



Forgetting Foster

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Reviewer:

[Andrea Reece](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Dianne Touchell's fine novel [A Small Madness](#) [4] described the terrible consequences of keeping secrets, of a family failing to be honest, and in **Forgetting Foster** her subject is also a family experiencing bewildering and traumatic breakdown, and struggling to find the words to talk about it.

The story is told from the viewpoint of seven-year-old Foster. His dad has always been a hero to Foster, whether in his business suit, confidently conducting negotiations over the telephone, or when he comes in to school to spellbind the children as a storyteller. Telling stories has always been something the two have shared: when Foster's mum was very poorly in hospital, his dad made sense of it for his son through invented stories, mum becoming a princess in her own fairytale. But when his dad begins to change, first becoming forgetful, then confused and angry, no-one has the time to explain to Foster what is happening, not his increasingly tense and exhausted mother, or his aunty, or the care-workers who become regular visitors to the house. Instead, watching and eavesdropping, he's left to make up his own stories to explain what is happening to his father and his family.

Touchell describes the onset and development of Alzheimer's disease with a precision that is both exact and lyrical. Readers understand completely the awful sense of loss and grief that both Mum and Foster feel, and their sense of betrayal too, as though the man they both love has somehow chosen to leave them.

It makes for harrowing reading ? the deliberate spite of Foster's next-door neighbour is particularly shocking ? and a story such as this can have no happy ending. Nonetheless, there's a sense that the stories we carry within us will sustain us. Foster likes the squeaky sounds his dad takes to making, which he compares to fairy language: ?the thrum of wings spinning around dragon eyelashes. It meant Dad was still telling stories on the inside.?

Original and well-written this powerful novel is well-worth seeking out.

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