

Entangled: A Chronicle of Late Love

Don Asher

Lois Goodwill

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Men and women in their seventies and eighties don't get very much exposure in the entertainment industry. Movies like *Cocoon* and books like *Emily, Alone* come along every so often, but for the most part the aging and elderly are written around, written over, written through. In their jointly-produced memoir, Asher and Goodwill pull no punches about what it's like to be old, hurt, and infatuated.

For twenty years, this couple has shared their nights, their passions, their ups and downs. When Asher is treated for prostate cancer, Goodwill is with him. When Goodwill's children get married, Asher is with her. What they don't share: world travel, exercise sessions, social engagements. Goodwill draws energy from a large circle of friends and family and enjoys hopping a plane to a distant country; Asher is much happier at home, alone, with a set schedule of tennis and local piano gigs to look forward to.

Their differences don't seem to get in the way of their happiness until Goodwill meets an ex-Jesuit priest who shares many of her passions. With him she feels younger and more alive, and that is attractive enough that she sacrifices her relationship with Asher to explore the possibilities of a new one. With illuminating candor, Asher and Goodwill write about what it's like to be at the end of a solid, twenty-year relationship.

A musician who published several fiction and nonfiction books, Asher writes in a straightforward manner about his experiences, choosing not to gloss over his pain and fear of the future. Goodwill, a clinical psychologist, uses a therapeutic technique in which she writes as a fictional character keeping a diary, allowing her the distance she needs to relay her story. The two styles complement each other—much in the same way their personalities meshed throughout their relationship—and create a book greater than the sum of its parts.

What makes each section fascinating and enduring is the level of honesty each holds him and herself to. When Asher describes the odds of his beating cancer he writes, "You look at your calendar one morning and the next appointment is only a week away: time to draw blood. The band of anxiety tightens across your chest, your dreams darken and scatter, and once again the odds on survival turn topsy-turvy; three out of four you'll make it, one out of four you won't." This emotionally clear way of scrutinizing life's elements turns into hardtack poetry in Asher's hands. Goodwill's approach is more delicate in description, but no less successful in revealing character.

While the subject of their book—love affairs at an elderly age—is fresh and compelling, this memoir would glow even if the authors were in their thirties. The success of a book always comes down to the quality of the writing and in this they have both proven themselves.

ANDI DIEHN (September / October 2011)

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