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The Steep and Thorny Way

Rachel Wadham

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Book Review

Title: The Steep and Thorny Way

Author: Cat Winters

Reviewer: Rachel Wadham

Publisher: Amulet Books

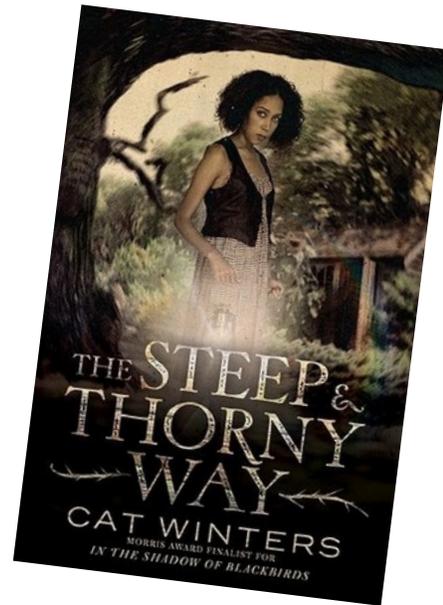
Publication Year: 2016

ISBN: 9781419719158

Number of Pages: 352

Interest Level: Young Adult

Rating: Excellent



Review

Hanalee has always believed that Joe Adder killed her father, he was convicted of the crime after all. But when Joe is released from prison, Hanalee must confront the fact that she may not know the whole truth. Slowly revealing the darkness that hides in her rural Oregon community, Hanalee finds that the Ku Klux Klan is recruiting young men into their organization. Hanalee's mixed race heritage makes her a target, but she soon finds out that Joe is also being targeted because he was once caught kissing another boy. Surrounded by lies, Hanalee can't identify who to trust while thinking that the enemy might be living right in her own home. As the truth slowly reveals itself, Hanalee finds that trusting the one person she thought was guilty will be the only way to save them both.

This powerful historical novel addresses the multifaceted issues of prejudice head on. Winters makes it clear that she strives to represent these experiences with honest integrity, and in doing so she has created rich characters that are able to directly face their challenges. Strong connections to Shakespeare's Hamlet adds some magical elements to the story that deepen the plot and enhances the setting's atmosphere. Historical photographs also serve to extend the story and provide ways for readers to visual the time and place. Filled with rich language that is truthful in light of the difficult themes and that also supports the sometimes slowly developed plot, this story proves to be a haunting look at hatred.

*Contains a homosexual character, some violence, and historically accurate but now racist language.