



THE

*Kelly Flanagan*

UNHIDING

OF

*A Novel*

ELIJAH

CAMPBELL



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She held out her knuckles again. Again I tapped them. Again the electricity.

She turned on her heels and hollered, “See you, Eli!” over her shoulder, pronouncing my name correctly. She’d actually been listening. Her spotlight was already seeming a little safer than all the rest. And suddenly it was the prospect of her leaving that made me feel uncomfortable and impulsive. The impulse was to prolong the conversation just a little longer.

“Hey!” I called. She stopped and turned. “Do *you* go by any nicknames?”

She shook her head. “Nope. Just Rebecca. The whole name. I’ve always wanted it that way. It reminds me to show up with my whole self.” She paused, thoughtful. “I guess I expect others to show up with their whole self too. Even if they *have* shortened *their* name.” She smiled mischievously. “Well, if I don’t see you tonight, I’ll try to swing by again next Friday, maybe catch you sunning yourself like a turtle again.”

*Like a turtle.*

The phrase got into me. And a theory about Rebecca’s interest in me began to form: like a turtle I had a shell, and like Geppetto she sensed a wound beneath the shell. She seemed oblivious to the parallels, but the comparison put a lump in my throat.

Then, she was gone.

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