

EXCERPT



Remember Me *A Novella About Finding Our Way to the Cross*

January 7, 2020 | \$20, 144 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-4670-2

She was safe. Not well, not at peace, but safe.

Katherine Rhodes lingered in the bedroom doorway and offered a silent prayer for Wren, who was writhing and whimpering in her sleep, no doubt tormented by her usual nightmares over all she had been unable to prevent. *If she had been more attentive. If she had been more assertive. If she had recognized the signs and demanded Casey get help.*

Kit quietly shut the door. Not all the way though. The three-inch gap was a psychological prop even if it didn't provide physical protection. She had been unable to provide such protection for her son, and she would be unable to provide it for her great-niece.

If she had been more attentive, if she had been more assertive, if she had recognized the signs and demanded Micah get help, then maybe he would be in the prime of midlife instead of forever seventeen.

The same voices harassing Wren had plagued Kit for many years, and though she had long ago become practiced in recognizing their source and rejecting them, noticing and naming the voices didn't mean they went silent—just dormant, waiting to be awakened by some other crisis when she felt out of control and yet responsible.

She dialed Jamie's number as she descended the stairs. "She's okay. Just sleeping."

"I'm sorry to keep pestering you for updates," Jamie said, "but when I couldn't get her to answer her phone . . ."

"No, I know. I promise I'll call you if I notice anything new." She had made that same promise to Jamie many times over the past couple of months, ever since offering her home as a place for Wren to regroup and recover after her stay at Glenwood Psychiatric Hospital. But a mother didn't outgrow anxiety, especially for an already fragile daughter now catapulted into the additional trauma of losing her closest friend.

"I don't suppose she'll make it to church tonight." There was something wistful in Jamie's voice, as if a Christmas miracle were still a possibility.

"No, I don't think so. But her pastor is coming to see her between the services."

"Oh! That's good. I'm glad to hear that. Please thank her for me."

"I will." While Wren had accepted Hannah's invitation to bring her communion on Christmas Eve, she might not remember the conversation. Kit didn't want her to miss the opportunity to receive it though. Receiving communion from elders who took turns visiting the house was one of the few things Kit vividly remembered from the days after Micah died. Robert didn't want to participate. She hadn't blamed him. Not for that, anyway. But when she'd felt so disconnected from her life, so disembodied with grief, chewing the bread and swallowing the juice was a tactile way to practice faith when she felt as if she didn't have any faith to practice.

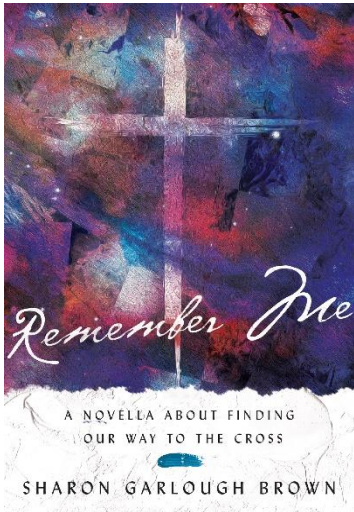


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Jamie said, "And what about tomorrow? Are you heading to Sarah's?"

"We'll play that by ear, see how Wren's feeling." Kit had already prepared her daughter for the possibility that she wouldn't be joining the family for their celebration. *The girls will be so disappointed*, Sarah had said, with a tone that communicated her own. But it couldn't be helped. Leaving Wren alone for an extended period simply wasn't safe.

"I can never thank you enough for all you've done, Kit, for all you're doing. I know I keep saying that, but I don't know what else to say."

"I'm glad to be able to do it. And I hope you and Dylan and the kids can have a wonderful celebration together, even with all this."

"I'm trying," Jamie said.

"I know you are. You're doing so well."

"Some days are better than others." Jamie sighed. "I've got to go get costumes ready for the nativity play. Joseph has the stomach flu, and none of the other boys are willing to play the role. So Phoebe has agreed to give up being a sheep and step in. Olivia is painting on a mascara beard and mustache as we speak."

Kit laughed. "Take pictures. Lots of them. And I'll ask Wren to call you later if she's up to it."

As she waited for Hannah to arrive, Kit debated whether she should try to wrap the two Vincent van Gogh prints she'd purchased for Wren: *Starry Night* and *Olive Trees*. Opening wrapping paper might require too much effort. Or might stir painful memories of other Christmas celebrations. Maybe it was best simply to give her the prints without making note of them being Christmas gifts.

She sat on the sofa, the prints propped side by side in front of her, and thought about the many conversations she and Wren had shared about Vincent's life and faith, about how some of his work evoked images of Jesus wrestling in Gethsemane and how they hoped to partner together in creating content and art for the Journey to the Cross at New Hope.

But that was before Casey died. Given Wren's current state of mind, it was unlikely she would be able to meditate on the Scriptures, let alone paint a prayerful response to them in time for Holy Week. And as far as weaving her own story into the New Hope reflections—as she had told Wren she would consider doing—the more Kit thought about it, the more she realized that wasn't the right context.

Still, Wren had bravely asked her to share her story. And though no words of wisdom or consolation, no words about the loss of her son or her own journey with depression could mitigate Wren's suffering in these early days of her anguish, perhaps there was another way to offer Wren what she'd asked for.

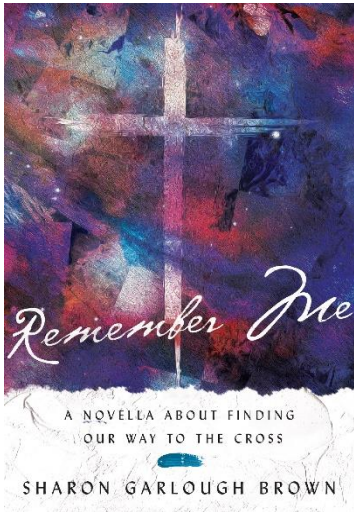


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If she told her story in small doses along with Scripture texts that had been meaningful to her, then Wren could read it when she was well enough to process it. And return to it whenever she needed to be reminded that she was not alone. “Companions in misfortune,” Wren often said, quoting Vincent. As much as she loved reading his letters to his brother, maybe she would appreciate reading letters written to her.

Kit glanced over her shoulder at headlights in the driveway and set the prints aside. Considering the ways Wren’s journey had already tapped her own subterranean sorrow, she suspected that by saying yes to writing letters, she might be saying yes to much more.

She rose to meet Hannah at the door. Tonight, with the cross casting its shadow on the manger, was as good a time as any to begin.

—Taken from chapter one, “The Word Became Flesh”



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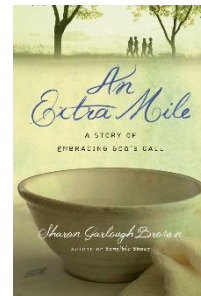
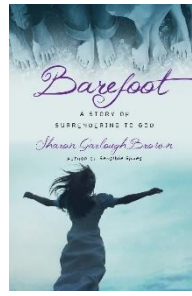
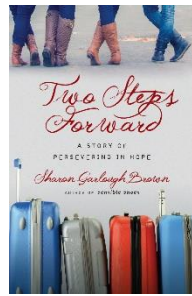
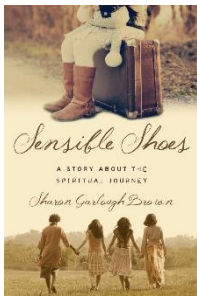
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In this sequel to *Shades of Light*, Katherine Rhodes finds her own grief tapped by Wren Crawford's struggles with depression and loss. Katherine reflects on the meaning of Christ's suffering and shares her own story of finding hope, while Wren moves forward in her commitment to paint the Stations of the Cross. Readers are invited into a similar journey of reflection through Katherine's words and Wren's paintings.

Author of the Bestselling Sensible Shoes Series

Sharon Garlough Brown is a spiritual director, speaker, and cofounder of Abiding Way Ministries, providing spiritual formation retreats and resources. She is the author of *Shades of Light: A Novel* and the follow-up title, *Remember Me*. Sharon is also the author of the bestselling Sensible Shoes Series, which includes these spiritual fiction novels and their study guides.



A graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, Sharon has served on the pastoral staff of congregations in Scotland, Oklahoma, England, and most recently in West Michigan, where she copastored with her husband, Jack, for many years. In March 2013 her book *Sensible Shoes* was named one of television personality Kathie Lee Gifford's "favorite things."

Sharon loves hearing from her readers and responding to their questions about her writing process, the Sensible Shoes characters, and the inspiration behind her work. Visit her website at sharongarloughbrown.com.



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