



Doll Bones

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Black starts her novel with that icon of childhood that is at once loved and feared: a china doll. Add the ghost of a girl to the doll, determined to be buried and prepared to cause chaos to get what she wants, and you have the ingredients for nightmares.

But **Doll Bones'** success is that the ghost story is interwoven with a coming of age tale. Young protagonists Zach, Poppy and Alice must learn how to interact with each other differently as they grow older and find new interests, and explore just how much childish play can be carried towards adulthood.

When Zach's father tries to force him to grow up by throwing out all of his toys whilst he's at school, Zach decides there and then to give up playing the ongoing story he's been creating with Alice and Poppy. Not wanting to tell them why, he simply refuses to play, leading Poppy to get the forbidden antique doll out of the cabinet in an attempt to entice him back. But this unleashes the ghost hidden inside the doll, which is made of her cremated ashes that her master potter father mixed into his porcelain. Determined to be properly buried, the suspiciously malicious spirit forces the three on the sort of quest they'd only been able to pretend before.

But their quest isn't as fairytale as they hoped, and the higher the stakes become, the more cracks develop in their team as they realise that there has to be more than games to their relationship. The challenges of family, blossoming relationships and how to be true to yourself even as you naturally start to change are juxtaposed well with a genuinely chilling ghost story. It's still mild enough to be enjoyable for pre-teens looking for a thrill, but don't be surprised if any dolls left in children's rooms find themselves suddenly homeless.

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