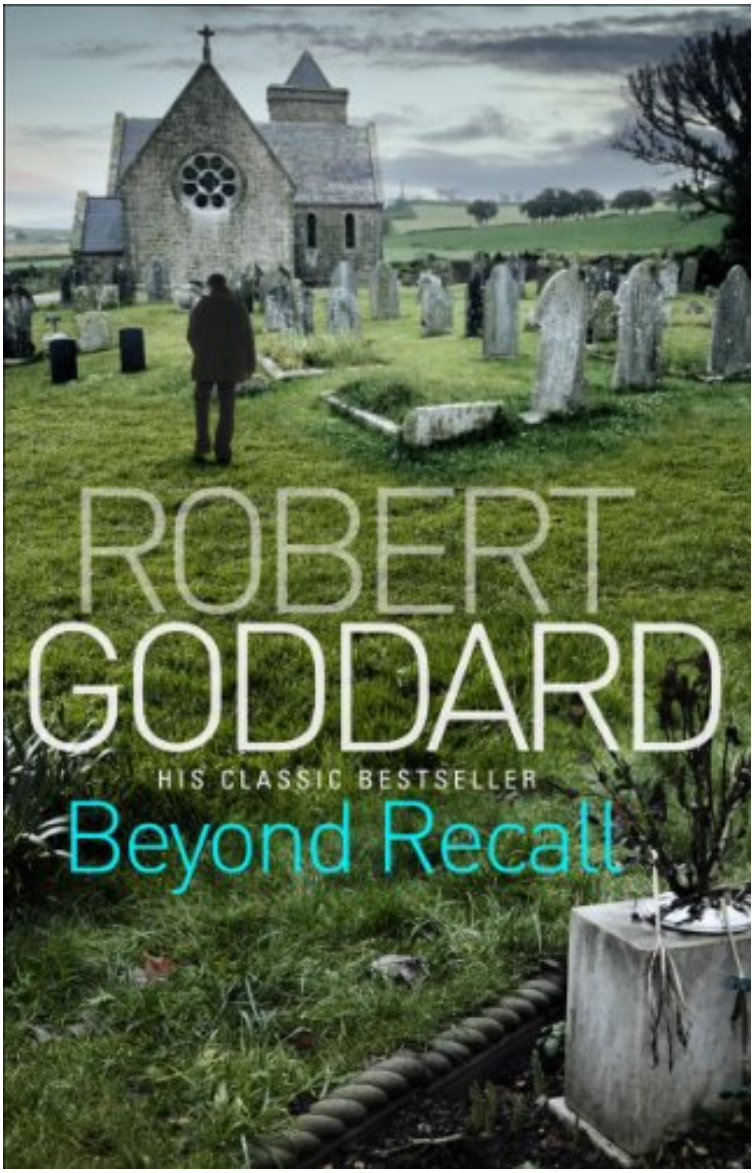
Beyond Recall



Par Robert Goddard
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(Get free) Beyond Recall

Par Robert Goddard : Beyond Recall before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Beyond Recall:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurEstranged from his family for most of his adult life, Chris Napier is persuaded to return home for his niece's wedding. At the reception, he is shocked to recognise a dishevelled intruder as his childhood friend Nicky Lanyon, whose presence is a chilling reminder of a murder and subsequent trial that Chris has tried hard to forget.When Nicky hangs himself, Chris is compelled to revisit the tragic events of 34 years ago, and the apparent justice that was served. But as present day mysteries begin to shadow his footsteps into the past, his search for the truth soon becomes a desperate struggle for his own survival..comA carefully crafted tale of suspense, Beyond Recall interweaves present and past as Christian Napier sets out to discover the truth behind his great-uncle's murder, committed during the days of rationing and privation

following the Second World War. That death provided the foundation of the Napier family's subsequent prosperity, but Christian is led to question the verdict reached in the case by the more recent suicide of an old and abandoned friend. The whole of the action is relayed through Napier's eyes and voice as he struggles to sort out his understanding of what happened before he was born, his own memories as a child, the alcohol-hazed intervening years, and the current arm's-length relationship he maintains with the surviving members of his family. Goddard's sense of place is strong. The Cornish market town of Truro, with its 19th-century cathedral looming over events spanning a century, provides the backdrop for the mystery and also for the shifting fortunes of the British experience. Descriptions of a grand family home transformed into a hotel and conference center, the tiny chain-pulled ferry crossing an estuary as it has done for generations, and Cornwall's unchanging and temperate beauty offer convincing detail beyond the usual place-name dropping. Although the denouement is muddled by a confusion of identities and too many people thought dead resurfacing (both to Napier's dismay and delight), the general scheme is entertaining enough and just within the bounds of what's believable, given Goddard's manipulation of the reader's expectations. The central themes of revenge and greed lose some of their power when mixed with a subplot colored by a '90s obsession with sexual misdeeds, but these flaws do not detract from the pleasure of the whole. An enjoyable read, fraught with the tension Goddard's readers have come to expect.ExtraitChapter OneBy September 1981, the murder of my great-uncle, Joshua Carnoweth, had ceased to be a shocking and lamented blow to Truro's peaceful image of itself. Thirty-four years had transmuted it into a quaint footnote of civic history. Most of the many things said about it at the time had been forgotten, and all of the passions stirred had been dissipated. It wasn't that nobody remembered, it was just that nobody cared enough to call the events to mind. Three decades of the affluent society had cast the rationed pleasures and abundant pains of 1947 into relative antiquity, and with them the memories of those who'd failed to outlive the year.Even within the family, of which old Joshua had been a semi-detached member, his name was seldom mentioned. Some of us lived in his house. All of usto varying degreesprospered thanks to the fortune my grandmother had inherited from him. But most of us had trained ourselves to pretend he'd played no real part in transforming the Napiers from humble shopkeepers into company directors and absentee hoteliers. He hadn't intended to, after all. He hadn't wanted to shower his wealth on us. He'd probably have been outraged that his murder should have such a consequence. To that extent, perhaps our neglect of his memory was justified. Perhaps anything beyond collective indifference would have been like dancing on his grave. That's how I'd have defended it if I'd had to. But then I was among the least witting of his beneficiaries. I thought I knew the whole story, but I didn't know the half of it. I thought I remembered it exactly as it had been, but what I remembered was a cunningly wrought fiction that had worn dangerously thin without anyone noticing. And by September 1981, it had reached breaking point.Saturday the fifth of September was the day my niece, Tabitha Rutherford, was to marry Dominic Beale, a good-looking and highly eligible young merchant banker. It was also, by happy contrivance, my parents' golden wedding anniversary. A full-scale family celebration was therefore arranged. The wedding was to be at St Mary Clement Methodist Church in the centre of Truro, followed by a reception at Tredower House.Since my grandmother's death, the family home had been converted into Cornwall's premier hotel and conference centre (according to the brochure), managed by my brother-in-law, Trevor Rutherford. This had been my father's solution to the problem of what to do with Trevor when he sold off the chain of six Napier's Department Stores which Gran's inheritance from Uncle Joshua had helped him establish in the Fifties. He'd done that almost as soon as death had neutralized her veto on such a conservative move, and retired with my mother to Jersey. A few years later, realizing Cornwall really did have a claim on their souls, they'd moved back to what must still be the most desirable residence on the Helford estuary. Tredower House Hotel had meanwhile begun to live up to its reputation, thanks more to my sister Pam's organizational abilities than any managerial excellence on Trevor's part.The hotel was closed for the weekend, so that the vast gathering of friends, relations and business associates could revel in our hospitality. And on Saturday morning, reluctantly obedient to Pam's summons, I drove down from Pangbourne to join in the merry-making. I'd given the Stag a tune-up for the journey and made it in four hours dead, little short of a record in those days. Pam had wanted me to go down on Friday, but I'd claimed an open-top drive against the clock was just what I needed to blow away some end-of-week cobwebs.That was an excuse, of course, as I'm sure she realized. I couldn't boycott an event of this magnitude, but I could minimize my exposure to it. A last-minute arrival and a prompt departure the following afternoon: I had it all planned. I'd be there, but with any luck I'd feel as if I hadn't been.There'd been a pretty classic falling out between me and Dad. It went back twenty years, to when I'd walked out on a

managerial traineeship at the Plymouth store and the generous allowance with which he rewarded filial obedience. I was making a living now, and not a bad one, but there had been times, too many for comfort, when I hadn't. I'd not asked to be helped out of any of them, and Dad hadn't offered. Pride got in the way on both sides. He wanted me to admit my mistakes without acknowledging any of his own, and he probably thought I wanted the same of him. So an armed truce was what we got. It left me with a unique status in recent generations of my family: that of a more or less self-made man. Self-remade was actually nearer the mark, in view of a sustained attempt at drinking myself to death in the late Sixties. But the upshot was the same. I wasn't in and I wasn't out. I was one of them, but it didn't feel much like itto them or to me.Something of the same ambivalence characterized my relationship with the city of my birth. Truro's both what you expect and what you don't of a cathedral city at the damp and distant tip of the south-west peninsula. A place of long, steep, curving hills, of bright light falling on rain-washed stone, of Georgian elegance cheek by jowl with malty warehouses and muddy wharves, of poverty and deprivation crammed in with the tourism and the Celtic romance and the strange, stubborn sense of meaning. None of the features of it I can most readily picturethe huge out-of-scale cathedral, the viaduct soaring above Victoria Park, my old school high on its hill to the south, the house in Crescent Road where I was born, Tredower House itselfnone of them were much more than a hundred years old then. Yet what I carry about with me of Truro, and can neither discard nor visualize, seems both older and stronger. We Napiers are partly incomers. One of Grandfather Napier's principal attractions as far as my grandmother was concerned was that he wasn't a Cornishman. But the Carnoweths are as Cornish as saffron cake. Their Truronian roots lie deep, and some stem reaches me, however far or long I stray.All this rendered any visit of mine to Tredower House a venture into well-charted waters that were nonetheless turbulent. It stood, bowered in trees, near the top of the hill on the St Austell road, a Gothic mansion that must have looked stark and ugly when built for Sir Reginald Pencavel, the china clay magnate, back in the 1870s. But the maturing of the grounds and the weathering of the sandstone had given it a sort of acquired avuncularity, like an old acquaintance you suddenly realize has become a friend.The last of the Pencavels was killed on the Somme. When his widow remarried in 1920, she put the house up for sale. Its buyer was a prodigal son of the city, my great-uncle Joshua Carnoweth, who'd just returned from a long and self-imposed exile in the gold fields of North America with a greater fortune than anyone had thought him capable of amassing. The purchase of Tredower House was both a rebuke to his doubting contemporaries and a declaration that his wandering days were over. He was forty-seven; too young, I'd have said, for subsiding into Cornish squiredom. But he had reasons enough, and no way of knowing that those reasons would one day conspire to destroy him.I was glad, in a way, that the house had become a busier, brasher place since it had ceased to be my home. A modern conference suite to the rear, a car park in what had been the orchard and a scatter of signposts and security lights proclaimed its commercial identity in a way that subdued more personal memories without ever quite erasing them. Even weddings had become a regular branch of the business, though none of the receptions laid on for clients could ever have required a larger pinker-draped golden-ribboned marquee than the one I glimpsed through the trees as I sped past in the Stag that morning, en route to the church.The ceremony went off flawlessly, without so much as a fluffed line, and was followed by a mass transit to Tredower House. With so many people eager to congratulate the bride and her grandparents, Pam distracted by her responsibilities as hostess and Trevor having for once a good excuse to ignore me, I drifted with little resistance to the margins of the event. An hour at least of champagne and canapes loomed ahead. For a reformed alcoholic on edgy terms with his relatives, this promised to be a torturous interlude. So I took myself off, as discreetly as possible, to a shady corner of the lawn, propped myself against the croquet bench that had been moved out of harm's way beneath the beech tree, and gazed back at the party. Laughter mixed ripely with the jazz band's lazy melodies in the still summer air. Colourful outfits swirled like a slowly wound kaleidoscope in the hazy sunshine. Light sparkled on champagne flutes. Joy, pleasure and satisfaction mingled. And trying desperately not to feel dog-in-the-mangerish, I toasted them all with orange juice.My parents, along with the bride and groom, were out of sight within the marquee. They'd still be busy greeting the guests, and I knew they'd be doing it with tireless aplomb. Gran had trained my father well in the social obligations that went with the status she'd carved out for him. She'd taught him to project a bluff glad-handed image of himself that had smoothed his path in the world of big business and local politics. It was an image old age seemed only to have strengthened. You needed to have been close to him to see and know a different kind of man.But my mother had been closer than anyone for the past fifty years and I knew her devotion to him was no act, so I reckoned there must always have been more that was genuine in him than I'd been prepared to

admit. I suspected Gran had manoeuvred them into marriage in the first place. The provision of a wife for her son and a mother for her grandchildren wasn't something she'd have left to chance, that's for certain. But, if so, her manoeuvring had paid off, as usual. I'd never had cause to doubt that my parents loved each other. The only question in my mi...