

The Honey Thief, by Elizabeth Graver

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Hyperion Press, \$22.95.

These, then, were Eva's half-memories. Of words but not their meanings, of a sweater but not the face above it. Of a box, the corner of a room, the scratch of wool, but never a whole father, or even a whole mother the way she'd been before. These were the things she hoarded--because mostly, she didn't remember. Or not in words, anyway, not in sentences, pictures or scenes..."

Elizabeth Graver's *The Honey Thief* centers around eleven-year-old Eva, whose propensity for shoplifting in Manhattan prompts her mother, Miriam, to uproot them to upstate New York. There Eva befriends a beekeeper (after stealing his honey) who becomes her only friend in their new town. All three characters in this marvelously crafted novel have memories they're trying to clarify, memories they're trying to forget, or memories that they can't control: the level of memory defines them. Eva struggles to remember her father, who died of a heart attack when she was six; she interrogates her mother about the songs he used to sing, the toys he used to build. As Miriam struggles to shield Eva from her father's demons, she finds that she, too, starts forgetting.

"But how to tell their story--to herself, to Eva? Miriam tried to keep it clear and accurate, but often, over the years, she found herself embellishing a little, brightening the colors. Or worse, she found herself forgetting."

Burl the bachelor beekeeper on the other hand, uses his memories to remind himself of the difference between the person he once was and the person he is now. "...[T]his was the place where, for weeks at a time, he managed not to return to the memory of his father's tight-lipped rages, his father's large hands reaching out to cuff his ears..."

Memory is one of the book's many themes, but it's written so subtly that you don't feel like the themes are being shoved in your face.

Graver's prose flows like, well, honey. The book filters small

revelations into everyday life. It's not climactic, and there's no easy ending--which is why it works so well. Although the novel takes place in Manhattan and upstate New York in present times, Graver's prose takes us into another world that, whilst unfamiliar, is one that we don't want to leave. This is a perfect "end of summer" book--a moderately easy read that you won't want to put down.

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