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The List of Things That Will Not Change

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Editor's Choice:

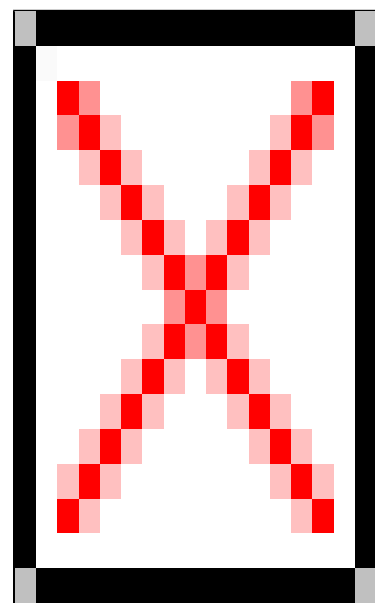
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Written in the first person, starting with the voice of an eight-year-old girl, it is never clear what level of audience this novel is addressing. The issues and problems it addresses are too old for young readers but too oppressively sweetened for older ones. In so much contemporary junior fiction the more unsuccessful any former marriage might appear to have been the more frequent tend to be the protestations of parental love for those children left behind. This is true of this novel, where expressions of love to and from a variety of quarters rain down so persistently as to risk becoming merely repetitive.

Bea, its cute young heroine, does learn some important lessons from sessions with her therapist Miriam of the type that benefits her and could possibly do the same for some of her readers. Sharing her life between mother and father, she goes to Miriam because of her occasional aggression to other children, particularly so in one past incident which she thinks might have led to terrible consequences. She also suffers from continuous, painful eczema. All this while she has to establish a new relationship with Sonia, the same age-daughter of the man who has now moved in with Bea's coming-out gay restaurant-owning father. Sonia is less keen on possessing a new step-sister than is Bea, and their growing relationship is handled well. All characters are regularly fortified by the wonderful food always present in the house, described in enough succulent detail for readers to wish they could get some of it too. But little else is as memorable in

these pages. Rebecca Stead has previously won the **Newbery Medal** and the **Guardian Prize**. Here?s hoping for a return to form in any future story. **NT**

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