I Wish I'd Written... Thursday's Child

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Article Category: I Wish I'd Written

Byline: Theresa Breslin chooses Sonya Hartnett's Thursday's Child.

This remarkable book seduced me with the very first sentence: ?Now I would like to tell you about my brother, Tin.?
The voice is that of Harper Flute relating her childhood in rural Australia between the two World Wars when her father, a scarred survivor of WW1, brings his family to live on an almost unsustainable parcel of land during the Great Depression. Tin, Harper's young brother, becomes obsessed with tunnelling beneath the earth.

The writing never falters. The book has an immensely powerful realisation of place, compelling characters, soul tearing moments, and atmosphere that seeps into your life. Hartnett's plain way of recounting this story is underpinned by a composite mastery of the art of creative writing.

At the end of the book, as her brother Tin digs on, ?past the bones of cavemen and dragons?, Harper Flute, now grown up and moved away from the family farm to live beside the ocean, tells us that she misses him. In her memory he is still a boy. Harper realises that she also misses the little girl who stayed behind, the child whom she once was.

When I finished this book and put it down I experienced my own sense of loss. I picked it up to read again.

Thursday's Child by Sonya Hartnett is published by Walker Books (0 7445 5996 0, £4.99 pbk). Theresa Breslin's latest book is Saskia's Journey (Doubleday, 0 385 60482 3, £10.99 hbk).

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