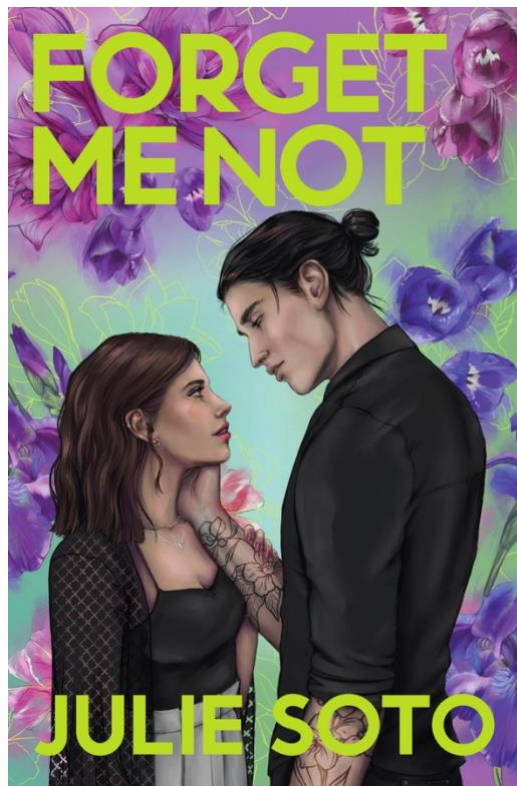




YOUR BOOK CLUB RESOURCE

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## READING GROUP GUIDE



## Author's Note

Growing up, it was a truth universally acknowledged that Sacramento was a place to leave—at least in my experience. The theater was in New York. The beaches were in LA. The culture was two hours west in San Francisco. And what even was CSU Sacramento? I grew up surrounded by people who agreed that Sacramento is a great place to raise a family, but if you're going to be an artist—get out. And I did. But like most Hallmark love stories where a city girl must return home from New York and learn to love her hometown roots with the help of a rough and rugged carpenter or mechanic or boatswain, I came home to Sacramento. And that boatswain, for me, was *Forget Me Not*.

Setting this book in Sacramento didn't seem like a huge deal to me until I was a quarter into writing it. Suddenly, everything was very specific and there was no way to get the book out of Sacramento. It was incredibly easy to know where Ama bought her donuts, where Elliot takes her for a date, which high school Ama went to and what other people think of that. Some things were instinctual, like the precise location of Elliot's flower shop—it's the shop where I picked up prom corsages and boutonnieres, though now relocated. About seventy-five percent of the locations mentioned in this book are real, and of that remaining quarter, about fifteen percent are locations that have either closed their doors or will be an inside joke with Sacramentans. Some names are cleverly veiled to protect my town, but if you know, you know.

I grew up driving past weddings in the McKinley Park Rose Garden, where a huge part of this book is set. I was never a little girl who dreamed of her wedding day, but when I sat down and tried to figure out what a perfect Sacramento wedding would look like, I found myself gravitating toward the Rose Garden and Midtown. Is it how I'd like to do my wedding one day? Maybe not. But I know I'd like to have Ama as my wedding planner.

It was important to me that Ama hadn't left town for college or a big career and then had come back to Sacramento, as if it was a second choice. That's something I always regret about my first several years back in my hometown—that I felt like I'd failed the quest to get out of Sacramento. For Ama in *Forget Me Not*, her dreams had always aligned with where she lived. She didn't need to go live the city girl life before coming home to fall in love. She knew she could accomplish everything she wanted from two blocks east of where she grew up. And sure, I threw in a rough and rugged boatswain who owns a flower shop, but can you blame me?

- Julie Soto

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## Discussion Questions

1. At the end of the book, Ama and Elliot's positions on marrying each other seem to have flipped. Ama is open to it and proposing to Elliot every day, and Elliot is the one saying no. What do you think Elliot is waiting for? Do you think he still believes Ama is opposed to getting married? What do you think she could do to convince him otherwise?
2. When we first meet Elliot, he states that he hates flowers, but by the next time we see him, he has learned to enjoy them. Have you ever reluctantly accepted a work assignment or a family responsibility that you grew to love and understand?
3. Why do you think Ama's position on getting married changed?
4. Both Ama and Elliot take on huge projects without getting a lot of assistance. Why do you think it is hard for each of them to ask for help?
5. The Greek myth of Amaryllis is mentioned briefly. Do you see any similarities in that story and in Ama and Elliot's relationship? Who is who?
6. Why do you think it is hard for Ama to see how Whitney has been two-faced to her? Do you think Ama owes Whitney any loyalty?
7. Ama's mom and Elliot's dad both affect their children's lives in some way. For Ama, her mother shaped how she views relationships and marriage, and Elliot's dad's death pivoted Elliot's career path. How have your parents influenced and maybe even dictated your life? How hard is it for children to separate themselves from their parent's values, expectations, and plans?
8. In the first chapter Ama tells someone that weddings are not marriages, that they're just a moment in time. What do you think about this? Do you feel that people make too big of a deal of weddings when they should be focused on what happens after? Do you think the bride should not have gone through with the wedding and party when she wasn't sure about the marriage?

9. We see throughout the story how social media has both helped and harmed various characters. Do you think social media is a good thing? What are the pitfalls of social media for someone's career or reputation? How has social media affected your life—in good and bad ways?

10. Ama is constantly reminding herself to “be professional”. Do you feel that Ama conducts herself in an unprofessional way? Do you think that some jobs allow for some so-called unprofessionalism like befriending your clients?

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