



February 21 - March 6, 2024

Dear Reader,

I'm a writer. It's all I've ever wanted to do. It's all I've ever wanted to be. Libraries curated my love for writing. I grew up in libraries, honed my writing in libraries, read my first books checked out from libraries. So, it's no surprise that for the last fifteen years, I've had the honor of serving my community as a librarian. Chief among my responsibilities is the coordination of all aspects of collection development. For me, there's no greater satisfaction than providing my patrons with stories that will move them, inspire them, and challenge them.

*One Summer in Savannah* is such a story.

*One Summer in Savannah* tells the story of a woman who conceives a child after a sexual assault and must decide whether to allow her attacker's family into her daughter's life. Inspiration for *One Summer in Savannah* stems from the 2015 Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church shooting. After the parishioners fed him and prayed for him, Dylann Roof shot and killed nine of them. Days after that terrible tragedy, before they had even buried their loved ones, some of the survivors and relatives of those killed walked into a South Carolina courtroom and forgave Roof. At that moment, I realized I knew nothing about forgiveness. I assumed that there were crimes and acts that were unforgivable. I learned the opposite. The loved ones who forgave Roof taught me that forgiveness is not one-size fits all and unknowingly challenged me to look inward to create my own definition of forgiveness. I decided to explore that by writing a book that challenged readers on the definition of forgiveness and what it truly means to forgive.

When I sat down to write *One Summer in Savannah*, I realized I had a theme but not a story. The story didn't come until someone very close to me told me that she conceived a child through sexual assault and practices the act of forgiveness every day. When I asked if I could share her story, she overwhelmingly agreed. She said "there are so many other women like me. It's an even darker side of sexual assault that no one ever talks about." After the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, she called me and expressed the importance of *One Summer in Savannah*, saying that if a woman lives in a state without exceptions for rape or incest or if she cannot afford to travel to a state to obtain a legal abortion, she'll have no choice but to have the baby. She said, "I made a choice. Some women will have no choice."

Every year, thousands of brave women are faced with a rape-related pregnancies. How does, or could, forgiveness work in such a situation? *One Summer in Savannah* tries to discover just that.

Thank you so much,

Terah Shelton Harris