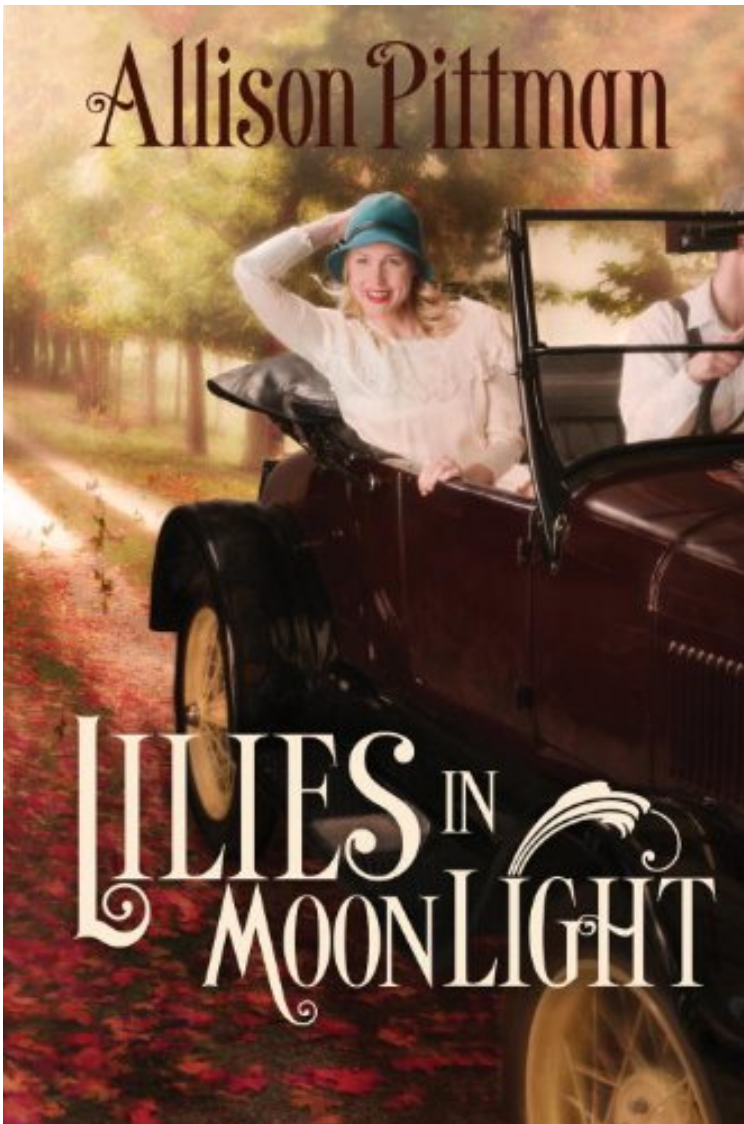


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Lilies in Moonlight: A Novel



Par Allison K. Pittman
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurHed lost his zest for life. She was just lost. Will they find the healing and love they long for? After a roaring night on the town, fun-loving flapper Lilly Margolis, dazed and disoriented, twists her ankle and falls into the backyard of a wealthy family where the effects of the Great Warover for more than half a decadeare still endured. Inside the walls of the Burnside mansion, Cullen Burnside, a disillusioned and disfigured veteran, and his widowed mother, Betty Ruth, who daily slips a little further into dementia, lead a lonely existence until Lilly. Whimsical, lighthearted, and beautiful, she rejuvenates their sad, disconnected lives and blossoms in the light of their attention.But Lilly, like Cullen, is hiding from a painful past. And when Cullen insists on returning her to her faraway home, their budding attraction seems destined to die on the vine. The resulting road trip becomes a journey of self-discoverybut what will Cullen

and Lilly find at journeys end? From the Trade Paperback edition. Extrait October 1925 Just ten o'clock in the morning, and already Lilly Margolis could feel the trickle of sweat sliding between her shoulder blades. Head up. Big smile, chin out, she silently rehearsed. Good morning, madam. Are you the lady of the house? Pause, two, three, four. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Lilly, Lilly Margolis. But Lilly's not just my name. It's also the name of the fabulous new body cream from Dalliance Cosmetics. Lilies in Moonlight. I use it myself. She held out her arm, focusing on the creamy silk of her skin against the dark wood of the door. Makes my skin smooth as silk and irresistible to the touch. At least that's what my boyfriend says. Wink, wink. She didn't really have a boyfriend, but every man who'd ever touched her said she felt like satin. Or cold milk. White and soft and pure. She, of course, didn't use Lilies in Moonlight body cream. She couldn't afford it. Nothing but Ivory soap from the five-and-dime and maybe a dab of Jergens lotion. May I introduce you to the other irresistible offerings from Dalliance Cosmetics? This little case right here is a regular treasure trove of beauty. This is where she'd hold up the case. She wore three bright red bangles on her left wrist, including one that held the case, and they'd clank together as she lifted it. Right arm? Pure, soft, white, unadorned. Left arm? Fashion and beauty in one grip. Lilly Margolis was everything blond, bobbed hair, perfectly plucked eyebrows, bright red lips all wrapped up in the perfect porch-sized package. What would Mama say if she could be on the other side of that door? No great mystery there. She'd say Lilly looked like a tramp, that God would condemn her for cutting her hair. To her, Lilly's smooth skin meant that she was lazy, pampered, indulged. Lilly banished such ugliness behind what she knew to be a dazzling face. Her mother might not approve, but the rest of the world sure did. Men most of all. And if she got lucky, the woman behind this door would too. Resolved, she touched her painted fingertips to her hair, doubled her smile, and rang the bell. What do you want? The woman on the other side of the door wore a faded housedress. Her hair was mostly piled on top of her head, though tendrils floated around her face. Smile. Good morning, madam! Are you the lady of the house? Oh, for the love of Pete. And Lilly faced the door again. She relaxed her posture, letting her shoulder stoop with the weight of the tan leather case, getting no satisfaction from even the clank of her bangles. She turned and walked down the front steps. Those potted flowers looked a little less lovely than they did when she first walked past them just a minute ago. Should've opened with the flowers. Next door, she'd know. Back on the sidewalk, she assessed the next house. Trim lawn, roses in bloom at the corner. Chin up, big smile, shoulders squared, she strode up the walkway, looking confident lest the lady be looking out the front window at that moment. At the door, she shifted the leather case from one hand to the other, bangles rattling as she raised her fist to knock. The door opened and this woman looked much like the previous one, but her hair was a little neater, her dress less faded. Good morning, madam. Tell me, are you responsible for those beautiful roses in bloom? Why yes, I am. The woman touched her fingers to her throat, as if shocked to be greeted with such a compliment. Well then, it won't surprise you to learn that the delicate rose petal is a key ingredient in Dalliance Cosmetics's Rose of Sharon hand cream. Just a dab worked in at night, and your hands will be as soft as the petals on your lovely flowers. May I offer you a demonstration? Oh, I don't think so, dear. Jergens works fine for me. A softer closing of the door this time, but a closing nonetheless. Back on the sidewalk, Lilly looked up the street. One house after another, all of them small and square. In some ways, no different from the row of clapboard shacks she left behind in Miresburgh. But here there seemed to be a sweetness to the smallness. Maybe it was the trim green lawns, the varied gardens, the short white fences. Who knows? Maybe her own street would take on life and beauty if it were bathed in this relentless Florida sun. Still, small houses meant small lives; small lives meant small dreams. Green grass or not, when she looked down the street all she saw was one closed door after another. Never gonna sell nothin' in this lousy neighborhood, she muttered under her breath. Still, she wasn't about to cry over it. After all, it could be worse. She could be one of those women all wrapped up in a housedress with nowhere to go. Why, they might be looking out of their windows right now thinking, What is that stunning vision of beauty doing on our humble little street? Lilly herself had been inspired by the beauties she'd seen in the movies and magazines. Mindful of her purpose, she smiled sweetly at the young woman pushing a pram, followed by two sticky children. Half a block behind Lilly was a park. She'd planned to stop there and sit on one of its bright red benches to eat the cheese sandwich that was wrapped in wax paper and nestled among the bottles and jars of Dalliance Cosmetics in the tan leather case. She turned around and followed the woman and the pram and the sticky children, who took turns looking back at her. Lilly stuck out her tongue and they did too. The mother never glanced over her shoulder even once. Once in the park, the sticky children ran to the swing set; the mother settled on a bench and pulled the baby out of the pram to settle it on her lap for a gentle bouncing. Cute baby. Lilly chose the bench on the opposite side of the

little walking path that stretched around the park. His name John. The recollection of the name seemed an exhausting endeavor. I don't have any children myself. Lilly crossed her leg and admired her shoe. White patent leather with a wide sea-foam green ribbon. She'd have to sell ten jars of Lilies in Moonlight to pay for them. I'm a salesgirl for Dalliance Cosmetics. It's highly rewarding. The mother smiled weakly, then hollered at the sticky children June and Teddy, telling them to play nice and take turns. Of course, motherhood is its own reward. Though truthfully, Lilly could think of nothing worse. Besides the disaster a pregnancy would bring to her perfect planklike figure, she'd grown up knowing exactly what kind of inconvenience it could bring to a girl's life. But I bet you like to take yourself a long, hot bath at the end of a day. Baby John began to fuss, bucking straight back in his mother's lap. Or on a hot day like this, maybe a nice cool one. Not too cold that can be shocking. But tepid. Just enough warm to take off the edge. So when you dip your foot in, you can't hardly tell where the air stops and the water starts, except for the wet. And then, when you lift yourself out, no matter how hot it is, you get this breeze that just chills. Look, lady. I don't usually have time to take a bath. I got three kids. Haven't you got a husband? He's a manager down at Parsons. Sometimes he works late. So you never have time to bathe? Lilly widened her eyes, creating an image of innocent incredulity. Course I do. The mother set baby John back in his pram and handed him a bottle of milk, a veneer of resentment on her smile. Just nothing long and luxurious is all. Lilly pouted. Poor dear. She lifted the tan leather case and set it beside her. Two clicks of the brass latches and she had a wide-mouthed jar frosted pink glass with a silver-painted lid. There's no reason you can't pamper yourself with even the shortest dip. It's not the length of the soak but the quality of the soap, that's what we say at Dalliance Cosmetics. I use Ivory. As well you should, what with the little ones and all. But how about something like this? Lilly rose from her bench and crossed the path, carrying the wide-mouthed jar aloft like a treasure. Slowly, holding the jar just under the mother's nose, she twisted the silver lid, wincing a bit at the glare from the bouncing sun. Bath salts. Lavender. Here, just take a whiff. The mother closed her eyes, revealing thin lids with tiny blue branching veins. Perhaps it was the shiny silver lid that caught the attention of the now sticky and sweaty children, because they abandoned their swings and ran pell-mell toward their mother. Lilly stopped them in their tracks with nothing more than a kohl-eyed glare. Scram, kids. This is for your ma. The mother opened her eyes again, transformed. Soft and content. Very nice. Not bad for a nickel, is it? A nickel? You're kidding. Well, the whole jar is a dollar thirty, but there's enough in here for at least twenty-five baths, so that works out to about a nickel a bath. Don't you think at the end of a day you deserve a nickel's worth of bath salts all to yourself? Perhaps some innate protective sense had taken over the children, because once again they abandoned their swinging and were running more cautiously this time toward the benches. Now the mother, with her arms crossed, looked at them with narrowed eyes. Teddy and June! You two go play or I'm going to give you a spank right here and now and another when we get home! Teddy and June obeyed, taking sulky backward steps so their selfish mother could gaze upon their sweaty, sticky, grubby faces for as long as possible. The mother scooted an inch or so away from Lilly. Put that lid back on. I haven't got a dollar thirty to spend on bath salts. Don't forget about the beauty of the jar itself, Lilly said, grasping to close the deal. When you've finished with the lavender, you can always refill it with something from the five-and-dime, and none of your friends need be the wiser. With this beautiful Dalliance Cosmetics jar on your powder-room shelf, you'll be the envy. I don't have friends who visit my powder room. The mother lifted baby John out of the pram again and held him close, resting her chin on top of his bald little head. Teddy and June would not be denied a third time. They scrambled onto the bench, wedging their way between the two women. Lilly leaped to her feet, barely snatching the pretty pink jar from the grimy clutches of June. Once again the mother's manner softened. What sternness she had dissolved like so many bath salts as her children peppered her with silly questions. Who was this lady? What was in the jar? Could they have a Coca-Cola with their lunch when they got home? And could the lady come have lunch with them? And wasn't she pretty? With gentleness Lilly couldn't have imagined, the mother answered each child. Yes, the lady was pretty, but no, she was far too busy to come home for lunch. This response was given with a wary eye across the top of Teddy's grubby face, but Lilly just smiled and winked. It was enough that they thought she was pretty. Lilly checked to be sure the silver lid was screwed on tight. Then, as the little family debated whether they should play on the swings or the slide, she reached inside baby John's pram and nestled the lavender bath salts within his blankets. She quickly closed the latches on her leather case and lifted it off the bench. Before she could get away, however, the mother called out, Hey! I told you I can't afford that. Lilly waved a hand behind her, bangles clanking. Forget it. You qualify for the free sample of the day. No, thanks. I'm watching my figure. Three blocks later Lilly sat down again this time at a drugstore counter and filled out a

sales slip. She thought back to the nearly empty powder box on the washstand in her room at Mrs. Myrtles Hotel for Women. She had a little more than three dollars in theretwo of which were meant for next weeks rent. A couple of big sales would make up the difference, but shed need to find better hunting ground. Hey, lady. The man behind the counter wore a blue-and-whitestriped shirt and blue suspenders. His gray hair was thick and curly; the glasses on the bottom of his nose gave a kindly effect absent from his voice. This isnt your office. You going to order something? Lilly dug into her little beaded purse and pulled out a dime. Two Coca-Colas. One for later tonight with the supper included in her two dollar-a-week rent. The man behind the counter popped the top off one of the bottles before swiping the dime across the polished wood. Lilly quietly unwrapped her sandwich, keeping it hidden on her lap as she tore off one bite at a time, chewing slowly and washing it down with sips of the cold, dark, fizzing soda. Behind her the bell rang, and though she didnt know another soul in this part of town, Lilly spun on her stool to see who walked in. Two women, probably in their fifties, wearing identical gray dresses, white aprons, and ugly brown shoes. Maids. Afternoon, ladies. Now the man behind the counter lived up to his friendly visage. Afternoon, Ed. Two egg salads? Coffee? Oh, its payday, one of the women said. Make it two chocolate sodas, right, Annie? You read my mind, Annie said, and the two of them giggled as if it were truly funny. Sounds good, Lilly said. She imagined herself part of their conversation, but they responded with a dismissive glare. The few bites of sandwich sat heavy in her stomach, and she wished for just a minute she were sharing a sticky table with little June and Teddy. Deciding these women werent worthy of her smile, she drooped her face into an exaggerated pout and twirled back to her sandwich, giving the women a view of the back of her neck, imitating the pose shed seen on the cover of the Vogue magazine on the newsstand in the corner. She continued with her sandwich and soda and sales-ticket book, all the while listening to Annie and her friend. Apparently their mistresses were at a weekly country club luncheon, meaning somewhere within walking distance there was a neighborhood with money. Lilly tore her sandwich into smaller and smaller pieces, making it last long enough for Annie and her friend to finish their egg salads and chocolate sodas. Ed was not fooled for a moment; hed come close to catching her midbite several times, but every time he asked if she wanted to order something, Lilly smiled her brightest and said no, thank you, she was watching her figure. At ten minutes to one, the maids slurped the last of their sodas and bid Ed good-bye. Lilly swigged the last of her Coca-Cola warm and flat by now and carefully folded the square of wax paper to put back in her leather case. It would wrap tomorrows sandwich. See ya, Ed. She gave a little salute, bangles clanking, and set the doors bell ringing. With the women in gray about twenty paces ahead, Lilly straightened her shoulders, refreshed her grip on the cases handle, and took a determined step. Fortune could not be far away. Revue de presse Praise for Lilies in Moonlight Flappers and family. Baseball and cosmetics. War and wealth. Give Allison Pittman those threads, and you have the rich tapestry that is Lilies in Moonlight. Lilly Margolis is an off-the-charts heroine that will have you fumbling to turn the pages to keep up with her. But its the honesty in Lilly and the entire cast of characters that is Pittmans greatest gift to us in this compelling story. Mona Hodgson, author of Two Brides Too Many and Too Rich for a Bride In Lilies in Moonlight, Allison Pittman offers a fine mix of sin, redemption, and history as an unflappable flapper takes a poignant ride through Prohibition-era Florida. From the homes of the wealthy to a backwoods tent revival, hard times and harder truths chase a wild girl and a warwounded man into the arms of a love that wont let them go. By turns both heartbreaking and flat-out fun, this story is a gem. Meg Moseley, author of When Sparrows Fall Lilies in Moonlight transported me to a world radiant with the bold, jaunty spirit of the Jazz Age. I was completely absorbed in the story of Lilly, an unsinkable flapper who turns the pain of her past into a drive to live her life to the fullest. Allison Pittmans novel is vastly entertaining, romantic, and deeply spiritual: a sparkling, fun read that also brought me to tears of sympathy for the characters. Beautifully written, this is a rich story of overcoming, hope, and love that surprised me in a wonderful way with every turn of the page truly in a league of its own. Rosslyn Elliott, author of Fairer than Morning Lilies in Moonlight is a tender story full of mercy and grace. When two scarred souls meet in God-orchestrated circumstances, Mrs. Betty Ruth Burnside makes it her mission to meld them together. Her son, Cullen, has no desire to fellowship with a flapper. Yet Lilly Margolis has such magnetism, and shes drawn to the Burnside's elegance and wealth. How could such an unlikely match work? Eileen Key, author of Forget-Me-Not