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The House of Light

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~~Not a Choice~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

The image of a lighthouse sending bright beams out into the darkness to give hope to those lost at sea is a perfect symbol for this gently but unsettling story of a brave and resourceful girl's search for freedom and safety. Set on an unnamed island in a totalitarian near future, this beautifully written book tells the story of 14-year-old Bonnie who lives with her beloved, but old and ailing, Granda. Bonnie's mother sailed away when Bonnie was a baby to seek a better future and Bonnie and her Granda are left to struggle against the privations of daily life and the control of the sinister Border Guards. When Bonnie finds a boat and a cold, hungry and frightened refugee boy her life changes as she decides that she must follow her mother's path towards the house of light to find freedom, taking Ish and her Granda with her.

The author skilfully creates a bleak atmosphere of fear and unease in her opening chapters but her portrayal of Bonnie, a central character full of love, courage and kindness who refuses to be cowed or caged, brings optimism. This gripping adventure story moves from fear to hope with themes of love, loss, friendship, life, death and connection to the natural world. The island setting is lyrically described, the depiction of the dangerous sea journey is heart stopping and the author's feeling for the world of nature shines through. Bonnie's story, with its hopeful and satisfying ending, is one for today's troubled times, it does not hide difficult issues and themes from children but shows them a way through, lit up by bravery and compassion. Highly recommended for 9+ readers.

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