



ALL IS NOT FORGOTTEN

by Wendy Walker

About the Author

- A Conversation with Wendy Walker

Behind the Novel

- A Note from the Author

Keep on Reading

- Recommended Reading
- Reading Group Questions

Also available as an audiobook
from Macmillan Audio

For more reading group suggestions
visit www.readinggroupgold.com.

 St. Martin's Griffin

*A
Reading
Group Gold
Selection*



A Conversation with Wendy Walker

Your earlier books were works of contemporary women's fiction. All Is Not Forgotten is a much darker novel, definitely a thriller. What made you change your focus? Were you influenced by novels like The Girl on the Train?

My first two published novels were called *Four Wives* (2008) and *Social Lives* (2009). These books were in the genre of women's fiction and involved stories of women in wealthy suburbs struggling with their identities, marriages, children, and former lives. I have lived in suburban Connecticut most of my life, both as a child and a grown woman, and I find it fascinating! But those books didn't "break through," so I went back to practicing law. It was hard to give up the dream of being a writer, so I also managed to keep writing! I signed with a new agent and she loved my concept of a psychological thriller based on memory science. *Gone Girl* and *The Girl on a Train* had created this new genre and editors were hungry for more. I was a bit nervous about switching genres, but I had always enjoyed suspense and thrillers and I was very interested in this story concept, so I dusted it off and wrote *All Is Not Forgotten*. It was great advice!

I know you're the mother of teenage sons. Was it hard to write about rape in that context?

I am asked this frequently and honestly, it was not difficult in the way people suspect. I get very emotionally detached from my own life when I'm writing. I try to be in the head of my characters. In this book, Dr. Forrester is telling the story and he is at times detached and at times emotional so I tried to follow that path. Focusing on the words he would use at various points in the story kept my mind off of the events and on the choice of those words. What was hard was trying to write the violent scenes in a way that would stay true to the language and



descriptions of both survivors and professionals who work with them. I did a lot of research to see what that language was—how they want us to hear about what happened to them—and I worked very hard to walk that fine line.

Do you still write wherever you happen to be (I remember you used to write in a minivan!) or do you have a more settled schedule and writing venue now?

Ha! That's true. Those days are long gone, but I still consider myself a time scavenger. Every day, I map out how many hours I have until my kids are home, and then I squeeze everything into those hours. I keep waiting for it to get easier, but it just doesn't. When the kids were younger, they were home most afternoons and evenings without much to do. I could often get household chores done then. Now, every minute from 4 to 10 p.m. is packed with driving and help with homework, so my daytime hours are always shrinking! The good news is that I can write at a desk.

What books are on your bedside table right now?

A pile of psychological thrillers that haven't been released yet! I get asked to blurb books by other authors, which is quite an honor. I have read some really good ones. Look for *The Twilight Wife* and *The Clairvoyants*—both out are now.

Are you working on your next book, and will it be a thriller?

My next book is called *Emma in the Night* and it will be out August 8, 2017! I'm so excited about this book because it delves into narcissistic personality disorder—not the one we talk about casually, or even the one often used in books and movies. This new novel dissects the complex pathology of the psychological illness, which is actually quite rare.

*About the
Author*

Here is a little teaser:

Three years ago, two sisters disappeared from their home in southern Connecticut. Now, one has returned to tell the dark story of her time spent on an island off the coast of Maine. As the FBI searches for the island and the sister who did not make it out, we learn about the twisted past the girls endured in their own home before they left—and the truth about where they have been comes under scrutiny. Through the voice of our narrator, the sister who has returned, and the investigation by the FBI's forensic psychologist, the stories of past and present converge in an unexpected ending. . . .

Are you one of those writers who likes to plan every detail of the story before you start, or do you create on the fly? Does this change from book to book?

Because of the way my novels are structured, I have to plot everything from the very beginning to make sure the pieces all fit together. I write the different story lines onto colored index cards and then layer them into the chapters when they seemed to fit organically into the narrative. I am a meticulous plotter! Of course, things do change and grow as a character comes to life, and sometimes I will go back and make adjustments for that. In *All Is Not Forgotten*, the character Charlotte evolved quite a bit and as I decided to give her more depth, I adjusted the plot to accommodate this new angle.



When you're not writing, what are your favorite things to do?

I love spending one-on-one time with a good friend, or having people to our home to cook dinner (I usually watch!). I also love skiing with my kids, yoga, and watching a really good TV series after a long day of work.

What is your idea of a perfect day?

Kids off to school, a quick run, six hours of writing with no interruptions, kids home, dinner, no driving, no drama, then a glass of wine and a good book or TV show. A girl can dream!

*About the
Author*

*Excerpted from an interview conducted by Elise Chidley.
Visit www.elisechidley.net to read more.*



A Note from the Author

Dear Reader,

Shhh . . . here is a secret about the writing of *All Is Not Forgotten*.

It was just two years ago that I wrote the novel, and when I look back on that short period of time, my memory is of a straightforward process of plotting and writing every day for ten weeks. But as I sit down now to write my third thriller, tortured over the twists and turns, the clues and hidden pieces of evidence, and—of course—that BIG surprise ending, I am reminded that writing a novel is never that simple.

So there I was, writing away—Dr. Forrester was betraying his profession and his integrity to protect his son, and something bad was going to happen to Bob Sullivan. I had it all worked out in my head, but what was originally planned is NOT what I ended up writing!

I am not a character-driven writer, which is to say that I don't usually start with a character and let that character lead the way. I like to work with a tight, cohesive plot first and foremost. But something happened as I was writing Sean Logan that made me change course. I had constructed him to tug at the heartstrings—both for Dr. Forrester and the reader. He is brave, strong, attractive, and loving. And he has what Dr. Forrester describes as a pure heart. What better way to punish Dr. Forrester for his misdeeds than to damage his most beloved patient? And so the original plan was to have Sean Logan kill Bob Sullivan only to learn that Bob was innocent. As I got to that chapter, however, something happened. I stopped writing! It seems I had fallen madly in love with my perfect soldier and I just couldn't ruin him.

I went back to pen and paper and started drawing arrows and boxes, connecting characters with actions and trying to find another way to kill off Bob. It took



some doing, but I came up with the secretary and her father—two otherwise unnecessary characters—just to save my beloved Sean from a lifetime of emotional torment and possible imprisonment.

While Dr. Forrester never learned his lesson, I learned something very important about writing. If I had grown attached to Sean Logan, it was likely that readers would as well. This was one time that I was glad I listened to my character and let him drive the plot. I suspect that my efforts to save him have been greatly appreciated, even if no one knows how close he came to facing this terrible demise!

Wang Wall

*Behind the
Novel*



Recommended Reading

Behind Closed Doors

B. A. Paris

What could be more fascinating than the dark, sexual secrets of a couple who seem to have everything?

Dead Letters

Caite Dolan-Leach

A mystery with gorgeously written atmosphere, both of the physical and emotional landscapes that destroy one family.

Defending Jacob

William Landay

How far would you go to protect your child? How well do you really know the ones you love the most? Perfect set-up to explore some very deep psychological issues within the structure of a well-crafted legal thriller.

The Kite Runner

Khaled Hosseini

Takes us into the depths of human despair and drama on almost every level—personal assault, misplaced blame, and epic cultural decimation. This novel never leaves you.

Luckiest Girl Alive

Jessica Knoll

It happens far too often and, as Knoll aptly describes, it can have a lasting impact on the survivor's life.

Mystic River

Dennis Lehane

Takes your guts out of your body, twists them in knots, then puts them back in. A dead child. A proud father out for vengeance. The most tragic ending of all time. No one comes out of this book unscathed, and I love the honestly and profound humanity of that.



The Twilight Wife

A. J. Banner

Sharply written, almost bare to the bones, which makes this book immensely readable start to finish.

Wuthering Heights

Emily Brontë

I am a sucker for the tortured Heathcliffs of the world. There should be a medical diagnosis for this affliction!

*Keep on
Reading*



Reading Group Questions

1. The novel begins with the violent assault of a teenage girl, and branches out into a complex story with a number of important characters and plot points. Discuss the author's decision to use Alan as the narrator. How would the story change if it was narrated by another character?
2. Both Tom and Alan go to great lengths to protect their children, or to seek justice on a child's behalf, and each of them must cross accepted moral or ethical boundaries. Which, if any, is more understandable to you? Why? What lines would you cross to protect a loved one?
3. The author explores the nature of memory in several ways. Do you think the novel's fluid structure, presenting fragments of the whole picture individually, echo the way memory works in each of us? Take a moment to talk about how you process your own memories. Also, how you might record them for the purpose of storytelling.
4. The drug treatment imagined in this novel could be seen as an advantage for a lot of people in pain, but the author explores how it could backfire through Jenny and Sean. If, as the title implies, all is not forgotten, how do you think our memories contribute to our identity?
5. Several plot points are made possible by the novel's small-town setting, such as Jason attending the party where Jenny was assaulted. Whatever kind of community you live in, talk about local events that have caused those kinds of far-reaching ripples. Did they affect you—and how?
6. Charlotte is presented as struggling with two sides of herself, the good and the bad. Do you think morality is that simple? Have you ever reconciled your own behavior in such black-and-white terms?



7. Almost every character in *All Is Not Forgotten* is presented as suffering from emotional wounds. Who do you believe comes out of this experience healed most fully, and why? Are there any outcomes that you wish turned out differently?
8. Detective Parsons is eager to make an arrest in the case, although his reasons are different than Tom's. Do you think the police in the novel work hard enough to find the real man responsible for the crime? Does a community like this one make law enforcement's job harder when it pushes for a speedy resolution in cases like Jenny's?
9. Jenny's life is irrevocably changed after she's assaulted, just as Alan's was. Talk about the way we react to sexual crimes as a society—and how we help and/or harm all the individuals involved.
10. If the treatment in the book was reliably successful, would you ever choose to have an experience completely erased from your memory? Why or why not?

*Keep on
Reading*