



ONCE REMOVED

by Colette Sartor

2018 Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction

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The women in the linked short story collection *Once Removed* carry the burdens imposed in the name of intimacy—the secrets kept, the lies told, the disputes initiated—as well as the joy that can still manage to triumph. A singer with a damaged voice and an assumed identity befriends a silent, troubled child; an infertile law professor covets a tenant's daughterly affection; a new mother tries to shield her infant from her estranged mother's surprise Easter visit; an aging shopkeeper hides her

husband's decline and a decades-old lie to keep her best friends from moving away.

With depth and an acute sense of the fragility of intimate connection, Colette Sartor creates stories of women that resonate with emotional complexity. Some of these women possess the fierce natures and long, vengeful memories of expert grudge holders. Others avoid conflict at every turn, or so they tell themselves. For all of them, grief lies at the core of love.

ADVANCE PRAISE:

“Colette Sartor’s stories shimmer with a radiant, unsettling light. She strips away the veils that we hide behind and exposes our deepest fears and desires, revealing who we inescapably are. The stories are laced with dark humor and raw, earned emotion, and they proceed from page to page with a beautiful urgency. Her prose sings and her wounded characters linger in readers’ memories like people you’ve known, people you could have been had luck gone the other way. This is trenchant, gorgeous fiction, the voice of a writer you’ll follow anywhere, everywhere.”

—Bret Anthony Johnston, author of *Remember Me Like This*

“These are short stories the way they were meant to be told, from a writer who, tale after tale, proves her mastery of the form. Peopled with characters who are bracingly complex, these stories tease out the subtleties of human relationships, especially when they’ve gone awry. I was absorbed and moved from every first sentence to the last.”

—Cristina Henríquez, author of *The Book of Unknown Americans*

“Lordy, what a wallop each of these stories delivers—to the heart and the head, sure, but also to the conscience and the soul, not to mention to the myths of family that we embrace and to the vital lies peculiar to love that we cleave to. Equally stunning is Ms. Sartor’s command of craft—no cleverness for its own sake, no peekaboo, no ‘Look, Ma, no hands.’ Instead, with enviable humility and no little grace, she has subordinated herself to the needs, wishes, desires, and dreams of characters who have galvanized her imagination and engaged her empathy. Bravo.”

—Lee K. Abbott, author of *All Things, All at Once: New and Selected Stories*

“*Once Removed* is that rare book that succeeds on both micro and macro levels; the stories focus on the specific intimacy of individual lives yet also participate in the larger project of a whole world made of these stories—dependent on them, in fact, supported and enlarged and sustained by them. Sartor’s women suffer the internal and external scarring of the dangerous terrain they navigate: love, family, self, community. They ask uncomfortable questions, both of themselves and of the reader; it’s hugely satisfying to reach the end of the book and feel the resonant strength of the answers it proposes.”

—Antonya Nelson, author of *Bound*



AUTHOR BIO:

COLETTE SARTOR teaches at the UCLA Extension Writers' Program as well as privately and is an executive director of the CineStory Foundation, a mentoring organization for emerging TV writers and screenwriters. Her writing has appeared in *Carve* magazine, *Slice* magazine, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *Colorado Review*, and other publications. Her debut short story collection, *Once*

Removed, won the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction. In addition to this and other awards, she has been granted a Glenna Luschei Award, a Reynolds Price Short Fiction Award, and a Truman Capote fellowship from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, where she completed her MFA.

Author Photo by [Rayme Silverberg](#)

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