

The Mother

Farin Powell

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The Mother is a heartfelt novel about a mother who comes into her own through her love for her daughter.

In Farin Powell's novel, *The Mother*, a woman sacrifices much to keep love alive.

Helen is driven and defined by her role as Daisy's mother. But Daisy, a bright, beautiful college student, battles brain cancer. Helen will do anything to help Daisy beat cancer, including compromising her own health and reviving a relationship with Daisy's dad, Jake.

Helen's relationship with Jake began when he, a wealthy and powerful lawyer, swept her into a picture book Paris romance. But Helen's difficult pregnancy prompted the couple to move back to the US, where Daisy's crying drove Jake to a separate bedroom. Their marriage ended a few years later when Jake chose work and womanizing over his family. In its wake, Helen devoted herself to Daisy. Since then, Jake has been absent, but he steps in to cover Daisy's expensive cancer treatments, working his way back into Helen's life and jeopardizing her burgeoning relationship with Tom, the first man she's created a meaningful bond with since her divorce.

When the book is focused on Helen and Jake's early relationship, it involves elaborate descriptions of Paris, including everyday street scenes and lavish dinner dates punctuated by trips to iconic attractions like the Moulin Rouge. These culminate in Helen and Jake's wedding and reception aboard a river cruise, where they treated guests to sights along the banks of the Seine. Helen reminisces about the romance of that relationship early on, though recognizing that it was too idyllic to last. Her feelings of foreboding are accentuated by descriptions that paint Paris in a champagne-clouded, halcyon haze.

Helen, whose days are dominated by care for others—first for her father, then for her daughter—is a flat lead who proves ever willing to forego her own needs in favor of everyone else's. That doesn't change even when she's encouraged to care for herself, and her lack of growth is a continual point of frustration. Nor is Daisy dimensional; she's confined to her role as a patient whose health crisis drives the plot. Still, both are sympathetic, and their devotion to one another is heartwarming.

The Mother is a heartfelt novel focused on the love between a child and her mother, the latter of whom comes to realize that she's worthy of love, too.

CHARLENE OLDHAM (June 4, 2020)

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