



Forgotten

By Catherine McKenzie
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Introduction

When everyone thinks you're dead, how do you start your life over again?

Emma Tupper, a young lawyer with a bright future, sets out on a journey after her mother's death: to Africa, a place her mother always wanted to visit. But her mother's dying gift has unexpected consequences. Emma falls ill during the trip and is just recovering when a massive earthquake hits, turning her one-month vacation into a six-month ordeal.

When Emma returns home, she's shocked to find that her friends and colleagues believed she was dead, that her apartment has been rented to a stranger and that her life has gone on without her. Can Emma pick up where she left off? Should she? As Emma struggles to recreate her old life, everyone

around her thinks she should change: her job, her relationships, and even herself. But does she really want to sacrifice everything she's working so hard to gain? Questions for Discussion

Questions for Discussion

1. In *Forgotten*, Emma Tupper is faced with many choices when she returns from Africa: Should she pick up where she left off or start afresh? Choose old love or new? Stay with her firm or branch out? Her biggest choice, however, is one that many of us have to make: between a successful career and a fulfilling, happy life. How do you think being forced to reevaluate her life changes the terms of that choice for Emma? Have you ever had to choose between your work and your happiness? What did you prioritize?
2. In the end, Emma comes to a compromise on the issue of career versus happiness. Do you agree with her choice to stay with the firm? When Peter and Karen offer her a job, she turns it down partly because it seems like it wouldn't be true to herself or her personality. How important is it to find a career that makes you happy and reflects who you are as a person?
3. *Forgotten* is full of female relationships between best friends, sworn enemies, mothers and daughters. Do you think women bond differently to men? Could Stephanie and Emma have had the same relationship if they weren't both women? Are Sophie and Emma rivals because they are two prominent women in a male-dominated law firm? What do Emma's feelings towards her mother and her mother's close friend Sunshine say about the importance of strong female relationships in a woman's life?
4. Sophie and Emma are sworn enemies from the start of *Forgotten*. Battling over men, cases, recognition, and office space, they can barely tolerate each other's presence. However, when Emma confronts Sophie for stealing the Mutual Assurance case, she begins to relate to her: "I feel something close to sorry for her. Or maybe it's just empathy. No crying at the office. The professional woman's code." Do you think that in overcoming their rivalry, they form a sort of solidarity? Have you ever been in competition with someone and then seen something in them that made you change your mind?
5. In *Forgotten*, Emma chooses the middle ground between staying stuck in her old life and re-inventing herself entirely. Have you ever had the choice to start over? What did you do?
6. Throughout this book, Emma is caught between the past and the future, between forgetting and remembering. She feels that Craig and her firm forgot her after she went missing, but others in her life, such as Stephanie, never forgot her. Similarly, Emma went on her trip to deal with the memory of her mother and to try to move on, but although she comes to terms with her mother's death, she cannot forget her grief. One of the most moving moments in the novel, however, is when Dominic gives Emma the gift of her past, neatly organized and recorded. Do you think Emma makes a choice between remembering and forgetting by the end of her book? Which parts of her past stay with her, and which parts does she forget? Have you ever had to forget a part of your past in order to grow and mature?
7. Emma must choose between her old boyfriend, Craig, and the handsome but wounded young photographer, Dominic. In the end, she forgives Dominic for his mistakes, including leaving for Ireland without saying goodbye, but she cannot forgive Craig for his transgressions while she was abroad. What makes Dominic more forgivable than Craig? Do you think Emma made the right choice in the end? How important is forgiveness in love? Have you ever had to choose whether or not to forgive someone you love?
8. It was Emma's mother's dream to go to Africa. To honor her mother after her death, Emma carries out this dream herself and ends up being profoundly affected by the experience. Have you ever followed the dream of someone you loved because you knew how important it was to them? Did it end up changing you or becoming your dream?
9. Emma's mother is an absent character in this book. As readers, we have never met her, yet we feel her presence through Emma's memories and dreams as well as through Sunshine, Stephanie, and Stephanie's family, who honor her at Christmas by hanging her stocking. How does she continue to live through Emma's life, and Sunshine's and Stephanie's? How do people that you have lost continue to live through your life?

About the Author

Catherine McKenzie was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec, where she now practices law. An avid runner and skier, she also sits on

various boards and professional organizations, and teaches part-time at the McGill Faculty of Law.