



The Slow Moon

Elizabeth Cox

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On an early spring night in 1991, Sophie and Crow, flushed with anticipation, slip away from a rowdy high school party and sneak off into the woods. Tonight, for the first time, they will make love. An hour later, Sophie lies unconscious, covered with blood, and Crow is crashing through the underbrush, hurling himself into the river to escape the police. . . .

What was meant to be an idyllic, intimate evening has turned into a nightmare. Despite Crow's frantic claims of innocence, evidence at the scene suggests his guilt. And Sophie, by now awake in the hospital, refuses to speak, leaving the residents of the couple's seemingly placid Tennessee town to draw their own wildly varying conclusions.

If Crow isn't to blame, then who assaulted Sophie, and what compelled Crow to flee? With each answer comes a new set of questions. Elizabeth Cox's vibrant and lyrical narrative revisits the events leading up to the fateful night, then shows how the tragedy reverberates throughout the community, among parents, friends, teachers, and neighbors—all connected to the young lovers, all with a stake in what happens next. As growing suspicions divide the town, a closer look reveals that everyone has something to hide.

A compelling and passionate page-turner, *The Slow Moon* waxes full with suspense, a haunting story of innocence lost, lives betrayed, and the courage required to face the truth.

From the Hardcover edition.

The Slow Moon Details

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From Reader Review The Slow Moon for online ebook

Kim says

Reading this book was painful. There were too many people to keep track of, and I did not care about any of them. I found the writing disjunct, and told from too many points of view. I could not WAIT for the book to end.

Sara says

This was basically one of the worst books I have ever read, ever. It was like being in a creative writing class in college and having to read your peers' pretentious attempts at "deep" and "profound" fiction. The town that the story is based in appears to be full of crazy people obsessed with the weather and other elements of nature. No one has any kind of reactions to anything that seems logical in the real world...literally every character acts like they're under water. There are lots of phrases like these gems from the points of view of boys who are, I don't know, sixteenish:

"Then the light unhinged sideways down the room, and it was gone. It was gone."

and

"Tom thought he could feel the weight of the moonlight on his arms and legs, a heaviness working over his body like quicksilver."

What. What teenage boy actually thinks like that?

Then there's the main story. It SOUNDS interesting, but it unfolds so unrealistically that I could barely even care about its resolution...and neither, apparently, could anyone that it was actually happening to. The plot sounds a little akin to a Jodi Picoult novel; according to the cover, Jodi Picoult actually "found herself pausing over the beauty of this book," which I think is code for "could barely force herself to finish a paragraph, let alone the entirety of the novel." I, too, found myself pausing multiple times whilst reading The Slow Moon, though in my case, it was to save the integrity of my teeth, which are surely worn to nubs from grinding them throughout the entirety of the book.

In Cox's defense, she does have a beautiful way with words and some quite lovely turns of phrases. I just wish she'd put them to better use.

To add insult to injury, the dog my family is fostering used this (library) book as a chew toy this morning. At least SOMEONE found something interesting about The Slow Moon.

Reem Reeding says

I enjoyed this book as a welcome distraction from my life at the moment. It's very beautifully written, with a sort of sense that as you read about each character it seems that the character is the most important one, the

one the book is really about.

The story centres around a girl that gets attacked, and her boyfriend gets accused and arrested when she can't remember what happened. It's set in a small town, where everyone knows each other, but they actually don't, if you know what I mean. It reminded me of Twin Peaks, where everybody's got a secret, and the story looks like your classic 'whodunnit'. Where this story differs though, is that it offers real depth into the hearts of the characters, what they want with their lives, and how the attack of the girl gets them all inspired, so to speak, to tell the truth about who they are and what they want from life.

Stephanie says

The plot of this book is interesting and with better writing, character depth, and more meat to the plot it would have been an excellent read. This was a quick read due to the basic level of writing. At first, I thought it was written for teens but a few pages in there was a graphic sex scene so then I realized that it wasn't. The author does not transition into other story lines well and sometimes I found it confusing and had to re-read just to figure out who I was reading about. Many of the stories were semi-random and almost didn't fit into the movement of the book. There were also bizarre racial references that were almost awkward to read throughout the book. Race was not really a running story in the book so the two or three sentences that contained something about a character being black were out of place. Lastly, there were too many metaphors and most seemed almost forced. A lot of the metaphors didn't necessarily fit and flow with the text. Overall, I suppose I didn't hate the book. I was interested to see how everything turned out with all involved. In the end I was disappointed that loose ends with many characters were not tied up. It seems as though the author was trying to allow the reader to infer what happened to the characters but with the basic writing and weak story development it just didn't happen. I don't know that I would read more of this author's work. Just not my cup of tea :)

Madi Mayor says

SPOILER

The Slow Moon was filled with drama in between the anticipation for the result of the main conflict: who raped Sophie? Although it could get confusing with each chapter being from a different character's point of view, I liked how each character had their own drama. I liked how even though each character was affected by the trial of who raped Sophie, they had their own issues too and it gave it more of a realistic feel. The group of boys that raped Sophie had their own problems too: one questioning his sexuality, another abandoned by his father at a young age. The mother of the accused boyfriend, Crow, even had her own drama; her husband cheating on her with her sister. I think these aside conflicts really made the book more interesting, and left you wanting resolutions for each character. Sophie could not remember whether or not Crow had raped her or not, and that frustrated me because Crow was a good guy throughout the whole book. Other than my personal frustration, I thought the book was pretty interesting.

The majority of the book had informal and ordinary diction and I believe it was meant more for the teenage and young adult crowd. With each character's drama, there was also a lot of emotional diction. Elizabeth Cox used a lot of loose, parallel, and periodic syntax throughout each narration. She used literary devices like similes and personification.

The overall message of The Slow Moon is that no matter what is going on, everyone has their own issues.

And with the group of boys that rape Sophie, sometimes violence results from these issues. Although something big can be going on, no one forgets about their own problems.

Fernanda says

This book caught my attention in a very strong way. I usually never read about books rape, but this one was different. With this novel, I got to see a whole new and dark side a small town lives in. I got to see that people let on a very different image that what they are really going thorough. It reveals of the dark secrets, and explains how that leads to the young girl who was raped by her own “happy and safe” community. I recommend this book to all of my friends since it does make you open your eyes. It makes you really analyze situations when feeling a little bit weird. It was very sad, but still very bright. Books don't usually go back in time and explain every one of the characters, they just hit the point. This one was very different because it did do all of that. BY doing so, we could all see that people can be deceiving.

Karessa says

****SPOILERS INCLUDED****

This is quite possibly one of the worst books I have read lately. The writing is awful, the mystery absent, and the dialogue unbelievable. My real issue with this story and its characters is the absence of any real emotion. Girl gets violently gang-raped - very little emotional damage displayed; wife knows husband has been cheating on her with her sister for 12 years - nothing; boy finds out his father is not his biological father by walking in on a conversation - nothing, not even a word; boy runs off after having confusing gay thoughts - when found no explanation of why he ran off; 3 boys are hauled off to prison in prison bus while a teacher and HS Coach (who happens to be in a relationship with the victim's mother) are there to offer support - WHAT?!?!; lastly victim says to rapist I want you to turn yourself in because I don't want to go there another trial and he DOES?! Also his 2 friends that also raped her (one only pretended to rape her so his friends wouldn't figure out he was gay) gladly turned themselves in also. I was thankful when I finished this book and wish I would have given up on it much earlier.

Dan says

This book is a quick and interesting read. One night in the woods, fourteen-year-old Sophie is brutally attacked by more than one man. She may not have seen the attackers well, or at all, but in any case, she can't remember. Her boyfriend, Crow, is charged with the crime. Readers know he is innocent but for the first half of the book, most of the suspense is built on the question whether Crow will be convicted. In the second half of the book much of the suspense arises from uncertainty about who the guilty attackers might be, whether they can be convicted and the awful consequences to Sophie if they are charged and defend themselves. Will Sophie remember? More importantly, will she be able to heal? Meantime, parents and other teenagers have their own problems.

Cox has plenty of sympathy for the difficulties of both the teenagers and the parents who must worry about them. Almost all the main characters except for a couple of men who seem genuinely devoted to the well-being of teenagers in trouble, are guilty of some kind of transgressions, or think they are. So eventually the

question of forgiveness arises, over and over with different characters, and then the question of the forgiver's own unintended complicity in the wrong or her failure to deal with it adequately.

Cox often displays actions and incidents beautifully, especially those of the teenagers. There are a number of teen-aged boys, but Cox manages to delineate most of them well, so Bobby stands out from Lester, and Crow is different from his brother and from Tom, even though they are friends doing similar things. So the writing often captures you and there is plenty going on—damage, attempted healing, betrayal, attempted justice. And forgiveness. Who can you forgive? Who must you forgive? And what things, if any, are unforgivable?

Maybe it's as much confession as observation about the book: in spite of big themes and much suspense, I seldom felt close to the characters—a confession if it is I who kept a distance, an observation if it is Cox who held me at arms' length. I'm not sure which it is.

Cox writes beautifully and in a well-structured story. Yet, little stylistic things, I think, conspired with whatever my limitations were to hold me at a certain distance. Not that any one of them mattered to my response but these things added up. Here are fairly representative examples, mostly in summary form:

- Sometimes Cox' comments about the internal life of her characters seems not to grow organically out of immediate experience of the characters but to be launched from outside them, as comments by the author.
- A certain amount of the story is delivered in narrative summary, not in a scene where the characters are seen doing or thinking or feeling. “[H:]e had poured his love and care, his attention onto his students—” That's the summary without a scene. Here's the author's comment: “. . . a benefit for those who grew up in South Pittsburg.” (p. 52 of my paperback edition).
- Cox doesn't seem to have much patience with physical details of anything—details I suspect I needed to feel close, to envision characters in their physical beings, in their actions that reveal them. “[N:]ow, in bed, she felt the burden of the day.” In this statement about Helen, she has no connection to any physical detail—bed, yes, but not sheets, not softness, or lumpiness or anything that she might actually physically feel or observe, just the abstraction: the burden of the day. (p. 21). In the same paragraph, we learn she'd always loved the morning, she'd come alive at sunrise, feeling possibilities. But Cox doesn't present her looking at the sunlight, the shadows, the window frame, anything physical. No one has a face, a physical face.
- Cox seems to be sometimes there on the page, ready to point you in the right direction—a real interruption of any feeling I might have been developing for the character, especially when she loads her narrative with romantic terms. “Her heart struggled against the idea that Crow might be guilty....” Surely that intrusion was unnecessary. It's merely the author's annotation to what we experience more directly in the rest of the paragraph. “She prayed hard. . . . demanding that God let this go.”
- Relationships are clearly important in this book and in a way its about relationships, but none of the relationships seem intense in themselves or to generate lasting intensity. Bobby is frustrated when Sophie won't accept his attentions, but this passes quickly. Fair enough; teenage frustration is like that, but that just means it doesn't grab your interest, the Or take Sophie and her mother. They have a good relationship, but the mother's intensity about the assault on her daughter doesn't appear in a scene; we hear about that from others. And her conflict with Sophia, a tiny secret exposed, quickly disappears.
- Cox seems to be half sociologist and half fiction writer. She's in the head of everyone and knows their innermost thoughts, but what she tells us sometimes is collectivized, not about individuals. “[T:]he girls weren't sure if they wanted to like her.” (p. 116 of my edition). Maybe that would be less noticeable if we saw Sophie's response to the girls' attitude, but we don't even learn whether she caught it. There is a nice lyrical passage describing a group of boys diving and rising up in the river like dolphins, then the switch to describing thoughts attributed to the entire group: “They didn't want to think about the price it took to be men, wanting instead to be the blaze, the rage, the danger they thought were men.” (p. 172) I admired the insight and the writing, but it wasn't really about these individual boys but about boys as a category, some of whom happened to be playing dolphin-like. It was more of an outsider's intellectual observation than a sense

of how the boys felt, even as a group. I'm not worse off for having read this book or this passage; I'm just not able to get close the characters on a sustained basis through such observations.

– Along with grouping of characters, Cox offers some generalizations about people in general that seemed to push you away from feeling for individuals.

We love for weakness or strength...for security or wildness, for money, or beauty or sometimes for sadness. Whatever the reason, the brain turned giddy with self-worth, and self-worth became indelibly linked to the one who was loved.

Certainly these thoughts tell us something about the character, Aurelia, who's been unforgiving of her former husband, but they are presented in a philosophical form, and it doesn't tell us how Aurelia actually feels, much less about the interactions Robert and she shared. That's not the whole story of this quotation. The next paragraph goes on:

Then when that person does something outrageous, do we still love him? Do we move away, kill off the loved one, because we can't find ourselves anymore in the definition love provided?

That's Aurelia casting her doubts about her own attitude as a philosophical generality. So, by indirection and generality, we do come to the individual Aurelia. If the generality made it iffy for me, the next line spoiled it. "Aurelia had done just this," that is, she had just metaphorically "killed off" her loved one, as we already knew. But most importantly, what does Aurelia do now with her new realization? We aren't told or show. In fact, the next sentence is delivered in a dismissive passive voice that seems to distance us further from the real Aurelia. "A divorce agreement was drawn and signed." (p. 162).

– Characters sometimes seem to have almost no reaction to major changes in their lives. When Crow is found not guilty, his reaction is so subtle you could miss it. He must have felt many things besides a strained relationship with Sophie, but if so we are not privy to them. I liked the way reactions to things were often muted by displacement, but I wanted to sense the intensity more than I was able to.

– Sometimes Cox shifts from the mind of one character to the mind of another and back so quickly that our time in a character's mind doesn't seem very important; instead of a deepening I felt a dilution.

The younger characters put their own teenaged brand on foolishness, crime and misery; yes, parents generally worry and suffer for their children's well-being. But – this may be the real explanation for the distance I felt – I'm an old man and disinclined to conceptualize the crimes, errors, misery and pain of individuals as representative of something else besides crime, error, misery and pain.

Still, days after finishing the book, I do remember the characters and their troubles, some of their names. So, for me, it was a book worth reading. In fact, I'm curious enough to want more education in Cox's work. I have another of her novels on my shelf for reading in the near future.

Sheryl says

I stumbled across this one at a used book store. I decided I must read it because of Jodi Picoult's review on the cover...

"I found myself pausing over the beauty of this book, and wishing I'd been the one to think of it." ~ Jodi Picoult

Such quick and wonderful read! I loved it. True that it was pretty easy to figure out the "who done it" early

on, I still hung on every word weaved by Elizabeth Cox. What a great job she did in describing each of the characters and their histories. I felt like I knew them; as if I lived in their little community of South Pittsburgh, TN... Elizabeth also did a beautiful job describing the setting surrounding that area of Tennessee, too. Living only about 90 miles from South Pittsburgh, she described the scenery/setting and change of seasons that take place in this rural area of Tennessee perfectly.

This is the first book I have read by Elizabeth Cox, and definitely not the last!!

Deb says

This is one of the most poorly written books I have read...ever! I am literally putting this book in the garbage because I don't want to subject anyone else to it. Character development was poor, there were so many unrelated character plot lines. Who cares about the slutty aunt of one of the main characters????? It reminded me of a parody of a soap opera that the cast of Saturday Night Live might do. Fortunately it was a fast read and I didn't waste too much precious reading time on it. If I were a writing professor, I would use this book as an illustration of how not to write a novel.

Stephanie says

Boo. I really couldn't get into this one. This book is like the worst kind of chick lit. I thought the plot was terrible, the characters were flat, and I found the whole thing to be pretty unbelievable.

Christie says

Elizabeth Cox's novel *The Slow Moon* was a huge disappointment to me. I was really looking forward to reading it but it turned out to be really, really mediocre.

Central to the story is the relationship between Crow, 16, (the son of wealthy, well-respected parents) and Sophie, 14, (daughter of a widow). The story opens as they sneak off from a high school party to have some alone-time in the woods. Crow and Sophie really like each other and they have decided that they want to take their relationship to the next level. The next level requires condoms though, and Crow has forgotten those in his truck. He leaves Sophie alone to retrieve them and she is brutally attacked.

This rape isn't enough for Cox to make a meal on, however. So instead of giving us any real insight into how Sophie feels and how Crow, wrongfully accused, feels, she fills the novel with a bunch of stupid subplots: Crow's parents' cracked marriage, his father's infidelity, his mother's pre-marriage pregnancy (so the man who Crow thinks is his Dad, isn't his Dad.) Crow's best friends all have their own problems – one is trying to come to terms with the fact that he may be gay, another finds out the father he thought was dead is actually in prison.

And can I just say a word about the writing. What 14 and 16 year olds (loss of innocence notwithstanding) actually "like[d] examining the frailty of others." (294) The novel is filled with passages like this: "Another car went by, throwing light onto the walls and ceiling, and the light felt heavy, like a horse running fast into his room; the threat of being crushed came to his mind." (247) Um, what?

Jodi Picoult's endorsement on the front of the book says "I found myself pausing over the beauty of this book, and wishing I'd been the one to think of it." Jodi, honey, you did think of it and you wrote it and called it *The Tenth Circle*. That book is infinitely better.

Sue says

Loved this novel! Elizabeth Cox's writing is beautiful and poetic. Her storyline for this book was carefully constructed, and the tension and suspense made me want to finish this in one day. But I made myself slow down and savor this brilliant novel. I have read most of her other books, and I thought "The Slow Moon" was captivating.

Cindy Huffman says

I went on a quick reading rampage, after finishing *Tree of Smoke*, and devoured a book over the weekend.

It started off intriguing: two teenagers, off to "do it" for the first time, only to have a violent gang rape occur to the girl as the boyfriend leaves her alone for a few minutes to get a rubber. And then it happens: the boyfriend is accused and the girl can't remember a thing.

And all along it is known that he didn't do it with other boys. And throughout the story, it is pretty much revealed who were the culprits...even though the young girl cannot remember.

A lot of other story lines are entwined about several characters, including the parents of all mentioned in the book. I wasn't really captured by any of the characters. There were flaws in all of them but they were also made out to be better than the people they were. For instance, the young rape victim finally remembers and feels sorry for the men who did this to her. She faces them and they are all sorry for what they did.

And throughout, we are lead to believe that it was an act of randomness, due to drinking and pot. They really aren't those kinds of boys.

And successful parents are also flawed. But also very good. The boyfriend who was accused, well his parents were madly in love with one another, yet the father has been having an affair with his wife's sister for years...and is madly in love with her.

So I really couldn't feel for the characters and there were just too many ugly sides to each one that just made me feel nothing for them, the story, or the book. I couldn't comprehend why the title? And what was, if any, the moral to the story? I'm not saying every book needs a moral, but it needs a story and I couldn't figure out what this story and/or moral was about.

And at the back of the book, there is a section for "Questions for the Reader"...apparently, a book for Book Club selections. And one of the questions was something like, Why do you think the author quoted Alfred Lord Tennyson to open the story? And I thought, I have no earthly idea...

Rebecca McNutt says

I didn't hate *The Slow Moon*, nor did I really like it. This book is so generic and typical that nothing stands out about it at all whatsoever. I don't like books that have no originality.
