



Holding on

Marcia Willett

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For generations, The Keep in Devon has been home to the Chadwick family. Now the three young siblings who grew up there are leaving to start out on their own. Fliss must journey to Hong Kong with her husband, even though she dreads being so far from home. Mole has embarked on a naval career and Susanna is about to fall in love.

Their grandmother Freddy's greatest fear is that she will not live to see the arrival of the next generation, but her worries are unfounded. It seems her grandchildren need her love more than ever to guide them through the rocky times ahead.

And no matter what happens, Freddy knows that the Keep must always be ready and waiting for their safe return.

Following on from *Looking Forward*, *Holding On* continues the story of the delightful and unforgettable Chadwick family.

Holding on Details

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Carolyn Hill says

I love this kind of book that seems harder and harder to find: gentle, character-driven sagas set in a beautifully described lush countryside in the modern era. That it is in England is even better, and of course is why I seek out these books in the first place. What is it about the romance of old houses, like "the Keep" in this one, picturesque villages, and an old world country life that only England can conjure up for us stateside? Perhaps its roots go back to feudal times that are so antithetical to the American experience, and the rose-tinted glasses of late British Colonialism soften the more modern view. Certainly this story could never be set in America. Though some of the characters live and work in London, and the central character lives for a period in Hong Kong, it is the family home in the Devon countryside that draws them all back for at least extended visits and connects them in a visceral way with their past and each other.

This is second in a series about the Chadwick family (and was only available in England; my copy is a used mass market paperback published there I found on Amazon). They are a family with the tradition of serving in the British Royal Navy, and in volume one we learn how the parents and brother of our main characters were brutally murdered by Kenyan natives in the 1950's (tragic victims of Britain's own brutal campaign to destroy Kenyan nationalism that is not given any reference in this story that ignores politics and the consequences of British imperialism in Africa). The time of this story is the 1970's and 80's, when the orphaned Chadwick children have grown to maturity and set out on their own adult lives, with two of the Chadwick males following the family tradition of naval careers, as well as the spouse of one of the daughters. There is no real plot, just following the romances and married lives of the characters and the decline of the older generation. This probably doesn't sound all that interesting, but fans of Downton Abbey can attest otherwise, though there certainly aren't the kind of shenanigans here as in that family saga (nor is this a grand manor estate anywhere near the level of Downton, but it is decidedly traditionally British in view point). Here, in more modern times, the household servants have become more like beloved members of the family. What makes this book worth four stars? It's the sympathetic characters and the way their personalities emerge and make them so individualistic, and, well, interesting. This book and series reminds me a lot of Elizabeth Goudge's books about the Eliot family published in the 1950's (and still my favorites), and that series is even referenced as one of the character's reading material. For those who like their reading to be an escape from the grittiness and nastiness that seems so prevalent in modern literary tastes, I recommend Marcia Willett's books. Her world is a gentle, beautiful place, populated with people who struggle with their own blindspots, weaknesses, difficult relationships, and inappropriate love and longing. It is the love, though, both familial and romantic, that is at the heart of this series.

Carolynne says

Second in a series about the Chadwick family. (Read *Looking Forward* first.) Fliss, Mole, and Susanna have grown up at The Keep under the loving care of their grandmother, Freddy. But now it is time for the fledglings to leave the nest. Fliss tries to make her marriage work and goes off to Hong Kong with her husband, while cousin Hal, hopelessly in love with Fliss, struggles with his own relationship. Mole joins the Navy, but still suffers from PTSD. Only sunny Susanna and her husband Gus find happiness. The story may be predictable but the characters are real, and the descriptions of the Devonshire setting are wonderful.

Claudia says

Nederlandse titel: Een veilig thuis

CLM says

Felicity Chadwick, her siblings and cousins, are now adults, dealing with various vicissitudes under the observant eyes of grandmother Freddy and Uncle Theo.

Carol says

Part of a three book series, it is an OK family saga. Probably after reading Paris Wife it is hard to return to light reading. I still like Marcia Willett's ability to weave a great story and develop characters.

Sue says

Second in the 'Chadwick' series. Freddy's grandchildren are grown up, adult life is portrayed through their eyes. Realistic and often moving. Recommended to read after the first in the series ("Looking Forward"). First read in 2000; just as enjoyable on re-reading seven years later.

Iris says

Romantisch verhaal van een Britse schrijfster. Het speelt zich af in Groot Brittanië met veel aandacht voor beschrijvingen van het familieleven, de inrichting en indeling van charmante huizen, landschappen (Devon), tuinen en de honden van de familie. Zwart wit personages (maar dat maakt het juist leuk.) Dit alles heel aangenaam en ontspannend om te lezen in de vakantie. Ik kan het niet laten te vermelden dat (het boek is uit 1999) er door de mond van sommige personages al een hint van een Brexit in zit.(blz 48) Grootmoeder en oom Theo gingen nog steeds te keer tegen de EEG. Grootmoeder voelt zich geen Europeaan heeft ze me laten weten. "We zijn een eilandvolk ..."

Muff says

Likeable family. I'll miss Freddy.

Kathryn Bashaar says

This series is starting to grow on me. I will definitely read the third one. Again, though, just a little too light. Everybody has so much stoic British self-control. I want one of the Chadwicks to get really mad or drunk or something. They are just too nice to be really interesting. When they make mistakes, the most they might do is weep quietly. Otherwise they lie bravely and stoically in the beds that they made. But they are good, gentle company right now, while I am going through a health crisis and maybe not up to something more challenging.

Penny says

Just adore the Chadwick family.

Deborah Sigel says

One of the 3 books of the Trilogy- Great!
