



Last Days of Night (Moore)

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The Last Days of Night

Graham Moore, 2016

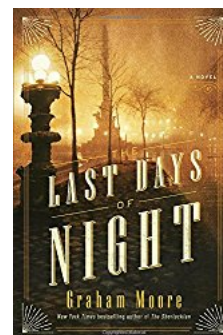
Random House

384 pp.

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Summary

A thrilling novel based on actual events, about the nature of genius, the cost of ambition, and the battle to electrify America—from the Oscar-winning screenwriter of The Imitation Game and bestselling author of The Sherlockian.



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New York, 1888. Gas lamps still flicker in the city streets, but the miracle of electric light is in its infancy. The person who controls the means to turn night into day will make history—and a vast fortune.

A young untested lawyer named Paul Cravath, fresh out of Columbia Law School, takes a case that seems impossible to win. Paul's client, George Westinghouse, has been sued by Thomas Edison over a billion-dollar question: Who invented the light bulb and holds the right to power the country?

The case affords Paul entry to the heady world of high society—the glittering parties in Gramercy Park mansions, and the more insidious dealings done behind closed doors. The task facing him is beyond daunting. Edison is a wily, dangerous opponent with vast resources at his disposal—private spies, newspapers in his pocket, and the backing of J. P. Morgan himself. Yet this unknown lawyer shares with his famous adversary a compulsion to win at all costs. How will he do it?

In obsessive pursuit of victory, Paul crosses paths with Nikola Tesla, an eccentric, brilliant inventor who may hold the key to defeating Edison, and with Agnes Huntington, a beautiful opera singer who proves to be a flawless performer on stage and off.

As Paul takes greater and greater risks, he'll find that everyone in his path is playing their own game, and no one is quite who they seem. *(From the publisher.)*

Watch for the 2017 film adaptation with Eddie Redmayne.

Author Bio

- Birth—October 18, 1981
- Where—Chicago, Illinois, USA
- Education—B.A., Columbia University
- Awards—Academy Award-Best Adapted Screenplay
- Currently—lives in Los Angeles, California

Graham Moore is an American screenwriter and author known for his 2010 novel *The Sherlockian*, as well as his screenplay for the historical film *The Imitation Game*. (Alan Turing had been Moore's childhood hero since he was 14.)

A second book, *The Last Days of Night*, was published in 2016. Set in 1888 New York City, the novel focuses on the heated rivalry between Thomas Edison and George Westinghouse during the advent of electricity and is told through the eyes of Westinghouse's attorney, Paul Cravath. Moore himself wrote the screenplay for the film.

Background

Moore was born in Chicago, Illinois, and raised on the city's north side—"the son of two lawyers who divorced and then married two other lawyers." His mother was formerly the City of Chicago's chief lawyer and First Lady Michelle Obama's chief of staff.

While he was learning to read, Moore developed a love of mystery stories; he later came to believe he'd have a career in music. Nonetheless, he received his B.A. in religious history from Columbia University.

At Columbia, unsure about a writing career, Moore took the advice of a professor to dedicate five years to any profession he pursued, "because it takes that long to get halfway decent at anything." After graduating in 2003, Moore stayed in New York, playing in a number of rock bands, creating a music studio in the basement of a heavy metal art gallery on Rivington Street, working as a sound engineer, and collecting sound equipment.

It was during those years he began to write. For several years, he wrote scripts by day and did studio work by night. He woke up in his New York apartment, dressed in a coat and tie, and sat down to write. "I told myself writing was my job and I was getting dressed for work—which was like telling myself, dress for the job you want."

Eventually, Moore moved to Hollywood, California, where one of his earliest jobs was on the writing staff of the television series *10 Things I Hate About You*. In 2010 he published his first book, *The Sherlockian*, which made it to the *New York Times* bestseller list for three weeks.

His adapted screenplay for the 2014 film *The Imitation Game*, based on Andrew Hodges' biography, *Alan Turing: The Enigma*, earned Moore numerous nominations,

including the 2014 Golden Globe Award for Best Screenplay, and ultimately won the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay at the 87th Academy Awards (held in 2015).

Moore lives in Los Angeles, California. (*Adapted from Wikipedia. Retrieved 2/25/2016.*)

Book Reviews

How America got the electric light bulb—a battle between intellectual giants—is the subject of Graham Moore’s fine new novel. Drawing on historical sources, Moore has created characters of equal parts charm and villainy—complicated men who grapple with opposite poles of their nature: all-out ambition versus belief in the greater good. A triangle of brilliant men is at the heart of this tale. Thomas Edison, the great man himself, is perhaps not the hero we’ve always thought... [READ MORE.](#)

P.J. Adler - LitLovers

A fascinating portrait of American invention...Moore crafts a compelling narrative out of [Paul] Cravath’s cunning legal maneuvers and [Nikola] Tesla’s world-changing tinkering, while a story line on opera singer Agnes Huntington has the mysterious glamour of *The Great Gatsby*.... Moore weaves a complex web..... He conjures Gilded Age New York City so vividly, it feels like only yesterday.

Entertainment Weekly

[T]hrilling.... While the plot starts off slowly, the tempo picks up as events within the court begin to unfold. Moore’s extensive research is apparent, and readers are likely to walk away from the book feeling as informed as they are entertained.

Publishers Weekly

The great tech innovators of...the 1890s posture, plot, and even plan murder in this business book-turned-costume drama.... The real-life events of the War of the Currents are exciting enough without embroidery. Still, readers who care more about atmosphere than accuracy will enjoy this breezy melodrama.

Kirkus Reviews

Discussion Questions

We'll add publisher questions if and when they're available; in the meantime, use these LitLovers talking points to help start a discussion for The Last Days of Night... then take off on your own:

1. Talk about the role of the lightbulb, that small pear-shaped device, in changing the face of civilization. Can you imagine life without it?

2. What do you think about the two great giants of American science and manufacturing: Thomas Edison and George Westinghouse? Are you surprised at the manner in which Moore portrays Edison, an American icon? How do the two men differ?
3. Can you explain the legal suit that Edison initiated against Westinghouse? In what way did Westinghouse's bulb differ from Edison's?
4. Does Graham Moore do a credible job in breaking down the science of electricity, especially the differences between AC and DC current?
5. How did Nikola Tesla revolutionize AC current? Do you think it possible/probable in real life that Edison might have made an attempt on Tesla's life? Or did Graham add that plot point to build fictional suspense?
6. How was Nikola Tesla different from the two rivals at the heart of this story? In what way was his "genius" different from that of Edison or Westinghouse? What drove Tesla, as opposed to the other two men?
7. Talk about the role of J.P. Morgan and his insistence that the two men settle their differences. Was his "coup" of Edison's General Electric fair?
8. In the end, is it possible to actually say *who* invented the light bulb? What role did each of the three men—Edison, Tesla, and Westinghouse—play in its development? Consider this passage from the book:

For Edison who loved the audience it was the performance. Westinghouse was different as he loved the products themselves and he made them better than anyone else. Westinghouse did not want to sell the most but wanted to make the best. Tesla, the third leg, only cared for the ideas themselves. Once he had an idea, he was done, he knew he had solved the problem and moved on.

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