

## **IN HER WAKE by Amanda Jennings**

***Published by Orenda Books***

To begin the New Year, I have chosen '*In Her Wake*' by Amanda Jennings for my January review. Chilling, complex and profoundly moving, it is an emotionally charged, psychological thriller.

### **THE PLOT**

Following a tragic family event, Bella Campbell's comfortable existence is suddenly ripped apart when she discovers that everything about her life was built on a lie.

Determined to uncover the truth about herself, Bella embarks on a personal journey of enlightenment which takes her to the ruggedly beautiful Cornish coast. As she starts to dig deeper, a series of further traumatic revelations lead to the discovery of hidden truths, past betrayals and a 25-year-old mystery – all of which threaten not just her identity, but also the only life she has ever known.

### **MY REVIEW**

Although I have read other novels dealing with a similar topic, '*In Her Wake*' was refreshingly different as it explores the familiar scenario from another angle. It is cleverly written, engaging and poses the question of how much do we really know about our family ... or indeed ourselves.

Throughout her early life, Bella Campbell knew only the confines of the family home she was brought up in. Having always wanted a child, her mother, Elaine, was attentive and extremely loving, but she was also fiercely over-protective and obsessed with keeping Bella safe. The neurosis included Elaine's insistence on Bella being home-schooled. This unhealthy state of affairs ultimately led to Bella being isolated from the outside world and totally reliant on her parents, who had now become virtual recluses.

When the time comes for Bella to attend college, Elaine is reluctant to let her go but is finally persuaded to retract her objection, allowing Bella to experience her first taste of freedom. However – as sometimes happens with people who have suffered oppressive or abusive childhoods – Bella soon finds herself drawn to someone who exercises the same characteristics as her mother ... her tutor, David, who is twice her age. When they eventually marry, her new husband then proceeds to usurp the protective and controlling role once occupied by Elaine.

In contrast with the close bond Bella shared with Elaine, her relationship with her father, Dr Henry Campbell, was always a strained affair. Henry could never quite allow himself to get close to his daughter, and so there was always an uneasy arm's-length tension between them. It is only when she arrives back at the house for Elaine's funeral that Bella feels he may be trying to close the gap and connect with her. However, the moment is short lived.

When a tragedy occurs after the funeral, Bella finds a letter from her father addressed to her, revealing a secret he has kept since she was a child. She is then devastated to discover the real reason behind his reticence and that her identity is a complete fabrication.

As Bella sets out to discover what really happened all those years ago – a journey that takes her to the coastal town of St Ives in Cornwall – Henry Campbell’s secret is gradually revealed to the reader through a series of flashbacks, until the full force of the Campbell’s unforgiveable deception is finally unveiled.

In the very early years of their marriage, Elaine’s behaviour steadily became more erratic after suffering a series of miscarriages, while Henry gradually transitioned from an outgoing and contented person to a more troubled and withdrawn individual. However, even though he is ultimately complicit in his wife’s delusional and immoral actions, it is impossible not to understand his reluctance to oppose her.

*‘In Her Wake’* is a compelling story about the consequences of keeping secrets and the destruction it can wreak on people’s lives. The personalities of the characters are well defined, therefore their reactions and responses to the conflicts presented by the storyline are entirely credible.

While Elaine and Henry’s carefully guarded secret slowly destroys them, the opposite is true for Bella. Discovering the truth helps to turn her into a much stronger person, making the final resolution both satisfying and rewarding for both character and reader alike.

## **THE AUTHOR**

Amanda Jennings writes psychological suspense and is the author of *‘Sworn Secret’*, which was published in the UK, USA and Italy. It was an Amazon Kindle Top 5 bestseller in the UK; a Top 100 bestseller in the USA, and reached the number 1 spot in Italy. Her second book, *‘The Judas Scar’*, was published in 2014 and optioned shortly after by a UK film and television production company. *‘In Her Wake’*, is her most recently published novel. The story is set in Cornwall, where her mother's side of the family comes from, and where she spent long and very happy childhood summers. Amanda is a regular guest on BBC Berkshire's weekly *‘Book Club’* and enjoys meeting readers at libraries, book clubs and literary festivals. Amanda also writes a blog and is active on Twitter. She lives just outside Henley-on-Thames with her husband, three daughters and an unruly menagerie of pets.

***‘In Her Wake’ is published by Orenda Books and is available from Waterstones, W H Smith, Foyles and other leading bookshops. It is also available to download in eBook format.***