

The Edge of Lost

Kristina McMorris

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An enthusiastic immigrant journeys to New York from Ireland in this vibrant period piece.

Kristina McMorris's novel *The Edge of Lost* is an engaging and suspenseful story about a young Irish immigrant looking for his real father in America. As the story progresses, it branches out to include such historical events and settings as Alcatraz, prohibition-era New York, and the burlesque atmosphere of vaudevillians and underground gambling rings. This is a well-researched historical novel, vibrant and authentic, and impressive for the way that it brings various settings to life.

Starting in Ireland, the story follows a young Shanley Keagan as he makes his trip to America in search of his father. Taken in by an Italian family after losing his uncle, Shanley is exposed to an America that seems as unforgiving as it does full of opportunity. As he capitalizes on his talents as a vaudevillian in New York and dabbles in its seemingly lucrative payouts, it becomes apparent to Shanley that another world lurks under the one he lives in, one in which events like prohibition fuel crime and where it becomes increasingly easy to fall into a criminal lifestyle.

Its narrative involving everything from love to criminality, *The Edge of Lost* is certainly a novel whose author tries hard to develop these themes. The story follows Shanley by way of a close third-person narrator, detailing events and circumstances that seem, at times, highly convenient. Still, McMorris dedicates a substantial amount of attention to her characters, all of whom impact Shanley and contribute to his progression and growth over the span of the novel.

As the story moves from Ireland to New York, its suspense is kept up through Shanley's multiple pursuits and transformations, and this becomes one of the novel's hallmark features. For readers interested in both the historical significance of places like Alcatraz and New York in the early twentieth century and the suspense of a well-written mystery, *The Edge of Lost* is a novel that does a fine job of illustrating its settings alongside an enthusiastic protagonist.

KENNY JAKUBAS (Spring 2016)

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