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Paradise

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Not a choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Hard-up sixteen-year-old Billie is in for a shock. Well, many shocks as it turns out. But it begins with a key. When a grandmother she's never known leaves Billie her seaside house in her will, Billie's family see it as their golden opportunity to escape from their difficult city life.

You can't leave all your problems behind, however. As Billie's mum becomes gripped by depression, Billie has to deal with the pressure of being responsible for her mum and little brother and working in an old people's home, while trying to create some sort of a life for herself, in particular with a local boy Danny. Threads from the past are also coming into their lives - tantalising mysteries and memories crowd the house that was Billie's mum's childhood home. But the present and past can collide in unexpected and devastating ways; Billie must put together the pieces to discover her father's identity and the truth about the past that her mother refuses to face if her family are going to have any hope of a real future.

Billie's tale is beautifully layered with that of her mother and grandmother, the three lives weaving seamlessly together to show how our lives are never wholly our own - we are all part of someone else's story. This novel is full of big issues (pregnancy, parental pressure, abuse and affairs to name a few) but they have real impact and are not just as a misery-hook for readers; the romance is sweet, not sickly; even the setting of the off-season seaside perfectly captures the tone of the book. Like its characters, this novel is not perfect, but is completely compelling, thoughtful and emotionally beguiling; a first-class novel which proves Joanna Nadin to be one of the best teen writers around.

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