

## Preview of “Gramnesia,” the next novel by Lori V. Fogarsi, coming in spring 2013!

Shelley and David are a couple of almost-empty-nesters whose children are just about all off to college. Preparing to embark on the next stage of their life, they’ve just ordered white furniture and are planning the vacation they waited their entire lives to take.

Everything changes when Alexandra, sixteen and pregnant, shows up on their doorstep and announces that she’s the daughter he never knew he had! Their life is catapulted in a completely different direction, abounding with dilemmas: Not only do they have an additional child, but also a baby in a household that had been just about to become serene. How much should they help her? And how could they not?

Shelley feels like she no longer fits in anywhere and to top it off, having two sixteen-year-old girls suddenly plunged into being sisters and school mates is not exactly warm and fuzzy. When Alexandra’s behavior starts to become erratic, the couple is faced with even tougher decisions to make.

Hold on for an emotional yet witty ride as you join this family of characters in a story of love, loyalty, heartbreak, and humor that will stay with you long after you turn the last page!

### Chapter 1

It all started on a Tuesday morning when I was in my kitchen, pouring myself a cup of coffee and marveling that there was any left in the pot. No one else was home, another near miracle.

With three college-aged kids home for the summer and a high school junior still at home full-time, a mathematical phenomenon occurs in which they multiply faster than amoebae, resulting in somewhere around nine quasi adults/teenagers at any given time. Sleeping, running around in bathing suits, asking for a ride, and eating, eating, eating. Ceaselessly eating.

So when I heard the doorbell ring, I didn’t run to answer it. The UPS man, whose job brings him to our doorstep with astonishing regularity, rings it whenever he leaves a package on the porch. And since I wasn’t expecting anyone, I didn’t see the need to go to the door in my PJs and reveal to the young-ish, good-looking courier that I was still in a state of undress even though it was after ten o’clock.

Then it rang a second time. Which meant that either it was a package I had to sign for, or it was a neighbor stopping by for some as-yet-unknown favor to ask. Sighing, I set down my mug, still my favorite despite the small chip on the rim because it says, *I’m 30... It seems like I should have money by now*. It had been modified with a Sharpie on its ten-year anniversary to read, *I’m 40*, and when I reached 45 I decided not to bother updating it anymore; It was still funny.

As I approached the door, I could see through its glass oval that there was a woman standing on my porch. Bracing myself to deal with whatever solicitation it might be, I opened the door and found that she wasn’t a woman at all. She was a girl-woman. And not just any older girl/younger woman, but one that was hugely pregnant, her

glistening face pocked full of acne, and bright blue eyes so watery they reminded me that I've been meaning to water the hanging flower baskets.

"Yes?"

"Is this the Morsony household?"

Immediately I knew that this was not someone closely acquainted with our family: She had pronounced Morsony the way most people would, *more-sewn-ee*, when in fact my husband's unusual ancestors had decided to pronounce it *more-sunny*.

"Yes it is. Can I help you?"

"I need to talk to David Morsony."

"He's not here at the moment. May I help you with something?"

She blinked. Her first tear fell. Fidgeting with her blonde ponytail, I saw that her hand was trembling, and I watched with horror as her lip began to quiver in a fashion that I knew was the precursor to the bawling, snot-bubbling drama I was so familiar with, having raised two girls of my own.

Averting my eyes, I noticed that in my driveway there was a Ford Focus that looked as if its only opportunity to move would be via a tow truck. It was blue, with a dented front fender and two different colors of duct tape hanging off one of the headlights. The windows were open and at first glance it appeared that someone was sitting in the passenger seat. Then I realized that it was a dog: one of those gigantic brindle dogs that reminded me of that 1980s movie with Tom Hanks.

The girl was sniffing and wiping under her eyes, while I thought longingly about my coffee, which was undoubtedly getting cold, abandoned on the counter inside.

Then it occurred to me that this girl didn't appear to be selling something, yet she had asked for my husband. Somewhere in the back of my mind lurked an intangible sense of foreboding as I waited for her to say something. I slapped at yet another mosquito; neither the bugs nor the heat ever let up during North Carolina summers and they were both out in full-force that morning.

I looked at the girl. She looked at me. She leaned up against one of the porch columns and I realized that since I was so uncomfortable, she had to be about ready to collapse. Mentally smacking myself in the head and relinquishing any hope of enjoying my quiet morning, I gestured toward the rocking chairs and asked if she'd like to sit down. But either she didn't see my gesture or chose to ignore it because she said, "That would be amazing," and stepped toward the door.

Quickly deciding that she didn't meet the qualifications for a dangerous intruder, I held the door open and she squeezed past me, her big, tight belly leading the way. Walking straight ahead into my kitchen the way all visitors do, she sat at the counter where my stool was already pulled out from my earlier attempt at solitude.

"Would you like some iced tea?"

"Sweet tea? That would be great!" Disproportionately appreciative, I hoped she realized that this was no home-steeped, prepared-in-the-sun-all-day sweet tea: It was Crystal Light, this former New Yorker's halfhearted attempt at Southern hospitality.

I handed her the glass and a napkin, which she immediately used to wipe the sweat that was beading up on her forehead.

"So, can I ask why you're wanting to speak to my husband?"

"Oh. Yeah, I guess so. So, you're David's wife?"

"Yes."

“Oh.”

Suddenly it occurred to me that this girl was not only similar to my own sixteen and eighteen-year-old girls, but she was also not that much younger than my twenty-one and twenty-three-year-old stepsons. And she was pregnant. Very pregnant. My internal rosary beads started twisting as I realized that we could be in for some seriously bad news. *How many times have I talked to those boys about safe sex?* The anger welled up inside me even though I had no information yet. *I'll kill them!*

She fidgeted with her napkin, twisting it into a little cone, then tapping its end with her fingertip. “You’re probably going to be surprised,” she said, her eyes turned downward.

“I may not be as surprised as you think,” I said, looking pointedly at her stomach.

“I’m David’s daughter.”

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She was right, I was surprised. And that’s an understatement. Disappointment washed over me as myriad implications spun through my head: David had lied to me; David had a child he didn’t take care of; David had *lied to me*.

It just seemed impossible. Ours was a marriage built of trust! A second marriage for each of us, the ten years David and I were together still felt like a dream come true. Every day. We told each other everything, shared every thought, feeling, nuance of our lives. From day one our philosophy was that we might as well be honest, be ourselves, because eventually the truth would come out anyway. Unfathomably, it seemed that day had come.

She was watching me, undoubtedly seeing the horror wash over my face as the betrayal of David’s omission coalesced in my stomach. *It just seems impossible*, was all I could think. David is the most ethical man I’ve ever met. Or even heard of! The idea that he had a child he had nothing to do with was preposterous. Yet here she was, sitting in front of me.

“He doesn’t know.”

“What?”

“He doesn’t even know I exist. My mother never told him.”

Relief and confusion combined so that I didn’t know if I felt better or worse.

“Do you mind if I use your bathroom?” She indicated her belly with the commiserative expression all pregnant women use when they’re talking to another woman who has had children. I tried to ignore the childish, midlife crisis part of me that resented her assuming I had kids. *Of course I look like I have kids. I’m a forty-five-year-old woman who has kids!* I admonished myself.

“Sure, it’s there in the hall, to the left.”

“Thanks.”

I picked up my mug and took a sip of my now-tepid coffee, then dumped it down the sink. Pulling the pitcher out of the fridge, I poured myself a glass of iced tea and contemplated what to do. Standing there in the silent kitchen, a squeaky, high-pitched noise broke through my thought process. Listening carefully, I realized that it didn’t sound like the neighborhood toddlers or any other recognizable sound.

Striding toward the front of the house, the bathroom door flung open just as I was passing it, smashing into the top of my foot.

“Omigod, I’m so sorry!”

I rubbed the spot, which I already knew would be yellow and blue by nightfall.

“I’m really sorry, are you okay?”

“Sure, I’ll be fine,” I looked at her, questioning.

“I was rushing because that’s Tiny, making that noise. It’s too hot for him to stay in the car and he hates being alone.”

“Oh.”

“Do you think it would be okay for me to bring him in? For a little while? The air-conditioning will make him feel so much better.”

Now, I do like dogs, don’t get me wrong. I would even go so far as to say that I love dogs. But this was a huge dog, and a dog I didn’t know. My mind’s eye went into my living room where there was brand new white furniture—David and I had ordered it when our youngest turned sixteen. The plan was to hurry up and enjoy nice furniture while our kids were older but didn’t yet have grandchildren to bring over and destroy it.

I looked at her. Her face was filled with hope. I looked out the front door at Tiny (who was anything but). His chin was resting where the car window was wide open, heartbrokenly staring at my house and occasionally making a yelping sound that made him sound... well, tiny.

“How does he do with cats?” I asked, thinking of Frick, our nineteen-year-old cat who was already heartbroken about losing his buddy, Frack, just six months earlier.

“He’s great. He loves cats!” she exclaimed in a desperately bright tone.

“Fine,” I sighed, hoping he loves cats as friends rather than as hors d’oeuvres. “But make sure he doesn’t chew anything in here.”

“Oh, he won’t,” she smiled, a glimmer of happiness brightening her face for the first time since she arrived. “He’s a really good dog. You’ll see.”

She went out to get Tiny while I went into the kitchen and called David at work.

“I need you to come home. Yes, now. Right now. And drive carefully. I love you.”

**I hope you enjoyed the preview! If you’d like to stay updated and receive other exclusive “Gramnesia” previews, I invite you to join my online community at**

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Sincerely,

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(LoriTheAuthor)