

He Should Have Told the Bees

Amanda Cox

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A beekeeper's reclusive, grieving daughter and a small business owner in search of healing meet over the impending fate of an apiary in Amanda Cox's delicate Christian novel *He Should Have Told the Bees*, about reconciling past pains with future hopes.

Beck depended on the safe, circumscribed world that her father, George, allowed her to inhabit after her mother's abandonment of them. After his death, she fills his responsibilities on their farm despite her panic attacks. Meanwhile, Callie is eager to expand her business making artisan candles and natural products in Chattanooga, but feels limited because of her alcoholic mother's rehabilitation costs.

When George's will makes Callie a co-trustee even though she didn't know him, this fuels intrigue. And as one woman risks losing her home, the other weighs whether or not to take a windfall by selling her share. Both women's vulnerable tendencies to shield truths about their lives fold into learning to accept help, including from potential love interests and a plucky girl who is summering nearby. Both women also bear the harm of personal rifts that led to insecurities and fears about their unmet needs.

Interspersed with Christian themes of trust, the sufficiency of grace, and the poignancy of discovering freedom from shame surrounding mental health issues and tumultuous childhoods, Beck and Callie's stories twine with the reassuring hum of the hives and bee knowledge that is subtle in its hints at the structured order that's contained within mysteries. Despite the women's initial bewilderment, the truth about them binds them in unanticipated ways, guiding each toward the warm refuge that she seeks.

A thoughtful novel in which women seek release from their damaging family patterns, *He Should Have Told the Bees* is about welcoming change.

KAREN RIGBY (September / October 2023)

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