

## To Forgive but Not to Forget

**Marion Catterall**

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*To Forgive but Not to Forget is engrossing as it challenges preconceived notions of what it means to love and be loved.*

Marion Catterall's *To Forgive but Not to Forget* is a passionate, heartfelt, and escapist novel about love, loss, and finding ways to heal and forgive.

Years ago, Catherine jilted her fiancé, Donald, to elope with another man. When her husband dies, she moves back home and crosses paths with Donald. They resume their erratic relationship practically where they left off, and end up moving to Scotland. There, they live in a castle that is haunted by the ghosts of its past.

Though Catherine and Donald are in their late forties, there is a youthful tumultuousness about their connection. The characters are unmistakably attracted to one another, yet there is a lack of trust between the two that is far from conducive to a healthy relationship. They fight and make up, and their volatile highs and lows are both refreshing and disconcerting.

Catherine is defined by her romances. She has a career and a family, but these are mentioned in passing, and with as much gravity as is given to naming the color of her hair or the town she grew up in. Though her character is underdeveloped, her feelings for the men in her life are strong and clear, which makes her empathetic. As the story unfolds and Catherine entrenches herself in Donald's world, she begins to come into her own, as someone more than just a wife or a lover.

The writing itself is prone to summarization, which emphasizes Catherine's focus on her relationships. The most descriptive scenes are those where Catherine is either loving Donald, mourning her husband, or seeking out any other romantic relationships that come into her line of vision.

Frequent sex scenes leave much to the imagination, and give the impression of a pseudo-gothic romance. The novel works commendably to normalize the fluidity of sexual preferences, as well as to blur the lines between monogamy and polyamory: even when Catherine is married, she is comfortable engaging in flirtations with other men so long as it doesn't come to actual intercourse.

The first half of the novel feels rushed, but as the story unfolds and the plot becomes increasingly complex, scenes are developed with more detail. The writing style throughout is simple and unassuming.

Tragedy and heartache are balanced with redemption and sexual tension in this story of one woman's path to happiness. *To Forgive but Not to Forget* is engrossing as it challenges preconceived notions of what it means to love and be loved.

RENATE CHILDS (March 27, 2017)

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