



Forget Me

Lisa Sherman

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Forget Me is a character-driven thriller focused on the question of what composes a person's identity.

Lisa Sherman's thriller *Forget Me* is about a woman's attempts to find out who she is.

Five years ago, Wanda was found unconscious in a river and was identified via an ID found in her purse. She doesn't remember anything about her life before. Addicted to painkillers and too depressed to bond with the daughter she gave birth to after her accident, Wanda now hates her life and the man she's been told is her husband. When she sees a news report about Jack Stanbrick, who was convicted of murdering his wife, Claire, Wanda is convinced it's all wrong. She can't stop thinking that she is Claire, and that Jack can't be guilty of murder. Over the course of weeks, Wanda struggles to prove her identity, save the man whom she now believes to be her husband, and determine who Claire and Wanda are.

Split into two parts, the book is told in a dual timeline, with the chapters alternating between Wanda After and Claire Before. The matters of Wanda's identity, and of how she and Claire came to know each other, are explored and explained throughout. The odds of Wanda being Claire fluctuate between likely and unlikely with each new piece of information. But the plot, and Wanda's own work toward self-discovery, rests too much on coincidences to the point of stretching credulity.

The novel is anchored by its themes of motherhood and identity. Wanda's relationship with her daughter, Claire's relationship with her mother, and Wanda's shifting emotions regarding the possibility of motherhood shape the story in influential ways. Wanda's desperate need to know who she is drives her actions, even when it's at odds with her growing love for her daughter, generating a great deal of internal conflict.

The book does an excellent job of illustrating difficult emotions through the skilled use of metaphors that relay, for example, the physicality of fear. Indeed, although suspense is present in the story, people's psychological struggles stand out most. Wanda's and Claire's emotional states oscillate between highs and lows, matching their tumultuous circumstances.

Still, key elements of the story are vague: Wanda is told by a few people that she looks quite a lot like Claire, but even when she comes into contact with people who knew Claire, most don't look at her twice. It is explained that her hair is different now, and that the accident left her with scars, but how this makes her unrecognizable is unclear. In a similar vein, Wanda thinks that she would recognize Jack's voice anywhere, which she almost proves, though an important plot point hinges on her confusing his voice with somebody else's.

The dual timelines come together in the end, merging and developing into an event that is predictable but satisfying. In keeping with its character-driven history, the book pays close attention to people's emotional outcomes, ending on a joyful note of triumph and hope.

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CAROLINA CIUCCI (September 23, 2022)

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