



Act of Contrition

Janice Holt Giles

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Act of Contrition focuses on the intimate relationship between Regina, a widow, and Michael, a young doctor whose wife left him for another man. Having found happiness in one another, they desire nothing more than to be together. Yet in the eyes of the Catholic Church, Michael is not free to divorce his wife and marry Regina. In an emotional climax Regina must decide if she loves Michael enough to give him up or if she'll force him to choose between her and God.

By modern standards, Giles's love scenes are tasteful, and the general atmosphere of ecumenism within today's Catholic Church renders moot many of the tensions in the novel. Yet in 1957 Giles's agent and publisher feared the work would cause "irreparable harm" to her reputation. As late as 1972 Giles was revising in the hopes of seeing the novel published. Finally her wish is fulfilled.

Janice Holt Giles (1905-1979), author of nineteen books, lived and wrote near Knifley, Kentucky, for thirty-four years. Her biography is *Janice Holt Giles: A Writer's Life*.

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