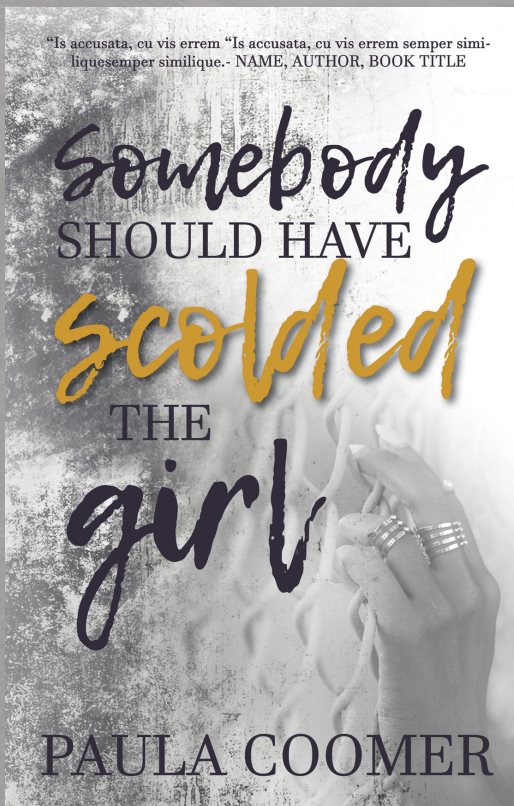


Somebody SHOULD HAVE scolded THE GIRL

Grab an Ameripass for one low fare and 'ride the Dog' across America with author Paula Coomer for a gritty, unflinching journey through some of the country's most poignant and vulnerable moments: War. Racism. Women's Rights. The Sexual Revolution and more.

REVIEWS



Paula Coomer directs an honest and unflinching look at the lives of strong, resilient, and deeply vulnerable rural women -- women who face prejudice, poverty, and small-mindedness with strength and grace and sometimes very human flaws. Coomer's deep knowledge of place and culture is evident, she writes in her endnote, "This collection is my attempt to take my family history and create from it stories about women who own themselves, women who are victors, not victims." Indeed, Coomer captures their hardscrabble lives with compassion, and one gets the sense that through her writing this community of women are understood and cared for. A gorgeous collection filled with unforgettable voices and stories."

*-Laura Pritchett, winner of the PEN USA Award for Fiction,
author of The Blue Hour and Hell's Bottom Colorado*



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Fiction/Short Stories (single author)

Somebody SHOULD HAVE *scolded* THE GIRL



Paula Coomer is a poet and literary fiction writer who occasionally writes about food and health. Her books include *Jagged Edge of the Sky*, *Dove Creek*, *Summer of Government Cheese*, *Nurses Who Love English*, and *Blue Moon Vegetarian*, among others. A long-time teacher of writing, Ms. Coomer has been a nominee for the Pulitzer, the Pushcart, and a number of other awards. She lives in the tiny village of Garfield, Washington, where she coaches writers and organizes and facilitates Clearwater Writers, a retreat program on the Wild and Scenic Clearwater River near Syringa, Idaho.



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BOOK EXCERPTS

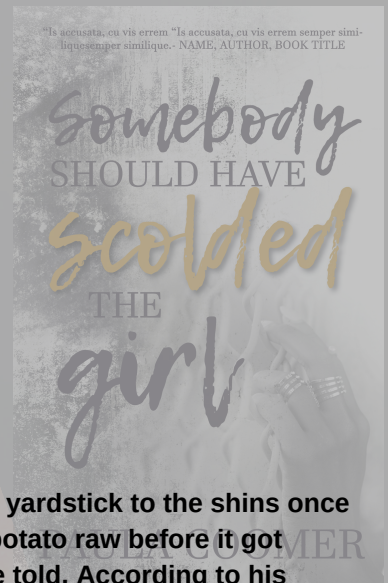
Mercy Grace was completely taken in by what she saw through the lenses, the way those shining spots in the galaxy made her feel small but lucky and, in a single glimpse, helped her to see her worries as just about the same size in the span of a life.

Late into the second night, she hears the stifled exit of a pair, listens to the huffing sounds of their two bodies against the john walls, imagines them inside a bullet. She dozes without knowing it, surprised that the next thing she's aware of is the honey-in-blue streaks of dawn out her window on the left side of the bus, which means they've turned south. Now it's the third day, and she couldn't care less about Las Vegas. She feels like she's seen enough of it in magazines and on TV, worries she'll be bored by it.

Tate was short for Potato Head. He got a yardstick to the shins once for being so hungry he ate a seed potato raw before it got to the garden. That was the story he told. According to his mother, however, he was barely toddling and trying to say "brother" when they brought baby Van Keith from the hospital in Campbellsville to bury in the family gravesite. Van Keith's backbone was born outside his body, which happens sometimes, according to Aunt Amanda Faye's big medical book. Tate cried so hard he couldn't speak the word right and the word brother came out "tater."

Had it not been for the depth with which the dancing captivated me otherwise, I would have been happy staying home, pondering my problem and looking for solutions in medical books from the library, leaving them to their marital bliss. Had it not been for the fact that I could attend to the quick, controlled movements of men as they waltzed or did the mambo or merengue, no one suspecting that I wasn't keeping tabs on the entire couple.

Now you have a feeding tube. It turned out you have a cleft palate and can't nurse, can't take a nipple. You are too young for surgery, so they stuck a feeding tube down your nose. I hook to an electric pump every two hours and squeeze out the breast milk, then they have me push it slow into your feeding tube with a large syringe, similar to the kind we use to artificially inseminate livestock.



AUTHOR Q & A

When did you first realize that words have power?

Very, very early on. The first time I was whipped for saying, "No." Beyond that, also very early on, I realized words were strong enough to keep my parents welded to a book or the newspaper, rather than paying attention to me. Words were my competition, so I became determined to possess them myself. I wanted my parents' attention back!

Which character do you most identify with?

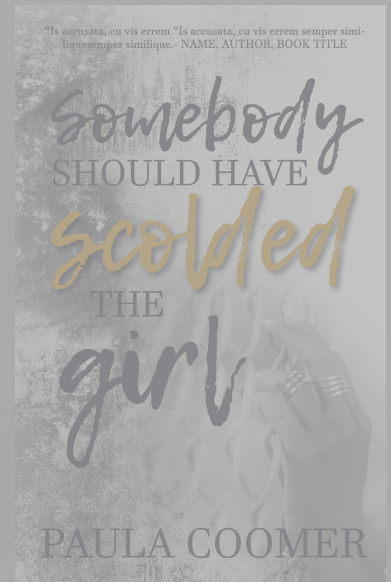
In a way Chipper Grube in "Soles of Our Feet." Coming out of Appalachia, my family is a mix of British Isles, African, and Cherokee. I have never felt like I belonged with any one group, but as more of my relatives had darker skin and hair than not, including my mother and grandmothers, I've always felt most at home around people of color. I know that is a trope, a stereotype, but it's true. Chipper is half white and half African American. He has his father's features and hair, but his mother's skin color. I had distinctly bushy hair when I was younger and used to get chemical relaxers put on to try to make it straight and more manageable—like my fair-skinned classmates. I slept with my hair rolled on orange juice cans; I ironed it and applied pink sticky hair goo to try to make it stay flat and straight. Trying, I realize now, to look whiter.

Do you feel a person could be a writer if they don't feel emotions strongly?

People will disagree with me about this, but I don't think emotions can be rated or ranked by degree. They simply are. You either feel love or you don't, you feel fear or you don't. But I don't see emotion as a necessary impetus for storytelling.

Does writing energize or exhaust you?

A little of both. I certainly can't live well without doing it. I experience a terrible sense of loss of meaning and mood shifts if I can't get to writing on a pretty regular basis. To be precise, I get grouchy. I have equal need for solitude and introspection and being out in the world, and writing is a way to accomplish the first two for me.... What I can say with certainty is that I'm now working on drafting my tenth book, and I don't regret a minute spent living this way. I would go so far as to say that I don't think there is anything more alive. It's worth whatever sacrifice.



Somebody SHOULD HAVE Scolded THE GIRL



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Stop off here and there at various crossroads, viewed through the eyes of Mercy Grace Hadley, Chipper Grube, Marlette Peel, Charlotte Dodge, and a cast of others, a community of loosely connected people in Kentucky and Indiana.

Emotional, but full of hope, *Somebody Should Have Scolded the Girl* holds an exacting, uncanny mirror to our current times.

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