



Missing Arabella

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This first novel is a tale of separated twins that plays engagingly with the conventions of fairytale and gothic romance. Arabella and Henrietta are chalk and cheese. Arabella is bubbly and extrovert, Henrietta quiet and serious. Sad to say, their parents love Arabella best and resentment grows in Henrietta. An incident involving sewing shears and the loss of most of Arabella's beautiful curls leads to Henrietta being banished to stay with a distant aunt who turns her into a domestic drudge and offers her disgusting food. But, despite their spats, Arabella loves her sister and sets off to rescue her. This relatively straightforward plot is fleshed out with supporting characters, dramatic and comic incident and an interposed wise and witty dialogue between a mother storyteller and her daughter who has her own ideas of what characters ought to do and how the story might go. If this device underlines that this is a book explicitly for girls ? and there is a romance sub-plot involving a lovelorn teacher ? it also assumes that its audience is going to be sharp as a tack and appreciate how story conventions are being both honoured and subverted. For me, it's this that gives the book a distinctive voice and makes up for those moments where the story dips a little.

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