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Beauty Sleep

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This story is narrated from two viewpoints, that of its protagonist Laura Henley and that of a mysterious boy named Shem.

In 1986 Laura was aged sixteen. She and her five year old brother Alfie were both found to be suffering from the same terminal illness, a rare cancer. They were both put in a state of cryostasis ? in other words frozen. Forty years later Laura awakes from her frozen condition. Her cancer is cured. She is in the Blackhurst clinic under the management of Miss Lily Crisp. Her Lesbian mothers have both died, as has Alfie.

Laura is not permitted to see her best friend, Stacey Flowers, who is apparently guilty of some serious offence. (She will in any case be forty years older than Laura.) Once awakened Laura is sent to live with Miss Crisp. She is given a place at Whitman?s, an elite school where Miss Crisp endows scholarships.

The questions posed by Evans?s book are how Laura may adapt to her new life ? or how might she fail to do so ? and what will she discover about her own life and her late brother?s. What is the role of the boy Shem in the unfolding narrative?

Evans?s book includes mysterious events and revelations. The weakness of the book however is that these interesting phenomena begin to take shape only when the reader has traversed some two hundred pages of introductory matter. There is of course a complex situation to be explored and a number of contributory threads to be woven together. When Laura awakes from her frozen state, she is quite naturally confused about herself and her environment. Unfortunately this confusion spreads itself to the reader.

Some readers will doubtless succeed, as did this reviewer, in navigating a path through this preliminary material. But others will give up. Once the novel gathers itself and embarks on its true course, the pace and the reader?s interest are sustained. An appealing diversion is added when Laura acquires a kitten named Batfink, whose antics certainly engage the reader.

The diffuse opening of this book is something a skilled professional editor and a committed publisher might and should have detected and corrected.

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