

★ **The Edge of Over There****Shawn Smucker**

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The Edge of Over There is a mesmerizing, menacing fantasy. Shawn Smucker fuses New Orleans lore, Christian themes, and dystopian landscapes in a thorough exploration of love and its unintended results.

Following *The Day the Angels Fell*—which details Samuel Chambers and Abra Miller's search for the Tree of Life—this sequel alternates between an older Samuel's brush with a stranger; the stranger's tale of Amos Jardine, whose struggle to save his daughter, Ruby, opens the door to *The Edge of Over There*; Abra's role in the fight between good and evil; and Leo, Ruby's brother, who hasn't forgotten her in the years since her disappearance.

Abra's mission unfolds through memories and a story-within-a-story that takes on mythic dimensions. What's at stake is the fate of mankind: if any fruit from the Tree of Life were to be consumed, the breach would disrupt society. Abra's task is to kill the tree and prevent immortality; as heavy as that burden is, she seldom wavers. She's skillfully drawn as a serious-minded teen who is chosen yet flawed.

The plot gains momentum once Abra reaches *The Edge of Over There*. In this visionary space set between earth and the afterlife, the disillusioned, the desperate, and the dreamers call forth a city to suit their needs. Ingenious turns allow characters to discover truths about themselves as they navigate the city, which reveals itself as both ancient and new, evolving and snared in uncertainty. The rich setting—filled as it is with symbolism, angels and devils, and provocative questions—yields endless mysteries.

But for all the fantastic elements in the book, it's the Jardine family's plight that is especially piercing. Amos's desire to save his daughter at any cost blurs into a series of lies that keep her imprisoned. How love drives some people to extremes while inspiring others to risk everything becomes an all-too-human issue.

KAREN RIGBY (Religion 2018)

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