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The Light That Gets Lost

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[Matthew Martin](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Natasha Carthew's debut novel [Winter Damage](#) [4] was nominated for the Carnegie Medal and shortlisted for the Branford Boase Award. A gripping adventure set in the bitter winter of a climate changed Cornwall it was distinguished by the power of Carthew's storytelling and the particular beauty and lyricism of her language.

Her second novel **The Light That Gets Lost** is another story of a young person in a bleak, seemingly hopeless situation. Trey is a damaged child: 'in his heart he carried a sackful of sorrow and across his shoulder he saddled the burden of guilt'. Both his parents were murdered by a gunman when Trey was just a little boy. He survived only by hiding in a wardrobe, his older brother was left in a coma. 'Something in the dark' claimed Trey that night we are told. Eight years on he is in a camp for troubled teenagers, and has just one aim: to find the man who destroyed his family and take revenge. He's convinced that the man, known as The Preacher, works at the camp.

The camp is full of children like Trey, 'with one million unfathomable worries strapped to his chest like a run of explosives'. It's a violent place, with thugs and bullies in control 'on the staff and amongst the young people. But Trey does find friends 'a boy called Lamby, twins who never speak a word, and a girl called Kay, who seems to have a way of making everything make sense. As a group they will find their way out, a way back to being human, even as the camp dissolves into anarchy and violence. Though a raw and often shocking novel, it ends in freedom, joy and hope. While it brings to mind other stories 'Lord of the Flies' in particular as order in the camp breaks down and the children take over 'it's wholly original, a novel that could only have been written by Natasha Carthew. The camp, the earth beneath, the sky above, are so vividly described, we feel the soil under fingernails, smell the sunshine. Carthew's language is enthralling, she uses Cornish dialect words rooted in the landscape described, and her writing has its own poetry.

Read a [Q&A interview](#) [5] with Natasha Carthew

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