



# The Romantic: A Novel

*Barbara Gowdy*

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**The Romantic: A Novel** Barbara Gowdy

**From the author of *The White Bone*, a piercing novel of passionate attachment and of the fear and freedom of letting go**

Louise Kirk learns about love and loss at an early age. When she is nine years old, her former beauty queen mother disappears, leaving a note that reads only—and incorrectly—"Louise knows how to work the washing machine." Soon after, the Richters and their adopted son, Abel, move in across the street. Louise's immediate devotion to the exotic, motherly Mrs. Richter is quickly transferred to her nature-loving, precociously intelligent son.

From this childhood friendship evolves a love that will bind Louise and Abel forever. Though Abel moves away, Louise's attachment becomes ever more fixed as she grows up. Separations are followed by reunions, but with every turn of their fractured relationship, Louise discovers that Abel cannot love her as fiercely and exclusively as she loves him. Only when she faces another great loss is Louise finally forced to confront the costs of abandoning herself to another.

Skillfully interweaving the stories of Louise and Abel at different ages, Barbara Gowdy produces a powerful exploration of love's many incarnations: a motherless daughter who yearns to be adopted, a husband eternally linked to a wife who has left him, a girl bewitched by the boy next door, a woman who refuses to let go of a magnetic, elusive man. Haunting and profound, *The Romantic* is a story about love in all its exquisite variations.

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