



Clarion Review

Romance

Forgetting U Existed

D.E. Rogers

REGI Books

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Four Stars (out of Five)

Writer Forrest Wade struggles to juggle women past and present. We get our first glimpse of that in 2010's *I Know She Didn't*, which launched author D. E. Rogers' tale of lovers Forrest and Mahogany. Their story continued in the sequel, *Counterfeit Friends*.

In the third in this series, *Forgetting U Existed*, we find Forrest now living with Mahogany and their young son, Bailey. He is dithering over whether to propose when he discovers ex-girlfriend Savannah is pregnant with their second child, conceived during a period when Forrest was angry with Mahogany.

Into the mix enters the college sweetheart who abandoned him years ago without explanation. As his passion for her rekindles, Mahogany becomes jealous and Forrest finds himself drawn to both women. The protagonist also grieves over the murder of his best friend, Jonathan, whose widow debates about whether to patch things up with Mahogany. Their friendship had dissolved in a business deal gone sour.

Such is the complex plot of *Forgetting U Existed*. Rogers expertly tells the story from the characters' multiple points of view to give readers an inside look at everyone's thoughts and motivations. None are particularly likable—Forrest is a cad who lacks willpower, and the women are stereotypical harpies who worship him. Yet, the characters garner audience sympathy because they grapple with their crises of conscience in ways that tug at the heart.

The plot moves at a pleasing clip, with plenty of unexpected twists. In addition to the relationship drama, there are drunken nights of shame, gun showdowns and car accidents. Rogers masterfully ends most of his chapters with a cliffhanger, making the novel a thrilling page-turner. Moreover, the author heightens the tension by keeping readers wondering what each character will do next. He also deftly illustrates what can happen as they let circumstances control their actions, rather than taking personal responsibility for their emotions and deeds.

The dialog is contemporary, using enough vernacular to be realistic and sufficient standard English for readers who may not understand the slang to get the gist of what the characters are saying.

While the multiple plot threads and many points of view enhance the novel, readers can easily confuse the identities of major characters and how they relate to the minor players. The story also bounces between locales quickly, making it difficult to remember in which city the action is taking place at any given moment.

In addition, Rogers reveals much-needed context from the previous novels far too late in the game. As a consequence, the audience remains adrift longer than necessary. For that reason, reading *I Know She Didn't* and *Counterfeit Friends* first is recommended in order to fully appreciate this novel.

Still, one thing is certain. Readers will remember reading *Forgetting U Existed*.

Jill Allen