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The Unadoptables

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Editor's Choice:

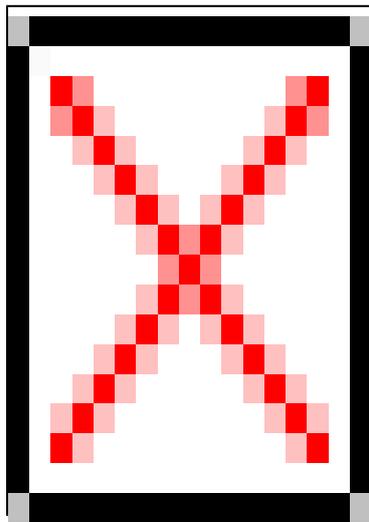
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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4



The Little Tulip Orphanage in Amsterdam has strict rules for baby abandonment. All of them are broken by the five babies abandoned there in 1880, none of whom are wrapped in a cotton blanket, placed in a wicker basket or deposited on the topmost step; it's no wonder that the five, designated rebels, become firm friends. Fast forward twelve years and, despite the best efforts of their ghastly matron Elinora Gassbeek (Milou thinks she has *the brutal sneer of a gargoyle?*), Lotta, Egg, Fenna, Sem and Milou are still living in the grim orphanage, unadopted and seemingly unadoptable. Enter Meneer Rotman, merchant and ship-owner, who declares himself willing to adopt them all. Four of the orphans are filled with hope, but Milou, the leader of their little group, has real misgivings, her strange fifth sense alert to something deeply sinister about the man. She's proved right, and the five flee that night, their one hope to find Milou's family who may be puppeteers.

After this irresistible opening, the story continues as the children make their way into the world alone, ending up in a gorgeous windmill, that also has its own, fully equipped puppet theatre. There are adventures galore ? they face more dangerous encounters with the wicked Rotman, dices with death and vicious dogs, and receive help from unexpected quarters. No matter how difficult the challenges they face, this strange little family sticks together, pooling their various talents and always buoyed by the hope of finding a place they can call home.

Puppet shows play a crucial part in the climax, and in many ways the whole story is a wonderful bit of guignol, with larger than life villains and hints of the supernatural, while 19th century Amsterdam provides spectacular backdrops. Tooke controls her characters and the plot very well and this is well nigh unputdownable.

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