



2003

### The Presence

Janet O. Francis

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#### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Francis, Janet O. (2003) "The Presence," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 24 : Iss. 5 , Article 20.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol24/iss5/20>

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Bunting, Eve. *The Presence*. Clarion Books, 2003. ISBN 0618269193. \$15.00. 195 pp.

Reviewer: Janet Francis

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Ghost stories;

Subject: Ghost--Juvenile Fiction; Guilt--Juvenile Fiction;

Catherine has no idea what lies in store for her when she comes to visit her grandmother during the Christmas season. Struggling with the guilt she feels because of a close friend's death, she is particularly vulnerable to the powerful approach of a 'presence' in St. Matthew's church who seeks to make her his companion in his no-life, no-death existence. The ambience of the story is particularly poignant with all the trappings of Christmas (carols, presents, parties) set in warm and sunny California where the poinsettias are growing and dates with cheerful, normal Collin are for swimming and bike riding. The feelings of disappointment that often accompany a spooky ghost story (especially when it contains some romance) are not to be found in this story. The reasons for the ghost's wretched condition are made clear and function as a vital part of the modern story. The danger to Catherine is real, the requisite old woman who helps her solve the mystery is satisfactory and the flaming finale a more than adequate expiation. This one should be a popular selection for junior high and upper grade readers (especially girls).