



2018

Thornhill

Karen Abbott

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Book Review

Thornhill

Author

Pam Smy

Illustrator

Reviewer

Karen Abbott

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

544

Year

2017

Publisher

Roaring Brook Press

ISBN

9781433828744

Mary and Ella are from separate decades but share loneliness and lack of familial love. Ella has just moved in to the house next to the abandoned orphanage, Thornhill. She sees a mysterious light and strange girl on the grounds, and discovers puppets left for her by Mary. Ella begins to discover the sad story of Mary's tortured life-and death. A talented artist herself, Ella paints and clothes the old puppets and returns them to ghostly Mary. However, friendship with Mary is an all or nothing deal. Soon a boy moving in next door to the fire ravaged orphanage sees two girls holding hands across the stone and barbed wire fences. Heed the danger signs, young man, and do not walk the gardens of Thornhill.

This is a poignant tale of vicious bullying and isolation. Ella's story is set in a modern English village while Mary's story is set in 1982. Ella's tale is a graphic novel interspersed with pages from Mary's diary. Mary's torture at the hands of her orphan counterpart is moving and her frustration is keenly expressed in her diary. Ella's loneliness is apparent in the images and her sympathy for the orphan girl pulls the reader into the story. Both story telling methods blend into a seamless and compelling tale. The emotion is taut and very real, which makes this book a powerful read. The ending and story would be stronger if it didn't settle for becoming a supernatural thriller and would be good for victims of bullies. As it stands, Mary's revenge goes a bit too far and weakens what could be an awesome book for victims of the same cruelty. As a thriller it is still a powerful tale with rich emotional depth.

*Contains mild violence.