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Twelve Nights

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This is an ambitious book, both in size ? 450 pages ? and concept. It begins promisingly as Kay?s dad disappears and his workplace denies that he has ever existed. Then Kay and her sister Eloise are kidnapped by Will and Flip, two insubstantial beings who identify themselves as wraiths. Will and Flip are collecting all of Kay?s dad?s possessions, even down to his extracted wisdom tooth which Kay has as a keepsake. In what follows we learn that Kay?s dad has been captured on the orders of an upstart wraith called Ghast as part of his plan to gain absolute control of Bithynia, a parallel world to our own whose guiding principles appear to be those of story making. More than this ? the next 300 or so pages - I would be reluctant to say, because I am not clear about it. This may very well be a failure on my part, but it leads me to believe it?s going to be a challenge for even a teenage reader who is keen on fantasy. The problem seems to be that Zurcher has put so much effort into the weaving of his created world around the complementary and antagonistic warp and weft of storying - plotting and imagination ? that his own story in the foreground is frequently bogged down in exegesis and digression and fogged in mystery. Much of the novel takes place underground and its unravelling is so drawn out that I too felt as if I was groping my way in the dark. In a novel that is above all concerned with storytelling, it is unfortunate that its own narrative is so obscure. Fragments of the stories of Penelope and Ariadne are told within the story. This is possibly partly to make a point about tales that are usually told from the point of Odysseus and Theseus. But, to my mind, in their clarity of character, motivation and action, these ancient stories provide a telling comparison to the surrounding tale in which they are mere threads. Perhaps for an adult with the same interest as the author in how a story works as both organism and mechanism, **Twelve Nights** would be an engrossing read. I am not convinced it?s a novel for children.

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