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The Thing with Finn

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Whether it's a Robinson Crusoe, Peter Pan's cronies or the islanders on a current television series, the theme of being lost has sturdy narrative foundations. Tom Kelly's story is about just that, a lost boy. The difference is, Danny begins this story in the cold bosom of a family thrown into emotional turmoil by the death of his twin brother, Finn. At no point is this loss turned into a great drama, indeed when it is eventually recounted it stands on the verge of anticlimax. The real lost soul here is Danny, and this is effectively put across to the reader by the way the first person narration darts around for the first half of the story. It ranges across some moments of laugh-aloud humour, including some of the most well judged appeals to the toilet humour of children I've encountered in children's fiction. In this Kelly is bang up to date with current playground sensibilities, without being facile or patronising. The real brilliance of the story lies in the way in which he interlaces this humour with a truly moving sense of Danny's lack of connection with everything that goes on around him. From the first half of the novel a set of questions gradually emerges about what happened to Finn and what will now happen to Danny.

So much remains unanswered. If a writer is going to do this they have to satisfy the reader that they're not just playing games. Kelly judges it just right. At the moment when the questions become overbearing, the story focuses on Danny's flight from home and encounter with a modern hermit, also the victim of tragedy, which leads to a journey where he both finds and is found. As we join Danny on this exploration, there is a funny, tragic and deeply fulfilling emotional journey for the reader ? a modern classic.

Running Order:

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