



The Great Forgetting

James Renner

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Jack Felter, a history teacher, returns home to bucolic Franklin Mills, Ohio, to care for his father, a retired pilot who suffers from dementia and is quickly losing his memory. Jack would love to forget about Franklin Mills, and about Sam, the girl he fell in love with, who ran off with his best friend, Tony. Except Tony has gone missing.

Soon Jack is pulled into the search for Tony, but the only one who seems to know anything is Tony's last patient, a paranoid boy named Cole. Jack must team up with Cole to follow Tony's trail-and maybe save the world. Their journey will lead them to Manhattan and secret facilities buried under the Catskills, and eventually to a forgotten island in the Pacific-the final destination of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370.

When Jack learns the details about the program known as the Great Forgetting, he's faced with the timeless question: Is it better to forget our greatest mistake or to remember, so it's never repeated?

The Great Forgetting Details

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Author : James Renner

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From Reader Review The Great Forgetting for online ebook

Dan Schwent says

When Jack Felter returns to his home town to help care for his dementia-stricken father, he winds up looking for his missing childhood friend, Tony, the friend that stole his high school girlfriend. Jack meets Tony's last patient, a kid named Cole with a very compelling delusion, that everything we think we know about history is wrong...

After reading The Man from Primrose Lane and True Crime Addict: How I Lost Myself in the Mysterious Disappearance of Maura Murray, I just had to read more James Renner. The Great Forgetting made him rise even higher in my esteem.

The Great Forgetting is a mind-bender of Phillip K. Dickian proportions. How much do we trust the history books? How much do we trust our own memories? What if the conspiracy theories are true? This book raises those questions and more.

It's best to go into this book unprepared so I'm not going to spoil the particulars. Once the truth behind Cole, Tony, and the rest of what was actually going on was revealed, I had a hard time doing anything but finishing it.

If I had to complain about something, which I won't, is that the characters were a little thin. However, I loved Jack and his father, The Captain. Cole grew on me as well, but I hated Tony and didn't trust Sam. Hell, even Scopes and the Maestro turned out to have hidden depths.

The tension toward the end was almost maddening. I haven't felt this engrossed with a book since the Dark Tower series. That's as great a compliment as I can give any book. Five out of five stars.

Jeanette says

Almost a 4 star but I cannot round it up. It was at least 4 star in entertainment value, until the last 1/3rd of the book. Then it was not.

The time conundrums and other facile interconnections of gradients (as this book defines gradients) did not make sense by then, and the outcomes became cartoonish as a result.

This author has immense skill in interfacing current or past minutia of culture and media into context of story and characters. That was absolutely 5 star level, and the parts of the book I liked the best. It reminded me of an early Stephen King.

But with extra long verbosity and introduction of too many intersects to match past Nazi or "forgotten" history, for me anyway- the tension dissolved. By page 250 only a few of the characters kept their depth. And by page 300, they all had progressed from idealistic yet flat cardboard figures and finally converted to tech game avatars.

Very disappointed that such an excellent slant and conceptual premise could have ended up as only a 3 star. Because the premise is an exceptional one and it was translated well for a goodly portion. Mu itself and its components were ridiculous in comparison.

Forgot to add: ITALICS. Flash-backed past events and characters' histories are represented by a break in the normal print pattern/chapter. In other words, you will have page after page after page of italics to read over a dozen times in this book. It was appalling. No, beyond annoying to the point that I was taken right out of the complex storyline. Please, please, please, publishers and authors. Return to a more chronological and English specific norm of print. This method is overused and killed all the critical logic here- at the same time.

Bradley says

What starts out as an intriguing mystery novel eventually turns into a devilishly wild ride of conspiracy theory SF, and this simple statement does nothing to explain just how CRAZY it'll get. :)

I'm a very big fan of cross-genre fiction and this one really fits the bill in a big, big way. The mystery is clever and engaging and fascinatingly strange, but what really struck my fancy was just how good the characters are. So much has happened in their lives and just getting to the point of the next reveal kept me glued to the page. These aren't even big reveals, just character reveals, and yet because Jack kept digging, this whole book took on a fantastic dimension that just got deeper and deeper as we find out more about Tony and Cole and the way the human mind can be a real nutter.

The whole book is a gradient. It starts you out with the small stuff and as you get acclimated, it gets steeper and steeper into nutter land. I'm just glad I already boil all my water. Of course, that may be because I drink little more than coffee and tea, but you know how it is. I avoid my Flouride in my water. :)

From there, however, I can't and won't spoil you, but if you're a conspiracy theory nut, yourself, do yourself a favor and read this little gem of a novel. Take a bag of your favorite theories, shake them around, take three handfuls of them, and now toss them in the air. Make connections. Build a story around them where they all fit together. Now read this book. How closely do they match?

Not close enough? Fine. Add another handful of theories and build another story. Closer? YES! lol

I can't believe the author got away with everything he did. The mystery connections were set up with some real brilliance. :) And this, my friends, became one hell of a great SF. :)

With one caveat: I debated knocking off a star for the slightly unsatisfying ending, but the whole ride of the rest of the novel was so strong and fascinating that I simply couldn't do that. I had a really great time. For those who've already read it, I liked the Prologue fine. It was the big action scene at the end and the immediate results of it, but not related to he-who-must-not-be-named. Maybe I just wanted something different to happen.

But everything else? I went fanboy all over it. :)

Thanks goes to the author for a physical copy of this book! It was a real blast!

Mia (Parentheses Enthusiast) says

CAUTION: *This review is filled with spoilers like you wouldn't believe. Definitely don't read this review unless you've read the book or unless you're positively sure you never will—come back later if you think you may read it at some point in the future, because The Great Forgetting definitely benefits from its surprises, wacky and flawed as they may be.*

I don't think there's any better way to describe my experience with The Great Forgetting than to relate two separate encounters I had while reading it.

I was halfway into Part 2 when my friend saw me reading this book. "Any good?" she asked. I nodded fiercely. "I can't wait to finish it. It's just so wild!"

The next time she saw me reading it, a few days later, I was mere pages from the end. "Almost done, huh?" she asked. I sighed heavily and nodded. "I can't wait to finish it. It's just so... wild."

"Good wild?"

I shook my head. "Bad wild."

See, the very thing that drew me into the story in the first place—the craziness of it—was the same thing that became so grating by the end. With every new aspect the author introduced, my disbelief became harder and harder to suspend until it was so ludicrous I rolled my eyes several times per chapter.

But let's backtrack for a second. The Great Forgetting is what I would call conspiracy fiction—it imagines not an alternate world from our own but the same one we live in, with all the secrets and covert plots laid bare. When the only main conspiracy Renner tackled was the titular one (radio signals causing people's minds to be wiped, allowing them to partake in a communal delusion and a shared yet false history) I was hooked. It was just in the right place between "plausible" and "crackpot nonsense" that reading about the protagonist delving further into something he initially dismissed was simultaneously entertaining and really engaging. But then Renner just had to go and through every single goddamned conspiracy theory ever hatched into this book, and it was just. Too much. Don't believe me? Here's a list of conspiracies The Great Forgetting incorporates into its plot, just off the top of my head:

- Bigfoot
- Nazi scientists
- the Holocaust
- fluoridated water
- Amelia Earhart
- D. B. Cooper
- the lost continent of Mu
- Alcatraz escapees
- fabricated history
- faked deaths
- genetically engineered humanoids
- chemtrails
- the 9/11 attacks
- Malaysia Airlines Flight 370

- Area 51
- Morgellons Syndrome
- secret tunnels through mountain ranges
- underground cities
- and practically everything but lizard people. And to be honest, I was kind of surprised that after all this nonsense, Mr Renner didn't just throw a reptilian overlord into the mix for shits and giggles.

But the ludicrous amount of conspiracies—even a few of which are too many to keep from scoffing at outright—wasn't the only bloated part of this novel. There were also way too many characters, several of which could easily be eliminated (such as Becky, Zaharie, Nils, and who the fuck even was Constance?). This issue isn't helped by the fact that *every single character* gets at least one mini-chapter where the omniscient narrator is in their head, so we see things from their point of view. It keeps the story from ever feeling focused on one plot, one issue, until the very end, and by then it's far too late. Plus, most of the conflicts that these alternate POV passages bring up are never touched on again, let alone resolved, rendering this tactic doubly ineffective.

Further, the characters themselves aren't interesting enough to warrant such a large number of them. The protagonist, Jack Felter, is pretty boring, being constantly moral and responsible and perfect and just generally not having a personality. His love interest Sam has a bit more going on, but her interesting tragic backstory was mentioned in the beginning and rarely seemed to affect her afterwards. And don't even get me started about Tony—Tony was just a fucking mystery to me. I guess I'm just supposed to accept his last-act transformation into a villain, and the fact that he was practically the human equivalent of a stale cracker despite everyone loving him and willing to walk the world for him.

Also... I refuse to believe that I'm reading into this just because I'm gay—there was definitely *something* happening between Tony and Jack, right? What the hell was *that* relationship? Jack remembers feeling closer to Tony than he'd ever felt with anyone else (even Sam, apparently). As kids they slept so close together in their sleeping bags that Jack fell asleep with Tony's breath on his face. They say they love each other pretty often—and before you come at me with that "they're just good friends" and "men can be vulnerable and loving with their friends, too", hang on! Jack doesn't just mention loving Tony, he mentions *falling* in love with him, and he says that it happened "the same way it happened with women." Okay, so I guess we just have to leave it at that, because Renner just sort of drops it without any real elaboration or exploration of this relationship. I guess they're just two straight guys who fell in love... straightly? And then fell in love with the same woman? (And speaking of, what the hell was up with that situation? The author acts like "falling into bed" with your best friend and his girlfriend is a totally natural thing that happens, but, uh, you know, it's definitely not. I don't casually visit people and wind up—oops!—sleeping with them and their significant other. Sam, Tony, and Jack's whole threesome/side-relationship thing was just baffling and it came out of absolutely nowhere.)

I don't mean to disparage all of the characters, though. Cole and the Captain were pretty great. Jean was great, too. What united these side characters, interestingly enough, is that they have compelling backstories AND flaws. They're layered and they're human and they're far from perfect. Their chapters were the only thing that redeemed the multiple-POV format.

Onto the writing. The prose in this book is nothing to write home about, but it's tremendously readable from start to finish so credit to Mr Renner for keeping things flowing smoothly there. Renner has a very specific talent that I noted a few times: he's very good at describing sound. I remember one noise being described as a thousand rubber balls rolling down staircases, for example. So that was pretty cool. But tonally, this book really confused me. I could never put my finger on how seriously it wanted to be taken. In some places, it

seemed like Renner was being almost tongue-in-cheek with his scores of conspiracy references, but in others it seemed like he genuinely wanted to make a larger point about humanity. There were some serious and thought-provoking passages about memory, immediately followed by these madcap chases by Nazi-created yeti-men with teleportation belts that totally threw the whole thing off. It was like tonal whiplash.

There was also a huge missed opportunity for some awesome meta-mindfuckery with the mention that some of the memories we'd previously read were altered—but nothing ever came of it. You never know why some memories were changed, or what they were originally. Which really bummed me out because I was ready for my head to be screwed with in a way that wasn't just another rehashing of that "alternate history where the Nazis took over" shtick.

I feel like I'm tearing this book to shreds and I really don't mean to. The first third is so interesting and engaging, and the parts with Cole showing Jack the "gradient," where you're not sure if he's trying to pull Jack into his delusions or if he's really perfectly sane, are fantastic. There was a delicious tension and conflict between what Jack believed and what he was being told, and later between what he believed and what he saw. I loved Cole's manipulation, earnest and clever as it was, and the moment when Jack had to decide whether to believe that he was crazy, or that there truly was a conspiracy so far-reaching it effected everyone else in the world. But once Jack threw himself into the conspiracy of the Great Forgetting, everything became so much more contrived.

One last thing before I go. The denouement of this story was just so problematic. I already had lowered my expectations after the "paradise island where everything and everyone is happy and perfect" segment, but good god did the ending just wreck it all. Not only did it involve all but two of the main cast of characters crashing suddenly to their deaths, but there was so much "Aha, I knew you would do that, which is why I did THIS! Bwahahaha!" it was just embarrassing. I feel like the rushed ending was the final nail in the coffin for me here, and the only reason this book was spared from getting two stars is because I really did love it in the beginning. Alas, sometimes a story just derails after a promising start. It's a special kind of disappointing.

Lea says

Okay. Where to start with this one . . .

The problem is that this is one of those books where nearly anything you say about it could be a spoiler. What's a girl to do? I want to rave about this book and explain in minute detail why you should be reading it RIGHT NOW -- instead of reading this review -- and yet, I so desperately do not want to ruin it for you so I can't say anything!

James Renner -- who, full disclosure, sent me this book -- is kind of scary, in that I'm pretty sure he literally looked into my brain and wrote this book using all that twisted information. And geez, how lucky is that?! So I finally get to read a book that combines all of the kooky nonsense I love, combined with alternative history -- which is my favourite kind of history -- in a big ball of unputdownable craziness. The only thing it needed was some sasquatch -- oh wait, there's that, too.

Seriously. The man is a genius. A frightening, mind reading genius.

And the references -- all the lovely lovely references, so much fun! Some of them are just little throw away nods to other books and writers. Some of them are deeper references that give your brain a little push, a "hey what do you think about this" kind of thing. And some are super gigantic enormous plot spoilery things that might make you a bit emotional. And it's all awesome.

I want to shift gears here just a bit to address the women in the book. There are two main female character -- there are others, but they're not as involved throughout the story -- Sam, the former love interest, and Jean, the sister. Writing it that way makes them seem very peripheral to the story, but they really aren't. What I found very interesting was that the author resisted the temptation to make them saintly. These are flawed characters, but ultimately . . . heroic. (As an aside, you could say the same about all of these characters.) Renner had me worried initially, as he described Sam's hair as "cinnamon" -- and I thought, here we go, another gorgeous woman who is more dream than human, when will you men stop doing that?! And then we find out that Sam has done some not so nice stuff, the biggest one being leaving our man Jack for his best friend -- and that simple fact kept me guessing about where her loyalties really were and whether or not I could trust her. Eventually we're given some more information that helps us see Sam in a different light -- I thought it was all very clever. Jack's sister, Jean, has a similarly troubled past, and battles her demons throughout the story as well. I wasn't really sure that Jean would be there for the group when she needed to be.

The author's book *The Man from Primrose Lane: A Novel* is one of my favourites -- I've read it multiple times. Pretty sure I'm going to be re-reading this one several times as well, just to catch all of the details I missed the first time around.

Final word -- you need to read this book! Highly recommend!

Sarah says

I had high expectations for this because I loved *The Man from Primrose Lane* so much. I enjoyed the first half of this a lot. It's a conspiracy theory oriented sci-fi thriller and that first half did get into my head a couple of times. Unfortunately the second half ended up taking it into rather too ridiculous territory. I still enjoyed it, it just wasn't as good as I had hoped.

Still, maybe I should start boiling my water...

??? 2.? says

★★???½

--Friday afternoon in the mental ward

Man, am I glad to see you again. I was beginning to go a little stir-crazy in here. Seriously, these idiots are just impossible to talk to. I've tried, you know, really tried to get through to them, but they all think I'm delusional. They can't even see that I'm the only sane one here!

You mind closing the door there? These walls have ears, if you know what I mean, and we sure don't need to add any more fuel to that fire. Pull up a chair, time is of the essence. Things are starting to progress at an alarming rate. You have got to get me out of here, man.

Alright, first things first, have you started boiling your water? Good. Thank you for humoring me there. Your eyes do seem a bit clearer today, so let's get to it. Do you know what a gradient is?

Yeah, it's sort of like an incline in the road I suppose, but that's not exactly what I was getting at. You see, the truth about what's really going on is so inconceivable that your mind would never be willing to accept it, if I told you everything, all at once. So instead, we'll use a gradient, or a system of baby steps, little truths if you will, which will ease your mind into realizing that ultimate truth. But we have to be patient. This is not something we can accomplish in a single day. And you'll have to be willing to do your part, meet me halfway. Do a little research of your own even.

What I've developed here is a seven-step gradient, comprised of seven impossible facts, each one progressively harder to accept than the one before. Don't worry though, the proof is out there, and I'll show you where to look.

Impossibility #1, so there's this man, the "Maestro" who's... *radio cuts in - SQUAWK SQUAWK SQUAWK BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEP -- THIS IS A TEST OF THE EMERGENCY BROADCAST SYSTEM*

Nooooo! Damn it, not again!!

(view spoiler)

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

Because this came out yesterday and it's amazing so it gets a bump. Don't like it?

"Life is long. Longer than we allow ourselves to remember."

Understatement of the year. I motherf-ing **LOVED** this. Holy hell. Where do I begin? Okay, so *The Great Forgetting* grabs you right from the cover. So appealing to the eye, so understated, so perfect. Then you open it and discover it's totally un-put-down-able . . . and that it's also one of those books where anything you say about it might be considered too much. Which leaves a Kelly and Mitchell combo who have looked pretty much like this ever since finishing the book on Saturday . . .

The basics are our MC Jack is a history teacher who plans to spend his summer vacation giving his sister a much needed break from dealing with their father who is quickly fading away due to dementia. It doesn't take long for Jack to catch up on small town gossip – mainly that his old bestie Tony (who also happens to be his high school sweetheart Sam's husband) has gone missing. Reluctantly Jack agrees to help track down his old friend which leads him to one of Tony's former psychiatric patients – a boy named Cole who will attempt to open Jack's eyes to the truth of *The Great Forgetting*. Then . . .

“Sometimes I get the feeling that none of this is right.”

So much mindblowing. Annnnnnnnnnnnnnnnd that's all I can tell you. Okay, well maybe not *alllll*. This book is smart. Like wicked smart. But don't let that intimidate you. Renner has done a great job of providing a cast of characters that are all Average Joes. While they find themselves put in spectacular circumstances, they are people with not-genius IQs so you never get lost in the crazy that is being thrown at you. Renner also does something that normally I hate – he inundates the reader with the present. Now, this may end up being a novel that doesn't quite stand the test of time, but for today? Right now? This sonofabitch **WORKS!** If you're into conspiracy theories and a story that stays on eleven for the duration, *The Great Forgetting* is not one to be missed. Be prepared to question **everything**. Oh, and make sure to get your foil hat fitted before even beginning . . .

Every star there is to star.

Alright. Review over – now for the full disclosure B.S. I never had contact with James Renner until he *personally* messaged me and asked if I would like to review his new book. Turns out he saw my review of *The Man From Primrose Lane* (which all of you should immediately read because the man ain't no one-hit-wonder) and didn't despise my giffy style (SUCK IT, GIF HATERS!). Upon receiving said message, I was very grateful to have stocked up on my supply of . . .

and proceeded to run around the house screaming about how awesome I am to my non-book-loving family who haven't yet figured out that I'm kind of a big deal. I should probably float my reviews ~~all day every day~~ more frequently in order to break into the Top 5 of the fake popularity contest. Whatevs. Anyway to make a long story even longer, endless thanks to Mr. Renner (and to Trudi who turned me on to his work in the first place). I can't wait to see what your crazy brain comes up with next.

AlcoholBooksCinema says

Stories are magic, and that is why the first thing any dictator does is to ban the stories that do not agree with him.

Brace for impact! A different thrill of spectacular from James Renner. An intriguing story with a scandalous vision that would have made Ray Bradbury read.

James Renner is my new favorite author. He once again succeeded in making me ditch my work and finish the book. His writing is so good it blew my mind. He once again proved the power of a straightforward storytelling without dropping too many adjectives and sentence enhancers. The Great Forgetting had it all except a foreseen ending. 4 stars because I felt the ending happened sooner than it otherwise would. This needs a sequel. Cannot end this way. It will be a delight for readers to read The Great Remembering. His writing is reason enough to keep reading.

Don't let this undeniable page-turner turn out to be a great miss. Put your trust in James Renner. But before that, You Need To Start Boiling Your Water.

Melissa says

The vertiginous veering between four stars and two! This starts out with a bang, reminiscent of Stephen King's short story *N*. inasmuch as it involves a patient/psychiatrist relationship that devolves due to the patient's growing influence over their doctor. While I find most of the conspiracy theories discussed implausible, it's still fun for me to suspend disbelief and wonder 'What If' along with the protagonist, Jack Felter – what if the fluoride in our water is there to keep us docile instead of cavity-free? What really is the deal with contrails? Is the paranoid Cole actually on to something or is Jack being sucked into his delusion?

There's a lot of exciting buildup, but once the story heads into what does it all mean territory, the writing begins to rush. The characters are heading somewhere for most of the book, but once they get there, actions are compressed and sensible explanations go by the wayside; in particular, there's some totally egregious stuff about teleporting belts to save the day that made me roll my eyes. Everything about their destination seems a little weird but nothing about that gets explored. At least seven weeks of plot happen off-page, and then the story veered straight downhill and I almost stopped reading altogether (view spoiler)

Just writing this is making me angry at the ending all over again. Two and 1/2 stars.

Douglas Lord says

Renner (*The Man from Primrose Lane*) begins—or does he end?—with an epilog in which a freshly severed monkey paw is found in the woods of rural Pennsylvania clutching the watch of one of the victims of Flight 93, which crash-landed there 14 years earlier. The paw is tattooed with a bright red swastika. Say what? Say “yeah.” The story proper focuses on history teacher Jack Felter, who returns to his pastoral Ohio hometown to help care for his ex-soldier father, now unstable with dementia. It's the last place Jack wants to be—too many psychic wounds that he blames on his two ex-crushes who ran off together to get married. One, Tony, disappeared three years ago, and the other, Samantha, enlists Jack's help in finding out wtf happened. Tony was a shrink, and Jack discovers that within two weeks of treating the teenage Cole he was raving about the water supply. Within 26 days, Tony had vanished into thin air. Jack contacts Cole to flush out the scoop, and the boy slowly compels Jack into believing that this world isn't reality, that dark powers fomented a Great Forgetting centered on lies, half-truths (like who won World War II) and mass hypnosis. Foreshadowing abounds. Dad advises Jack to “...play both sides.” Tony at one point says “[m]emory is about trust.” Jack is spurred to think, “[o]ur grasp on the truth is dependent of the honesty of older generations.” Which is the

rub—there's believability, authenticity here, a lot of it. The likable story moves quickly and has Jack sucked deep and fast into conspiracy theories about everything. Intricate, but easy to follow, this is well done with solid emotional anchors surrounding Jack's father and Sam. **VERDICT** If you enjoy alternate histories, this is a *damn good one*.

Find reviews of books for men at Books for Dudes, Books for Dudes, the online reader's advisory column for men from Library Journal. Copyright Library Journal.

karen says

"The thing is, memory is about trust. We have to trust that what we remember is fact. And we have to trust what other people remember for things we never saw."

... It was a disturbing and thrilling realization, that our grasp of the truth is dependent on the honesty of older generations, on the companies who write history books.

once again james renner has written a kickass novel that is impossible to review.

it's a *little* bit easier than The Man from Primrose Lane because the book doesn't suddenly *reinvent* itself in the middle, but it's definitely a book where caution is required in reviewing. it's best if you don't know what's going to happen until it's happening all around you. which is the main difference between this book and a swarm of hornets.

if i had to sell it in five words, it would be: conspiracy theory road trip novel.

fortunately, i have so many more words.

like these: umami pepsi. make this a thing, please.

not a helpful review so far. so let me try to explain. there's a *kind* of novel that always feels like a home when i come across one. i can't articulate exactly what it *is* about these books except that they are paradoxically both exciting and comforting to me; my heart beats faster while my body relaxes. they have nothing in common with each other, although they frequently fall into the place where postmodern metafiction intersects with slipstream and kinda knocks you over sideways a little and has you questioning reality.

Ron Currie Jr., The Sea Came in at Midnight, Jonathan Carroll, When We Were Animals, Gretel and the Dark, Infinite Jest, Evan Dara, The Dead Lands, Magnetic Field etc etc. it's a feeling that registers as a tightening in my armskin first, and then i get warm and still and my brain locks in and i'm just *gone*. it feels like reading the forgotten bits of my own dreams (which already sounds like the plot to a jonathan carroll novel. feel free to run with it, j.c.) but also like how it feels to wake up after a seizure or a fainting spell, where everything is half-familiar, half-foreign. if you've never experienced either of those things, it is like how disoriented sam must feel at the beginning of each episode of quantum leap.

ask your parents.

but anyway, this is one of THOSE books. one of MY books.

it's such a specific experience - i rarely get deeply immersed in a book where i'm not constantly aware of myself-as-reader, but it's more than just immersion; it's quite physical. there are plenty of books i love that don't give me this feeling, and there are plenty of books that started to (House of Leaves) but then ended up going in a different direction.

and all of this is just blather because i'd much rather tackle the task of trying to explain some weirdo feeling i get sometimes that is likely due to an undiagnosed neurological disorder than to risk ruining this book by saying too much.

but for those of you who need more than just "how it makes my arms feel" to decide whether or not to read a book, it's about history, memory, regret, *some nerd bullshit*, family, madness, secret agencies with your best interests in mind, grief, urban legends and "what really happened to..." the idea that knowledge is power, but memory even more so, and whether it's better to remember and learn from mistakes both personal and cultural or to forget every last bit of shame and humiliation and historical atrocity and start over unencumbered. and bigfoot.

also, the truth about the moon is finally revealed and, oddly enough, it's what i've been saying for years.

renner does a really good job, through different characters, addressing some of the questions that would naturally arise from people confronted with Great Truths, but i still have a million questions, or at least two. which i will hold for now until this is published (not long now!) and we can all chat about it. unless there's another round of the great forgetting and all of this gets wiped from my mind.

but i can't tell you any more until you start boiling your water.

yayyy! i totally forgot this was being sent to me and i opened the package thinking it was a different book and then i went SQUAWKKKK real loud when i saw what it was so i thank you james renner and st martins for making me scare my cat!

review coming...

come to my blog!

Vera (GirlySunglasses) says

Some books are special. They make you look at the world around you in a different way. They fill your heart and your mind with 'what ifs'. They make you think of possibilities.

This is one of these books.

I recently read James Renner's first fiction novel, The Man from Primrose Lane and fell in love with his

style. Then I learned he was releasing a new book soon and couldn't wait to read it. I bought **The Great Forgetting** the morning it was released, and started reading immediately. Unfortunately, it was a busy week and I couldn't read much during it but as soon as Saturday arrived, I put all my focus on it. I knew it would be a great ride, I just didn't anticipate it being so intense - way more intense than **The Man From Primrose Lane**.

I got attached to one of the main characters, *Cole*. He grew on me to a point that I was really caring about his future and well being.

(view spoiler)

There are great characters in this book - it's not a one person adventure. Nils, for example, brings a bit of much needed comic relief. The Captain is one of the brightest spots. I'm a little ambivalent to Sam. Jake is the appointed hero, the official main character so to speak, but to me, the real star, the real hero, is Cole.

There's not a real, defined villain in this story. There are mentions of bad guys, sure, and even brief appearances of a few, but what you have is mainly misguided beings. Beings wanting the same thing, but going at it differently because of their own experiences and approaches to life and society.

This book is rich in so many aspects. It is something that needs to be read, needs to be experienced. I highly recommend it.

Congratulations, James Renner on this brilliant work.

Footnote: If you're a fan of dystopian novels, you should definitely check this out, even though it's not one *per se*, you'll find many elements that you will enjoy.

mark monday says

I almost forgot to write this review! ba-dum-bum.

a complex, fast-paced, sci-fi tinged thriller that often feels like a lighthearted romp despite the heavy themes and upsetting deaths on display. great artists will continually revisit their pet subjects and themes; Renner - clearly a great writer - does the same in this second novel which deals again with how humans process grief, loss, and trauma. often by.... wait for it... forgetting. but also by rewriting histories, both personal and large-scale. in his ingenious and mind-boggling first novel, the canvas was relatively small and the focus was intimate: Renner was exorcising personal demons and obsessions, and also penning a sad but warm love letter to his home state Ohio. in *The Great Forgetting*, the canvas is wider: writ large, it encompasses the Holocaust (and, in a way, Holocaust denial), 9/11, and all sorts of conspiracy theories; writ small, it subtly probes how people deal with painful emotions and things gone awry in life. there's so much going on in this novel that I frequently had to cling to those recognizable Renner themes to keep my bearings - at times it felt as if he threw everything he was currently interested in at his writer's wall and kept not just what stuck, but what slid off as well. as a result, the book is often chaotic in an enjoyably berserk way, but just as often felt like it could have used a bit more mapping out before finger met keyboard. several highly intriguing and sympathetic characters are unfortunately lost in the breathlessly paced mix. despite my issues, this is certainly a worthy accomplishment and an enjoyable read. I'm looking forward to reading more by him.

Trudi says

I'm so remiss in my reviews of late, but I really wanted to make sure I wrote something for this one to draw your attention to it: A) because it's a whole lot of wacky, weird and wild fun (something I've come to expect from this author) and B) said author was generous enough to send me a copy in the mail so the very least I can do is tell the reading world what I thought of it.

James Renner is the author of the mind-bending, genre-mashing *The Man from Primrose Lane* and you really must read that one if you are looking for something that is wholly unlike anything else. There was some buzz a few years back that Bradley Cooper had been tapped to star in a film adaptation, but no updates on that yet.

I didn't know what to expect in picking up *The Great Forgetting*, but you can bet I approached it with keen anticipation. Renner is a brave author who doesn't ever make safe choices. He marches out into the badlands of crazy and bewildering, sees what he finds there, and then puts it into his story. It doesn't always work, but considering the kind of unique crazy pants he's peddling, it works amazingly, unforgettably (heh) well most of the time.

This one starts as almost a quiet domestic drama: an unassuming high school teacher returns to his hometown where his sister is looking after their senile father. Jack has to deal with an ex-girlfriend who married his best childhood friend Tony. But Tony has gone missing and his wife wants Jack to help her get him declared deceased. In his efforts to do this, Jack meets a boy named Cole, the last person Tony had any significant contact with before his disappearance. Cole is a patient in a psychiatric ward suffering from complex and paranoid delusions. Or are they? The more Jack talks to him the further down the rabbit hole he goes. And takes us with him.

Side note of interest: James Renner is definitely an author to watch. And while he has a noteworthy talent spinning wild and crazy tales of speculative fiction, Renner is also a dedicated true crime writer. He is currently researching the unsolved disappearance of UMass nursing student, Maura Murray and will publish *True Crime Addict* in May 2016 about his experiences. The Maura Murray case is a real life rabbit hole story and it is very easy to become lost in all the moving pieces and arm chair detective theories that exist for this cold case. Renner also maintains a blog of his ongoing investigations that makes for riveting reading if you are into that sort of thing.

Two young armchair detectives are also hosting a pretty decent podcast right now about the Maura Murray case in which Renner has been a guest. The hosts are currently at work on a documentary.
