

Trembling River

Andrée A. Michaud

J. C. Sutcliffe

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In Andrée A. Michaud's compelling novel *Trembling River*, a woman returns to her hometown after thirty years, facing the ghosts of her childhood and exorcising her guilt.

Marnie returns to Rivière-aux-Tremble for her father's funeral. She hasn't been back since she was twelve years old and her best friend vanished in front of her. As Marnie wrestles with her memories, Bill—deep in mourning after his nine-year-old daughter, Billie, went missing a year prior—moves to Rivière-aux-Tremble, too, looking for a place to be alone with his grief. Alternating chapters ping-pong between Marnie and Bill's perspectives, which are consumed by their loved ones' disappearances. Their language is by turns lyrical and jarring: Marnie's point of view is often poetic; Bill's language is more acerbic and melodramatic. This dichotomy results in balance.

The novel's second half is more inward and slow. Marnie and Bill explore their emotions, and the novel is thorough in depicting their grievous mental states. Further, their parallel story lines begin to coalesce in interesting ways: in places where they just missed seeing each other; as they wear similar items of clothing; in the ways that their bodies move and react to those around them. This mirroring infuses a sense of mystery into the story just when it's needed, resulting in a through line and an entry into the book's final section, wherein Marnie and Bill are accused of involvement in yet another child's disappearance; they work to find ways out of their individual predicaments.

An intriguing dramaturgy, the literary novel *Trembling River* begins with a missing-persons riddle and develops into an exploration of sorrow and the ramifications of guilt on those left behind.

GERILEE MCBRIDE (January / February 2023)

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