



# The Half Wives

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**Over the course of one momentous day, two women who have built their lives around the same man find themselves moving toward an inevitable reckoning.**

Former Lutheran minister Henry Plageman is a master secret keeper and a man wracked by grief. He and his wife, Marilyn, tragically lost their young son, Jack, many years ago. But he now has another child—a daughter, eight-year-old Blue—with Lucy, the woman he fell in love with after his marriage collapsed.

*The Half Wives* follows these interconnected characters on May 22, 1897, the anniversary of Jack's birth. Marilyn distracts herself with charity work at an orphanage. Henry needs to wrangle his way out of the police station, where he has spent the night for disorderly conduct. Lucy must rescue and rein in the intrepid Blue, who has fallen in a saltwater well. But before long, these four will all be drawn on this day to the same destination: to the city cemetery on the outskirts of San Francisco, to the grave that means so much to all of them. The collision of lives and secrets that follows will leave no one unaltered.

## The Half Wives Details

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Author : Stacia Pelletier

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# From Reader Review The Half Wives for online ebook

## The Lit Bitch says

The first thing that caught my eye about this novel, was it was story told in one day—May 22 1897. In my mind I was thinking, how is this going to work out? One day? Will this even hold my interest or would there be enough content in that one day to keep me interested?

Because this sounded like a challenge, I agreed to review it even if it sounded a little on the odd side.

Over the course of one momentous day, two women who have built their lives around the same man find themselves moving toward an inevitable reckoning.

I'll be honest, I am a sucker for a good love triangle. I know a lot of people tend to shy away from them but for me—if they are done well—I really enjoy them. In this case I felt like the love triangle was well done. Often it's two men in love with the same woman, but in this case it was a man in love with two women and I really really liked that perspective.

I also liked how the whole one day story approach turned out. It wasn't what I expected at all but in a good way, and it worked—that's all I will say about that since I don't want to give too much away.

While this book had a lot of things that I enjoyed, I couldn't give this one a higher review than 3 stars and here is why—the story telling style. The book used dashes in place of quotes and the three character perspectives used a lot of different pronouns which I found horribly distracting. I had problems understanding who was talking and it really slowed things down for me. In my mind, this was a risky approach to the novel and while some might enjoy this kind of 'shake up' in writing, I personally wasn't a fan. I found myself getting frustrated with the reading.....not with the story itself but with the mechanics.

The story itself was really good, especially the ending. This was one that stayed with me for a few days. It's a great story about grief, love, and loss. Though the approach was not what I would have gone with, it was a readable story. For those who have the patience to muddle through the pronouns and some of the technical problems, you will be rewarded with a unique story.

[see my full review here](#)

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## Ben says

This is an achingly beautiful novel, both interior and cinematic. The story evolves over the course of a single day which seems like an impossible thing to pull off in a piece of literary fiction, but Stacia Pelletier manages to do it with incredible pacing and grace as she switches among the four narrators revealing their distinct points of view and private pain. I can't imagine a story that could do a better job of painstakingly showing, hour-by-hour what the loss of a child can do to a couple. I highly recommend this novel.

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### **Shannon Deveny says**

"The Half Wives" is a sad story, beautifully told, if a titch too long. For me it reiterated the reality that not making a decision is the same as doing so, and that saying nothing actually speaks volumes. The ending really got me -- I keep coming back to it days later. It was so bittersweet. I was equal parts devastated and excited for each of the main (adult) characters as their futures were set free; an opportunity to redefine themselves. Unfortunately Blue, the child wrapped up in the actions of three bewildered adults, got the short end of the stick. If any character truly "lost" in this novel, it was she, which is darkly poignant and too real.

\*I obtained an ARC, but was not asked to write a review.

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### **Melissa Lee-Tammeus says**

This is the story of a man living two lives and the others that suffer from his choices. Largely depressing and hopeless, this story swallows you up and leaves you really hoping there will be some relief for someone in this story. However, there truly isn't and I left this book feeling sad and a bit defeated. However, I cannot deny that I was pulled in fully and felt all the emotions of these characters, so while this is not a walk in the park by any means, the author's beautiful writing, wonderful storytelling, and desperation of her characters will have you happy enough you took the time.

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### **Robin says**

It is rare for me to see a review of a book that might interest me in one of my alumni magazines, but Stacia Pelletier's "The Half Wives" caught my eye. A minister who has lost a young son, overwhelming grief, secrets, another woman, another child, historic . . . I was curious. At several points I did wonder if it was too sad to continue, but unlike some other reviewers, I found the characters intriguing and the writing lovely. The switch of narrators worked for me, but I agree with one reviewer about the use of 2nd person that felt out-of-place. I will be curious to read further works by this author.

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### **Joy Powers says**

Bit of a slower read but it was good. Liked the characters....

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### **Maria says**

The Half Wives introduces us to 4 characters; Henry Plageman the former minister and husband of Marilyn, father of two children: one in the grave another still alive and lover to a woman for many years. We get to know about Marilyn the wife and grieving mother who has grown apart from her husband and has thrown herself into volunteering at an orphanage. We get to hear from Lucy the lover and the mother of the illegitimate 8 year old daughter who has waited and waited for her lover to leave his wife fully knowing he never will. And lastly we get a glimpse of Blue the 8 year old illegitimate daughter born from Lucy and

Henry. The story is long winded and I'll be honest....I muddled through it and continued reading as I had no other book during my long trip. I will not bore you with the whole book and will only leave you with this: Gone are those beautiful hours it took for me to read this book....hours I could have used reading a powerful meaningful book.

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### **Sheryl Jones says**

I am sorry to say that after 89 pages of reading "The Half Wives" by Stacia Pelletier I gave up and stopped reading. The title had really drawn me in and the summary on the back of the book added to my interest. Perhaps I should have read the summary more closely and maybe really knowing that the entire 324 pages would be about one day in the life of Henry Plageman, his wife, mistress and young daughter might have deterred me from choosing this book. The book is written in multiple chapters that each address one of the four main characters. While for awhile chapter may have concerned the titled character it also might suddenly insert what another character is doing - changing the time, places and activity. My largest concern was the author's use of so many pronouns throughout the book - in a chapter entitled Henry one might see him addressed in the text as "I" or "he" or "you". It slowed down my reading pace (which was already dragging) assuring myself what pronoun was addressing what character. Also as I mentioned before this book represents one day in the lives of these characters and as the information of each weaves back and forth through out the book and often is repetitive.

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### **Kate says**

I wish the author's note about how/why she wrote this story had been placed first instead of last. The whole book takes place in one day, told from several points of view. Fascinating details and history about San Francisco in the late 1800's. You never think about the issue of expansion and graveyards-yet I'm sure every large city faces it. Particularly those places where they have a view. This is definitely a slice of life book----no real action goes on. For me, it got kind of tedious towards the end. Then I read the author's note and was newly interested and thought how clever the author was.

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### **Makncheese2 says**

Plot was entertaining enough but, although I normally enjoy switching the identity of the narrator, this story changed too quickly. Just when I would get used to the first person perspective of a particular character, it would change to someone else. The historical notes at the end were fascinating as someone who used to live in the SF Bay Area. I had NO knowledge of the dark history of the city cemeteries.

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### **Anna says**

What a book... beautifully written, amazingly sad, very raw but somehow captivating. What a heartbreaking story, not so surprising but such real life ending. I will remember this book for a long time as it left its footprint.

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## Sarah says

Jack Plageman would have turned sixteen on May 22, 1897. However, he'd tragically died in his crib on his second birthday. His parents' lives haven't been the same since. The observance of the sad anniversary takes the form of a ritual – an annual visit, timed precisely for 2pm, to San Francisco's city cemetery, preceded by the replanting of a small garden around his tombstone. Nobody dares to change this.

That is, until this year, when the patterns are disrupted. All the characters come together at last, and long-concealed secrets spill forth.

The chapters in this finely tuned novel about grief, interpersonal connections, and the long journey toward independence revolve among four viewpoints. Henry Plageman, Jack's father, is a former Lutheran minister turned hardware store owner. Stuck in the Golden Gate police station overnight after disturbing the peace at a local meeting, he needs to get himself out before 2pm, when he's due to meet his wife.

The cemetery where Jack's buried sits on prime California real estate, overlooking the Golden Gate strait, and it's a potter's field: mostly immigrants and the destitute are interred there. When locals had proposed that the graves be moved elsewhere, Henry had made his objections loudly known.

Henry's wife, Marilyn, who's emotionally estranged from him yet tied to him via Jack, tries to drown her grief in endless charity work, but never succeeds, and doesn't really want to. The third and fourth perspectives are those of Lucy Christensen, Henry's secret lover, who misses him greatly but needs to break things off for her own sanity; and her lively eight-year-old daughter, Anna (nicknamed Blue), Henry's only living child. She adores her father, even though he sees them only rarely.

*The Half Wives* has three aspects that may take potential readers aback, even those who seek out literary fiction. The dialogue uses dashes instead of quotation marks; the plot of this 320-page book spans a mere six hours; and the perspectives of Henry, Marilyn, and Lucy are told in the second person. (Still with me?) This latter choice is startling, and I found it difficult to process at first. Fortunately, the pronoun difficulties mostly fell away after the first few chapters, and the use of "you" served to enhance the effect of characters going through the motions, rather than actively participating in their own lives.

The novel moves smoothly among the four viewpoints, and between present-day events and people's memories about their moments of happiness and heartache. Pelletier provides poignant insight into the odd dependent relationship between Lucy and Marilyn that directs their lives, even though they've never met, and Marilyn doesn't know of Lucy's existence. Henry can't bring himself to leave either woman, though it's clear that his avoiding that decision has wrought its own set of consequences.

Henry's also oblivious to the reality of Lucy's situation, which she knows.

*He loves your humble cottage by the sea. He used to call it home. Even though he never spent a full night inside. He adored its cleanliness, its unpretentiousness. Its separation from the everyday.*

*His everyday. Not yours. He never saw you scrub a floorboard. But you did scrub them.*

The questions of whether Lucy can get up the courage to leave him, and how, create some compelling

moments.

Although the characters are the focus, the historical setting, the “Outside Lands” of northwestern San Francisco – stunning yet remote, decades before the Golden Gate Bridge’s construction – is critical. The story emphasizes how the city treats its orphaned and poor residents, from childhood until after death.

Recommended for literary fiction readers who don’t mind taking their time or making some mental adjustments to the unusual style. It’s well worth it.

First reviewed at Reading the Past.

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### **Karen Osborne says**

This is a beautifully written and powerful historical novel of four people caught up in each other’s lives in complicated ways. It takes place over the course of one day. We get to see the day through the eyes of each of the four characters, people so real you know them intimately. There were times I had to stop reading and go back over a sentence or phrase because the language was so beautiful, evocative. Other times I had to stop because the emotion was too much, I cared so deeply.

Ms. Pelletier is an amazing writer. Her first book, *Accidents of Providence*, written under the name Stacia Brown, is equally compelling. I can’t wait to read her next one,

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### **Creel Unbelove'D says**

It sounds like a great premise for a novel. After the first two chapters introducing the main characters, I didn’t care enough about them to continue reading. There was no immediate problem to be solved, just two boringly sad people that couldn’t get their stuff together and move on. I couldn’t read further.

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### **Connie says**

Waste of ink and paper. I could move a front-end loader with my little toe and get more going than the author did in this entire bunch of tripe. Good part: The author let the reader know which character was the focus of each chapter. Bad part: The time frame jumped around within each chapter and it was difficult to figure out chronologically what was happening. Not much was happening anywhere in this novel. Basically one day in the lives of the three main characters, but with ten plus years background as to how they got to that one sad day. An interesting book could have been written about any one of the two “wives” or the “husband.” I’d like to follow the lives of either of the young girls, but not if this author wrote those stories like this one was written. Yes, the author has a great vocabulary. The use of that verbiage occludes the flow of the story. Much as that wordy last sentence might affect anyone reading this review. I tried to think, “Oh, that thought or sentence is so deep and important for the story.” It wasn’t.

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