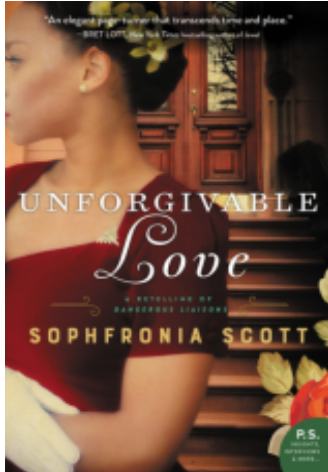


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# Unforgivable Love: A Retelling of Dangerous Liaisons

by Sophronia Scott

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## About the Book

In this vivid reimagining of the French classic *LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES*, it's the summer when Jackie Robinson breaks Major League Baseball's color barrier and a sweltering stretch has Harlem's elite fleeing the city for Westchester County's breezier climes, two predators stalk amidst the manicured gardens and fine old homes.

Heiress Mae Malveaux rules society with an angel's smile and a heart of stone. She made up her mind long ago that nobody would decide her fate. To have the pleasure she craves, control is paramount, especially control of the men Mae attracts like moths to a flame.

Valiant Jackson always gets what he wants --- and he's wanted Mae for years. The door finally opens for him when Mae strikes a bargain: seduce her virginal young cousin, Cecily, who is engaged to Frank Washington. Frank values her innocence above all else. If successful, Val's reward will be a night with Mae.

But Val secretly seeks another prize. Elizabeth Townsend is fiercely loyal to her church and her civil rights attorney husband. Certainly there is something redeemable in Mr. Jackson. Little does she know that her worst mistake will be Val's greatest triumph.

## Discussion Guide

1. When it comes to men, Mae Malveaux believes she has a well hidden contempt for their arrogance. How well hidden is that arrogance? In what ways do you feel her contempt is justified or unjustified? In which instances do you see Mae's behavior as a woman doing what she has to do in a man's world?

2. What, if anything, new did you discover about Harlem society in the 1930s and 1940s?
3. Have you seen any version of DANGEROUS LIAISONS (the motion picture or the play or even *Cruel Intentions*). How did this lessen or increase your enjoyment of the novel?
4. Discuss the roles of 'keeping up appearances' in the actions of Mae, Val, Gladys, Cecily and Elizabeth.
5. Would Elizabeth have continued to be contented in her marriage had Val not come along? Or do you feel she was already beginning to emotionally separate from her husband and from that marriage? Why do you think Elizabeth was attracted to Val to the point of being willing to sacrifice her way of life? Was it solely from love or were there other motivations?
6. Do you believe Val truly changed for the better? Were you surprised at his fate?
7. Jackie Robinson is a hero of Val's. What do you think Val sees in Robinson that makes him idolize the player? Is it solely his role in changing baseball, a sport Val loves, forever --- or are there attributes Val sees in Robinson that he longs to emulate?
8. Are you a fan of other retellings of classic tales? What do you enjoy most about retellings?
9. What role do you think Mr. Travis plays in Cecily's part of the story?
10. In which of the book's settings would you feel most at home --- Harlem, Westchester, Paris or rural North Carolina?

## Author Bio

Sophronia Scott hails from Lorain, Ohio. She was a writer and editor at *Time* and *People* magazines before publishing her first novel, ALL I NEED TO GET BY. She holds an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts and a bachelor's degree in English from Harvard. Her short stories and essays have appeared in numerous literary journals. She lives in Connecticut with her husband and son.

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