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Hold My Place

Cassondra Windwalker
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A goth librarian falls for a handsome married chef in Cassondra Windwalker's novel of obsessions, *Hold My Place*.

Snarky, dark Sigrun is secure in her identity. She loves her career, horror movies, and choosing materials for her patrons. Edgar makes French-Asian cuisine, and has a lovely, ethereal wife. When Sigrun finds herself dreaming about Edgar, she decides that the best cure for her crush is to take his cooking class. She hopes to alleviate the heat that blooms in her chest when she thinks of him.

The low thrum becomes a roar: Sigrun and Edgar embark on an emotional relationship, taking walks late into the evening, even through personal and global tragedies. Sigrun feels an increasing hunger to be with Edgar to the exclusion of all else, and that hunger does not feel like her own.

A cloud of eerie normalcy lingers over the book. All looks fine, but there is something off center. Sigrun notices this as she falls deeper into her relationship with Edgar, knowing that she's engaging in an affair with a married man, yet unable to stop herself. All becomes clearer to her after she meets Edgar's wife in passing: she's intrigued by how much they love each other, but still unwilling to untangle from him.

As the book hurtles toward tragedy, subtle shifts in tone and language signal the change that is happening within Sigrun. She becomes obsessed—not only with Edgar, but with his previous lovers. Indeed, the book is so focused on Sigrun that others have little room to breathe. Even Edgar is sidelined, allowing Sigrun to overwhelm and to be overwhelmed.

Brimming with muted eroticism, *Hold My Place* is a dark romance novel punctuated by longing, lingering spirits and love without end.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (January / February 2022)

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