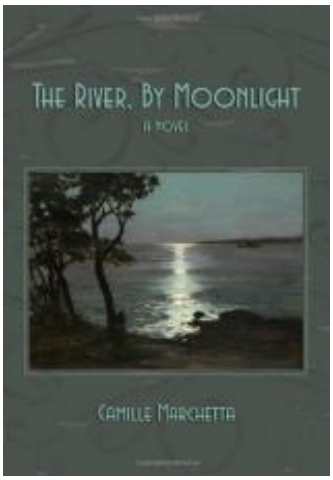
# The River, By Moonlight

by Camille Marchetta




## About the Book

On a rainy night in 1917, a passing vagrant sees a young woman fall (or is it jump?) into New York City?s Hudson River. He tries to save her, but fails. The police tentatively identify the woman as Lily Canning, twenty-five years old, from Minuit, a town in the Hudson Valley.

But is it Lily? The question torments her mother, Henrietta, as she awaits confirmation. And when it comes, even more anguishing questions arise, for neither accident nor suicide makes sense. Lily could swim like a fish, and with her looks, and wealth, and talent, with an exhibition of her paintings about to open at a prestigious New York gallery, she had everything to live for.

In the days following her death, her heartbroken mother, her estranged husband, Edmund, her family, her friends, even the servant girl, Nuala, try to unravel Lily?s secrets and to come to terms with the devastating consequences of her loss on their own lives.

Set in New York City and the Hudson River Valley, when the country was poised on the brink of the First World War, **The River, By Moonlight** is a vivid evocation of time and place, and a poignant portrayal of what happens when individual actions and national events collide.

Above all, it is a deeply moving study of grief and despair, of the resilience of human nature, and the triumph of determination and hope.

**The River, By Moonlight** placed in the 2008 Eric Hoffer Award for Books in the category of General Fiction.

## Discussion Guide

**1.** In the introductory pages of the book, a few lines of poetry are quoted. These are from Alfred Lord Tennyson?s "The Lady of Shalott". Why did the author choose these lines? Is there a thematic relationship between the poem and the book?

**2.** The novel is set in 1917, at the start of the First World War. Is this period crucial to the novel's themes or would its story have worked just as well in another era? If so, when?

**3.** Although written in the third person, each of the book's chapters is told from the point of view of one of the characters. Why do you think the author chose this structure? In your opinion, does it add anything to the novel or would a more straight forward narrative have worked better?

**4.** Erich Roeder, a family friend, is the only one who seems to know of Titus Canning's secret life. Do you think any of the other characters suspect the truth? Does his wife, Henrietta? She says of herself that she's not one to think the worst unless she must. Do you think this is foolish of her, or only sensible?

**5.** As different as they apparently are, Dr. Roeder and Edmund Farel have similar political views. In what ways do their views coincide? Do any of the other characters feel as they do? Do their views have any relevance in today's world?

**6.** They were best friends all their lives; still, Rosaline's relationship with Lily seems almost too good to be true, with little or no friction. Is this possible, or is Rosaline deluding herself? Is her desire to destroy Lily's painting as well-intentioned as she thinks it is? Does any good come out of her deciding not to?

**7.** It is obvious that Florence feels almost totally unloved. Is she? And how does this feeling affect her relationships with other people?

**8.** Nuala believes that, given time, Louis would have come to love her sister, Deirdre, and that the two would have married and lived happily ever after. Do you think this would have been possible, given the difference in their circumstances, or is the idea just a reflection of Nuala's essentially optimistic nature?

**9.** Teddy has very mixed reactions to Lily's work. Do you think he can judge her talent objectively? Or is his vision obscured by other emotions?

**10.** Although it's hard to resist blaming Edmund, he does make a case against Lily for contributing to the failure of their relationship: her selfishness, her inflexibility, her inability to adapt herself to his needs. Do you think his complaints are in any way justified?

**11.** All of Lily's family and friends, in one way or another, hold Edmund responsible for her breakdown and death. Do you think he is? And, if so, in what way?

**12.** Lily had everything to live for, so everyone says. Even Lily seems aware of how much she has to be grateful for. Why then was she in such despair about her life?

**13.** Her cousin, Louis, is convinced that he could have saved Lily. Do you think that's true? Could anyone have saved her?

**14.** Rosaline believes that Lily's death has had a profound effect on the lives of all who were close to her. Do you agree?

**15.** While Lily's depression blighted her life, Nuala, who had none of Lily's advantages, by the end of the novel, has made a great success of hers. How do you account for this difference?

## Author Bio

Born in Brooklyn, Camille Marchetta received her BA in English Literature from the College of New Rochelle, in Westchester County, New York, and later studied fiction with noted writer Anatole Broyard at The New School in New York City. Shortly afterward, on a visit to England, she fell in love with the country, decided to stay, and was fortunate enough to find work with Richard Hatton Limited, a theatrical and literary agency, in a few years becoming a literary director of the company.

The agency was small but powerful, its client list including well-known writers, directors, and actors such as Sean Connery, Malcolm McDowell, and Leo McKern. Among the writers with whom Ms. Marchetta worked were Robert Shaw, author of many award-winning novels and plays (though he is best known in the United States for his acting performances in *To Russia With Love* and *Jaws*); the playwright Richard Harris, whose *Stepping Out*appeared on Broadway; and Anthony Shaffer, who wrote *Sleuth*, a hit in the West End, on Broadway, and as a feature film.

Returning to the States, Ms. Marchetta went to Hollywood, found herself an agent, and eventually got an assignment on the ?Dallas? mini-series. Asked to join the staff, she remained until the series soared to the top of the ratings. With that, her career in television was established. She wrote television movies, pilots for new series, produced ?Nurse,? which won Michael Learned an Emmy, and ?Dynasty? in the season it finally crept past ?Dallas? in the ratings and reached number one.

In 1985, Ms. Marchetta took a sabbatical from television, returned to London, and, fulfilling a lifetime ambition, wrote her first novel, **Lovers and Friends**, which was published in the United States in 1989 and subsequently in England, Finland, Sweden, and Germany. Following its publication, Ms. Marchetta co-executive-produced *Falcon Crest*, co-authored two best-selling novels with Ivana Trump, and worked as a story consultant on the television series, ?Central Park West.? St. Martin's Press published her second novel,**The Wives of Frankie Ferraro**, in 1998. **The River By Moonlight** is her most recent book.

## Critical Praise

"The language in this book is beautifully crafted, the imagery is rich and evocative. I highly recommend it to anyone who loves to examine characters thoroughly and come to know them from the inside out. This author can really write."

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