



The Preacher's Promise

Piper Huguley

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1866 – Oberlin, Ohio

Devastated by her father's death days after her triumphant graduation from Oberlin College, Amanda Stewart is all alone in the world. Her father's unscrupulous business partner offers her an indecent proposal to earn a living. Instead, to fulfill a promise she made to her father, she resolves to start a school to educate and uplift their race. Sorting through her father's papers, she discovers he had carried on a mysterious correspondence with a plantation in Milford, Georgia. She determines to start her teaching work with the formerly enslaved. However, when she arrives, the mayor tells her to leave. There's nowhere for her to go.

Virgil Smithson, Milford's mayor, blacksmith and sometimes preacher man with a gift for fiery oratory, doesn't want anything to do with a snobby schoolteacher from up North. On top of everything else, the schoolteacher lady has a will hard enough to match the iron he forges. He must organize his fellow formerly enslaved citizens into a new town and raise his young daughter alone. Still, his troubled past haunts him. He cannot forget the promise he made to his daughter's mother as she died—that their child would learn to read and write. If only he didn't have secrets that the new schoolteacher seems determined to uncover.

To keep THE PREACHER'S PROMISE, Amanda and Virgil must put aside their enmity, unite for the sake of a newly-created community in a troubling age, and do things they never imagined. In the aftermath of the flood that was the Civil War, God set his bow upon the earth to show love and understanding for humankind. To reflect God's promise, these combatants must put aside their differences and come together--somehow.

The Preacher's Promise Details

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Sally Kilpatrick says

Warning: once you start this book it will not let you go.

I had taken it with me somewhere and left it in a bag which I found while cleaning my room. Mind you, I'm supposed to be reading RITA books, but I opened this one up and got hooked. It's one of those books where you'll tell yourself you'll just read another few pages and then look up 50 pages later and realize you're late for an appointment.

Amanda Stewart (daughter of the protagonists from The Lawyer's Luck) is now an orphan with two options: become the mistress of her father's former law partner OR go teach in Reconstruction Era Georgia. She chooses the latter.

Once she gets there she runs into local blacksmith/mayor, Virgil Smithson. He's a little miffed that she isn't a man and wants to send her back north, but, of course, she has nowhere else to go.

In order for Amanda to stay, however, she basically has to marry the mayor both for protection and for the sake of propriety. Adding to the complications is Mrs. Milford, former mistress of the plantation who still fancies herself in charge.

So, here's what I'll say instead of adding anymore to the plot for fear that I'll spoil:

- This is one of the best inspirational novels I've ever read.
- This is one of the best opposites attract novels I've read.
- The Preacher's Promise is an excellent romance and yay for the marriage of convenience trope!
- It's also an excellent historical because it is fraught with the external tensions of Reconstruction Era South. Having Amanda come from up north gives the reader an entry point into what the post-Civil War south looked like while Virgil's perspective reminds us that slavery isn't an institution that can be forgotten or overcome in a day or a year or even several years. An underlying--and sometimes overt--tension reminds the reader that these were dangerous times for Amanda, Virgil, and everyone else in the town of Milford.

Okay, I can't tell you any more without spoiling. I'm afraid I've done a little of that already. Don't worry, though, because the pacing will keep you turning pages, and there are some truly lovely turns of phrase.

Katherine Coble says

This is a terrific book. It's a great story with characters who are truly interesting.

Mstcat says

The Preacher's Promise is a very sweet story that takes place following the Civil War. During this time African Americans in the South are finding themselves with new freedoms and opportunities that they have never had before; however, they are still living under the prejudice of the South. This is the case in the town of Milford. The town has sent a missive to the North requesting a teacher (their first) for the new school house that is being built. Unbeknownst to them, the man who they've reached out to has recently passed away and his daughter Amanda, who is college educated herself, has decided to answer the call. She is in a bad situation as she believes that her father's law partner has stolen her father's money, which is rightfully hers. In addition, he's hinting that she should give herself to him as a way to end her financial woes. For Amanda the school teacher offer seems to be a sign from God. The mayor and preacher of the town of Milford is a single father named Virgil. He isn't happy to see a woman instead of the man that he had expected. He believes that the beautiful woman can only mean trouble and is anxious to send Amanda back to where she came from. The owner of the plantation that had once enslaved the people of Milford is Mrs. Milford. She is an old sickly woman who still holds significant power in the town. She has a strained relationship with Virgil due to occurrences in the past regarding Virgil's late wife. Mrs. Milford says Amanda needs to leave for proprieties sake, unless she agrees to marrying Virgil. With no other path to take, Amanda decides to do just that. But Virgil isn't an easy man to live with and their growing love for one another is tested by secrets and omissions. In addition, when the neighboring white town discovers that the Milford's children are being taught when the white children are not, trouble begins to brew.

I liked both Amanda and Virgil. They were very much people of their time and products of their circumstances and environments. Amanda has always been free in the North and is a very intelligent woman. She knows nothing of the ways of the South and is headstrong, sometimes in a reckless way. She wants to teach the children and any adults who want to learn, but she also wants to be a good and proper wife to Virgil, the mayor/preacher. Virgil is a simple God-fearing man and is a bit difficult to deal with. He hadn't wanted a wife, but is quick to see all that Amanda has to offer both himself and his daughter. He has secrets that he fears will make Amanda think less of him and he secretly feels he isn't the right man to be mayor. He distrusts Mrs. Milfred and fears for his daughters future. Virgil stands in his own way a lot of the time, and although this frustrated me about his character, I forgave him considering the time period and his position of town preacher. I completely disagreed with his response to the threats made by the white men regarding the school, however, I understood it after awhile. In this situation I felt Amanda acted childishly, but it wasn't without purpose and it helped to move the story of her father's money along. Virgil's daughter was sweet and I was happy that she had Amanda in her life considering what was bound to be a very strict and potentially unhappy upbringing if left in the care of her father who was very strict on his own.

Overall I really liked this book. The story, although not over-the-top or overly exciting, steadily held my interest and left me wanting to know more about what is in store for the little town of Milford. This period in history fascinates me because of the will and determination that African-Americans at the time possessed. We know what amazing hardships they faced, but they were determined to learn and carve out a life that included towns and businesses. Although life was not perfect in Milford there was hope and the beginnings of a better future. I look forward to reading the rest of the series, including the prequel. Readers should note that this book does not contain a great deal of sex. True I would have liked a little more intimacy or heated moments between our main characters, but it didn't kill the book for me by any means. It is very much a "fade to black" kind of story that doesn't really even get that far. This isn't about sex at all. If that disappoints you - try the book anyway. It's a heck of a good book without all of that. If you can't live without a little bump and grind in what you're reading then I guess this one really won't make you happy and maybe you should pass. I'm very sorry about that though, you're about to miss a good, but sweet story... I recommend

this book to readers who enjoy historical romance. featuring African-American main characters, and authors such as Beverly Jenkins.

I give The Preacher's Promise a 4.5 out of 5 rating

*A copy of this book was given to me by the author in exchange for an honest review. *

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Franknannie says

I loved this book! I do not normally read anything in the romance category, but this book was so much MORE! There were great spiritual truths hidden within these pages like little golden treasures. I found myself looking for the nuggets! These characters were richly developed, warm and genuine. They were people with flaws, but a desire to serve a great and mighty God who values us in our brokenness. This book is very well written, creative, and holds a persons interests. There were very real threats and danger to them, yet this talented author wrote this book in a manner that left the gory details out, and let the reader feel safe and relaxed. Brilliant!

Jaclyn Loschiavo says

I DO NOT read romances generally, but I couldn't turn down the chance to read a romance set in Reconstruction era Georgia. There's TONS of Jesus in this, but it felt very authentic to the time and characters, which is not always the case in historical inspirations. Plus, I really think the religiosity helped keep the book light in a time period that could have definitely turned depressing (given how Reconstruction turned out for Freedmen). This was a nice, short read for me to pick up in between grading and lesson plans. I think I finally understand the appeal of "sweet" romances!

Michelle Styles says

If you are interested in American history at all, you will enjoy this book as it opens a window into an oft-overlook aspect of history -- the African American experience in Georgia during Reconstruction.

Although the relationship between Amanda, the college educated Northerner who grew up believing she was free and Virgil, the former slave who had to work for his freedom but then in doing so failed to save the woman he loved is an important element of this story, this story is more about Virgil's struggles with self-forgiveness and his feelings of inadequacy in a world which in many ways has changed beyond reckoning but where unfortunately old prejudices still linger and can strike at the heart of those he holds dear. These struggles have blighted his life in many ways, closing him off from his young daughter. It is through school teacher Amanda's influence that Virgil changes and begins to embrace the rich future God has envisioned for him.

Huguley has a wonderful voice and the story is a page-turning read. It is a life-enhancing book.

Huguley is a worthy successor to such saga writers as Catherine Cookson, Joesphine Cox and Benita Brown. If you enjoy a good family saga, you will find the entire Home to Milford College sequence unputdownable.

Victoria Bylin says

Some historical romances use history as wallpaper, meaning the story itself is more a reflection of modern times than the historical framework. Other historical romances bring history to life in a way that addresses the past, speaks to the present, and challenges us to think about the future. *The Preacher's Promise* falls firmly into the second camp. In short, I loved every word.

About the history . . . this story leaps off the page. You can see it, hear it, and feel it in your marrow. The author digs deep and goes wide at the same time.

About the romance . . . Wow! Just wow! There's tons of tension between Isaac and Amanda, and it's the real deal. These two people come from different worlds, and those worlds collide.

The best news just might be that this is Book 1 in a three-book series. Downloading now!

Recommended for readers of classic romance, historical romance, historical fiction, and anyone else who wants a story that challenges, informs, and entertains all at the same time.

Jacci says

I'm not really a romance reader or a Christian romance reader specifically because Christian romance can be way too predictable. This book did not follow that "someone has to get saved by the end" plot line and I was grateful. I do love historical fiction. This book was very well written and kept my interest from start to finish. Thank you Piper for introducing me to reconstruction era Georgia.

Laura Trentham says

Loved how the author weaves in parts of history that aren't common knowledge with a beautiful love story.

Andrew says

"The Preacher's Promise" is a very entertaining tale set in Reconstruction Era Georgia. With some interesting characters, this is another book which I found hard to put down once I started. I look forward to reading the other books in the series.

reneenDaBomb says

The Preacher's Promise (Home to Milford College Book 1)

The story of lawyer Lawrence Stewart's only child, a daughter named Amanda (Mandy) and Virgil Smithson, the town mayor, smithy, and preacher ?. It tells about their first meeting when she arrived in Milford, GA. Their courtship kept me chuckling. Now, Virgil is a hardworking southerner. Quite acquainted in his thinking. Miss Amanda was an Oberlin college graduate, outspoken young ? dealing with the ole ways of the folks living in Milford just two years out of slavery. Great series.

Five ? ? ? ? rating again!

Parker Cole says

The book definitely lived up to its promise from the excerpt. I absolutely loved it. The complexities of the characters, the conflict of the Reconstruction era, the clash against tradition and new ways, come together to build a story filled with multi-layered stories.

Amanda is the Northern free woman who needs to escape her father's law partner. When she comes to Milford, she's independent, free, educated, and blazing with her view of things.

Virgil is slave turned freeman and also the Mayor of Milford. When he meets this woman from the North, he finds himself fascinated and repelled by her independence.

That's just the tip of the iceberg in this book. Huguley does a marvelous job of keeping the reader interested in these clashes of personalities and cultures. It's a wonderful story and I can't wait for the next one.

Tasha says

Preacher's Promise is set in Reconstruction Era Georgia and it paints a familiar picture of the gentile south, shaped by recently abolished slavery. Amanda Stewart, free woman and recent graduate of Oberlin college, has recently lost her father and simultaneously discovered that she has been left destitute. She could've done any number of things at this point, things that could have put her in danger, but she immediately took on a job as a teacher. I loved Amanda. Huguley did an amazing job of giving this character agency. She is head strong, sometimes to a fault, but I appreciate that she wasn't timid or easily frightened in situations where she should be, especially when it comes to Virgil Smithson, Milford's mayor, blacksmith AND preacher. (Whew! No one would accuse him of being lazy.) But Virgil was stubborn and sometimes inexplicably bound to propriety. And the two of them together were very frustrating at times! The sexual tension! Ugh!

This being a inspirational romance means that even with all that tension, I didn't get the...release I desired (heh :), but it was still extremely enjoyable. And what I loved most was how it demonstrated that even during this time in history, in the least desireable circumstances, love can still bloom. It was sweet and tense and full of characters that I'm anxious to revisit.

Anna says

I don't usually read inspirational novels, but I met the author a couple years ago at an RT, and that beautiful cover stuck with me, so I bought the book. Also, I do try to read outside my subgenre in romance.

This is a lovely, hopeful, gorgeously written story set in a time and with history I really know nothing about because the US school system is crap at teaching anything but white history, especially in the north.

I was very grateful that I read it.

Tynika says

A Good Read

This book captured my interest and I couldn't put the book down. The Love between Amanda & Virgil was rare and a sweet message of how love happens unexpectedly. I can't wait to read the next part of the series.
