



2020

Deep and Dark and Dangerous

Karen Abbott

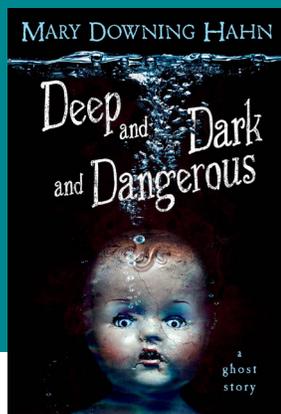
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Abbott, Karen (2020) "Deep and Dark and Dangerous," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 41: Iss. 6, Article 7.

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Book Review

Deep and Dark and Dangerous

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Reviewer

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Rating

Outstanding

Level

Intermediate

Pages

192

Year

2008

ISBN

9780547076454

Publisher

HMH Books

Ali is invited to babysit her five-year-old cousin, Emma, at the family cabin for the summer. There, Ali hopes to solve a mystery about a girl in a photograph taken at the lake. One day at the beach, Ali and Emma meet a very disagreeable girl named Sissy. Emma is immediately taken with her new friend, but Ali has reservations. As Emma spends time with Sissy, her behavior spins out of control. Ali then discovers that Sissy is the ghost of the girl in the photograph. Sissy's disappearance is linked to a forbidden canoe trip that is connected to the two girls' mothers. Now her ghost wants revenge, and it's up to Ali to ensure that the truth is told so that the participants can face effects of their deception and find peace.

This is a great little paranormal getaway with some worthwhile messages stowed in between the mysteries. In the beginning, Sissy is so unforgivably truculent that it is hard to regret her early demise. Emma's loneliness explains her devotion to her harsh and moody new friend, and the reader feels complete sympathy for Ali's initially harsh attitude. These emotions morph into sympathy and understanding as Ali learns about Sissy's past. The primary theme of the story is learning to accept someone repugnant because they are more than their worst selves. In other words, the theme is that everyone deserves to be treated with respect. This elevates a simple ghost story to something more. There is real dignity in the way that Ali grows and learns to stand strong for what she feels Sissy deserves, and Sissy's constant rude behavior helps Ali's compassion stand out. By the end, these two girls have had a major impact on each other that is beneficial to them and to the adults in charge.

*Contains mild violence.