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The Ransom of Dond

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This could be, but almost certainly isn't, an ancient Celtic legend. When a thirteenth child is born to a mother in the village of Inniscaul, they must be sacrificed to Dond, the god of the underworld, in return for thirteen years of good harvests. Understandably, even the most fertile of mothers never has more than twelve children but Darra and her mother are unlucky, for Darra, as her name reveals, is the second born of twins, and so is an inadvertent thirteenth child. We meet Darra on the eve of her thirteenth birthday, the night before her sacrifice. She has been brought up in seclusion by Cail the village elder to understand and accept her fate but when she meets her twin brother Bawn for the first time and they are both visited by the god Lug in the shape of a blackbird, everything changes and Darra, Bawn, their mother and the villagers are faced with a situation in which it is no longer clear who may live and who may die. Told with the economy and drama of oral storytelling and with the feel of a timeless myth, supported by Pam Smy's atmospheric illustrations which place it back among the ancient Celts, it nevertheless has a modern resonance. Although a political reading is hardly essential to the enjoyment of this powerful novella, this is a story of a young generation imprisoned by religion and by the past, in which it appears that one of twins must die to ensure the prosperity of all. Might there be an implication for the young generation of an island divided in two by political tradition and old battle scars?

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