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Lily at Lissadell

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Like Jacqueline Wilson, to whom she is frequently compared, Judi Curtin is increasingly drawn to setting her stories in the past, and that is the case in this her latest novel. It's 1913, and young Lily must leave school ? and her dreams of becoming a teacher herself ? to go and work as under housemaid at Lissadell House, the family home of the Gore-Booths. Life as the lowliest of the servants is hard: the hours are long, the work is exhausting and her fellow housemaid is distinctly frosty. On top of that, Lily is a long way from home and misses her mother, and little sisters and brothers very much. But, like many Curtin heroines, she's bright, caring, optimistic and, above all, resilient. Lily knows that with her in employment, the financial pressures on the family are eased, and there are advantages to living in the Big House ? not least, regular meals. As the story unfolds, Lily makes friends with Maeve, one of the young ladies of the house ? the real-life daughter of Constance Markievicz, who also plays a part in the story ? and that leads to breaks in the routine and some exciting adventures. Just as important, she wins the trust of her grumpy co-worker Nellie, and discovers truths about her life too.

For all its Upstairs, Downstairs setting, the accent is mostly on how much the people in the house have in common, and while Curtin skilfully creates a real sense of history ? the arrival of the motorcar, talk of what is happening beyond Lissadell and Lily's two room cottage home ? we care most about Lily; the drama, such as it is, comes not from historic events but the sense of her development, and of what she might go on to do. It's clear that Lily is living in an age on the brink of huge change, but the overall atmosphere is one of optimism and hope.

The three main characters ? Lily, Maeve and Nellie - are as lively a trio as you could hope to meet, characters that readers will believe in and care about. As we've come to expect from [Judi Curtin](#) [4], the story is full of charm and humour and this is a genuinely heart-warming read.

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