

★ **Forgotten on Sunday****Valérie Perrin****Hildegard Serle**

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A determined, empathetic woman works to preserve the stories that others dismiss in Valérie Perrin's scintillating novel *Forgotten on Sunday*.

Orphaned as a toddler and raised by her grandparents, Justine could be cynical at twenty-one. Instead, she sees possibilities all around her—including in the stories of lonely retirees. Currently, she's recording Hélène's only outwardly ordinary story about the war, first love, and motherhood. "I'm always being told that when an old person dies a library burns to the ground," Justine says. "I'm saving a little of the ashes."

There's fire at the novel's core, and magic lurking beneath its bones. Herein, birds follow people throughout their lives, like omens, familiars, or protectors; women hide their gifts to protect their handsome husbands' egos; and there's power in not knowing your lover's name. More enduring than the story's Nazis are the barkeepers who defy them; more compassionate than the retirees' missing family members is the mysterious caller whose lies lure them to visit. Even Justine's story holds horrifying and expansive secrets: about her brother, Jules's, parentage; behind the silences in her home.

Perrin's signature gift of transmuting quotidian circumstances into transcendent truths is everywhere apparent. Hélène, afflicted with dyslexia, licks words on a blackboard expecting to be poisoned; she finds her true salvation through Lucien, who teaches her Braille, opening the universe to her. Herein, betrayals are deeper, love more lasting, and vengeance more vicious than those who eschew Sunday visits imagine. And such passion, Justine reveals, is visible to all who are curious enough to truly look.

A wise woman acts on the belief that telling one life story can illuminate the world in the tender, heartbreaking, and delight-filled novel *Forgotten on Sunday*.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (May / June 2024)

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